

---

# Death Valley National Park

## Wildflower Update

---



Bigelow Coreopsis in Gold Valley. 4/5/09

### **April 22, 2009**

The rich, pink blossoms of the Beavertail Cactus can be found in abundance along the Mud Canyon and Beatty Cut-Off roads near Hell's Gate, along the Scotty's Castle Road and many other locations from 2000 to about 3000 feet in elevation. Death Valley Sage, Brittlebush, Rock Nettle, Globemallow, and other perennials are blooming in open wash and protected canyon environments. Bigelow Coreopsis and Desert Dandelions can be viewed blooming in profusion along portions of the Greenwater Valley dirt road. They may also still be putting on a nice display in nearby Gold Valley, which is reached with a four-wheel drive vehicle. The bloom is past its peak at elevations below 3,000 feet, but abundant fields of Desert Gold are still visible along park roadsides.

### **April 13, 2009**

The wildflower bloom is past its peak at elevations below 2,000 feet, but still has some good viewing opportunities along park roadsides. The rich, pink blossoms of the Beavertail Cactus can be found near Hell's Gate, along the Scotty's Castle Road and many other locations from 1000 to about 3000 feet elevation. The Death Valley Sage, Brittlebush, Rock Nettle, and other perennials are blooming in open wash and protected canyon environments. Bigelow Coreopsis and Desert Dandelions are still blooming in profusion along portions of the Greenwater Valley dirt road. Though a bit past peak, they are also putting on a spectacular display in nearby Gold Valley, which is reached with a four-wheel drive vehicle.

### **April 6, 2009**

The wildflower bloom in the valley's lower elevations is a bit past its peak. The Beavertail Cactus can be found in bloom along the Scotty's Castle Road and near the beginning of the Echo Canyon dirt road. The Bigelow Coreopsis and Desert Dandelions are blooming in profusion along portions of the Greenwater Valley dirt road. They are also putting on a spectacular display in nearby Gold Valley, which is reached with a four-wheel drive vehicle.

### **March 29, 2009**

The wildflower bloom in the valley's lower elevations is now at its peak. Along the roadsides and up the nearby alluvial fans are patches of Desert Gold, Notch-leaf Phacelia, Desert Fivespot, Gravel Ghost, Evening Primrose (Brown-eyed, Shredding, and Golden) along with several others. Lack of any recent rain and several days of drying wind will make the show quickly pass. Look for flowers along Highway 190 north of Furnace Creek, along the Scotty's Castle Road north of the Titus Canyon junction, and along the Mud Canyon Road.

The Evening Primrose may already be gone in some places, eaten up by larvae of Sphinx Moths. Watch for mass migrations of these plump caterpillars with a prominent horn on their back end, crawling across the desert floor, looking for more wildflowers to eat. Fortunately, the adult moths are one of the flower's primary pollinators.

In the mid-elevations the show is just now starting, but localized. Look for Fremont Phacelia and Desert Dandelion in Greenwater Valley. On the hills around Gold Valley there are impressive displays of Goldfields, but a four-wheel-drive vehicle is necessary to get there.

### **March 21, 2009**

Temperatures have warmed to the low 90s along the valley floor, but no rain has fallen for weeks. Due to this, the spring bloom may peak in the lower elevations at the end of the month. Many wildflowers are bolting—rushing to produce seeds—so the plants are often tiny with few flowers. Although most wildflowers are primarily along the roadsides, there is quite a bit of variety if you look closely.

Visitors are finding roadside wildflowers along the Mud Canyon Road, Scotty's Castle Road, Highway 190 east of Furnace Creek and along the Badwater Road. Those with high-clearance vehicles are finding spring wildflowers along the Echo Canyon Road, Hole-in-the-Wall Road, and Titus Canyon Road.

Wildflowers currently in bloom: Desert Five-spot, Broad-flowered Gilia, Brittlebush, Panamint Daisy, Globemallow, Mojave Aster, Brown-eyed and Golden Evening Primrose, Lesser Mojavea, Notch-leaf Phacelia, Desert Gold, and Gravel Ghost.

### **March 12, 2009**

The park has received little rain from recent storms. It is likely that the wildflower bloom will be very spotty in Death Valley this spring. The Creosote Bush is now blooming parkwide with other perennial shrubs also blooming in protected canyon environments. Park roadsides and some of the drainages south of Badwater remain the best spots for locating annual spring wildflowers. Flowers currently in bloom include Brown-eyed and Golden Evening Primrose, Lesser Mojavea, Notch-leaf Phacelia, Desert Gold, and Gravel Ghost. The peak blooming period this spring is expected to be late March to early April.

### **March 1, 2009**

Continuing light rains and cool temperatures have enhanced the prospect for a moderate display of wildflowers this spring. It is still a bit early to see much but pockets of Desert Gold and Brown-eyed Evening Primrose along the roadsides south of Badwater and the Encelia bushes blooming along the road to Scotty's Castle. The peak blooming period is hard to predict but currently we believe late March to mid-April will afford the best wildflower viewing opportunities.

### **February 8, 2009**

A strong storm has brought one to two inches of rain and significant flooding throughout the park the last few days. This has greatly increased our prospects for spring wildflowers in Death Valley. Much of the park received an early rainfall in October and a parkwide rain, nearly one half inch, just before Thanksgiving. This early rain, followed by warm temperatures allowed a widespread sprouting of annual wildflowers seeds. Some of these such as Desert Gold, Brown-eyed Evening Primrose and Sand Verbena have already been observed blooming along park roadsides in the southern and northern ends of the park. In Death Valley, the driest spot in North America, spring wildflowers are not a yearly event. It's a rare treat for conditions to be just right. The bloom this spring may still be spotty, nothing like the huge blooms in 1998 and 2005, but still worth a viewing. The heavy rains were received late in the season, so the peak blooming period along the valley floor and up to 2,000 feet may be anywhere from mid-March to early April.

Charlie Callagan  
Ranger Naturalist