



Name: Canemah Bluff
Location: Off of South End Rd., turn left onto Fifth Ave; there will be signs for Old Canemah Park.
Type: Groomed trails, wilderness
Length: Multiple trails; total area of 158 acres
Difficulty: Easy to moderate
Equipment needed: Boots; compass recommended if taking on old trails/off trail

Canemah Bluff offers beautiful flora, history

By Isaac Soper
 Arts & Culture Editor

Hidden in Oregon City, a town on the verge of suburbia, sits a 158 acre protected wilderness area known as the Canemah Bluff.

In 2008, Native American artifacts and ceremonial sites were found by park workers in the area, which was used as a meeting place for members of many tribes around Oregon; between 30,000 and 60,000 members of various tribes; would come to the Bluff and fish the Willamette River together.

There are many different types of wilderness in the location, including of course, the Bluff itself, along with ponds, dense forest, open fields and marsh lands. There are various trees in the area that are becoming rarer by the minute, such as the Oregon white oak or the Pacific madrone, both which are beautiful and unique trees.

There are a few offshoots of the trail that are temporarily closed due to water saturation and mild flooding, but the new trail is very nice. The new trail begins at the Canemah Children's Park (located at 815 Fourth Ave, Oregon City), and traverses through the large, protected areas that make up the

Canemah Bluff area.

The Bluff looks down upon the Willamette River.

There are a plethora of beautiful wildflowers in the area, including the bright yellow Oregon sunshine, the upside-down white fawn lily and the common camas. Apart from flowers, there are a wide variety of mushrooms and fungi that are very unique and magnificent in their own right. On the hike, we were able to find a less-common black jelly fungus and an elven saddle.

Jelly fungus is an edible fungi, although considered by many to share the same taste as dirt (see story below).

Many of the rocks and trees in the area have a thick covering of moss; in some spots we were able to find patches that were over four inches thick.

There are multiple trails that are slightly overgrown that will provide good views "off the beaten path."

Be careful, there is some poison oak. Poison oak can be identified by its glossy oak-like leaf structure (that during warmer times of the year will turn from green to red). Its leaves are in bunches of three, "Leaves of three, let them be."

Apart from the cemetery trail, which heads to the Canemah Cemetery, there are loads of little trails that can provide fairly

easy hiking for hours and hours.

Unless it's a really busy time of year, Canemah is relatively quiet, over a period of three hours; only four other people were seen, hiking on the main trail and the cemetery trail.

Most do not associate Oregon City with "wilderness." Canemah is that. Once you hike away from the children's park, Canemah becomes a different world all together.

Cool waterways, awesome trails and jutting rocks to climb on, beautiful wildflowers, twisting white oaks, Pacific madrones—almost human-like in appearance. Canemah is one of the best places by far in Oregon City.



A black jelly fungus grows on a branch of an Oregon big-leaf maple tree.

Wildman goes native, searches for local sustenance



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Food is an important part of a balanced diet. Other than grocery stores, fast food restaurants and dumpsters, there are in fact, other ways to find food. Look out your back door. Do you see any weeds? What we commonly call weeds are in fact native plants. Quite a few of these native plants are edible, and in many cases, quite tasty.

Throughout the year, finding food in the wilderness can be relatively easy to impossible. As I entered the woods on the outskirts of town, I tried to find some of the basic edibles. For me, that includes plants that I know are edible, without my guide, such as the common dandelion, the blackberry and the wild carrot.

A few dandelions were found, though the slightly bitter taste of the petals and the leaves left me unsatisfied. Blackberries were no more than thorny vines; the

wild carrot (also called Queen Anne's Lace) couldn't be found.

The Oregon grape, identified by its holly-like spiny leaves, was flowering which means it's fairly bitter but edible berries would be in season soon. "Soon" was not soon enough; I was on a quest to fill my stomach and hunger was setting in.

I walked further, deeper into the woods, seeking something palatable to eat. I looked down to see the white flowers and distinct leaves of the wild strawberry. The flowers meant that there would be no pickings though.

As I stood, I saw the thorny stems of the wild rose, of which the leaves, petals and buds (known as rosehips) are all edible. There weren't any rosehips or petals yet, but a few young leaves made a quick snack. I had to search for something more filling; I came upon some ostrich ferns. The young coiled heads of the ferns (commonly called fiddleheads) are edible if boiled in water. With only a pocket knife and a water bottle, the possibility of boiling fiddleheads was nil.

Giving up on my prior knowledge and opening my guide, I started to search for some of the plants I wasn't as used to. Looking down at some interesting mushrooms, I noticed a large patch of wild violets, which have heart-shaped leaves and five-petal yellow flowers, both of which are edible raw. The leaves tasted similar

to mild lettuce and the petals had a unique but satisfying taste as well. Being the first large amount of wild edibles I had found on my search, I collected a few bunches of the plant.

Some wild plants can be eaten raw, and some must be cooked, for instance, the infamous stinging nettle, a plant that when brushed up against makes you really itchy until you take a shower. Yes, it is a good idea to have some gloves to harvest the plant. If you do come into contact with it, another wild edible, the dock, has the remedy. Just mash up the dock's leaves and rub the juice on the site of contact, and the sting will subside.

As much as I enjoy eating mushrooms at home, without a detailed guide, I didn't even consider eating the different fungi that I'd seen.

Those who may be interested in harvesting wild mushrooms (the edibles, not the psychedelics) should look for an in-depth guide on what exactly to look for. If you eat a mushroom that isn't edible, you will most likely die.

If you do plan on going out in the woods (or in your neighbor's weed-ridden yard) to procure some wild edibles, make sure that you purchase a guide to properly identify the plants you are going to consume. If you're not 100 percent sure it's edible, do not eat it. There are many edible plants that can

easily be confused with deadly ones. In the case of the wild onion and the death camas, though they look very similar, the death camas is, you guessed it, deadly. Other plants that are easily confused are the wild parsnip (also called cow parsnip) and the poison hemlock.

I assume you can guess which one is toxic.

Finding only a few edibles in the woods, due to my lack of knowledge and practice, I still left the forest with a feeling of satisfaction, though the refrigerator looked pretty good once I got home.



The Oregon grape displays its vibrant yellow flowers after a warm Spring rain. The fruits of the plant will be edible by Summer.

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