

Early blooming wildflowers in the Applegate

BY SUZIE SAVOIE

The cheerful sight of spring wildflowers enlivens the soul after a long, cold winter. With warm, sunny days ahead, it's time to get out and enjoy the spectacular early blooming wildflowers on display throughout the Applegate. After flowering and setting seed, these species will go completely dormant in the summer, an adaptation for surviving the Applegate's dry summer months.

Douglas' grasswidow

Olsynium douglasii

One of the earliest wildflowers to bloom in the spring, Douglas' grasswidow inhabits rocky, vernal wet places that turn very dry in the summer. You will see it growing on dry, rocky bluffs, in meadows, and in open oak woodlands from low to mid elevations. Early season native bees appreciate the early blooms of grasswidows.

Indian warrior

Pedicularis densiflora

The much-loved, bright red flowers of Indian warrior stand out in early spring. Native only in Oregon and California, this perennial wildflower is in the broomrape family, and, like other plants in the genus *Pedicularis*, it is parasitic. Indian warrior attaches to the roots of other plants, most often plants in the heath family, like manzanita and madrone, in order to obtain nutrients and water. It is considered a hemiparasite because parasitism isn't necessary for its survival, but it takes the opportunity to parasitize when it can in order to increase its survivability and vigor. Indian warrior grows at low elevations in oak woodland, mixed conifer forest, and chaparral in the Applegate, primarily from

Humbug Creek and Thompson Creek, through Williams and North Applegate.

Henderson's fawn lily

Erythronium hendersonii

A springtime display of thousands of Henderson's fawn lilies carpeting an oak woodland is sure to bring a smile to your face. An endemic species in southwest Oregon where it is abundant, Henderson's fawn lily is listed as a rare and sensitive species in California, where its population is very limited. The pinkish purple to lavender flower color is distinctive among fawn lilies in the West, where most are white to yellow. Henderson's fawn lily can be found growing in dry, open oak or madrone woodland, mixed woodland, or pine forest.

Pacific hound's tongue

Cynoglossum grande

This early-blooming native perennial wildflower in the borage family prefers to grow in light, dappled shade and is commonly found growing beneath Oregon white oak. The striking foliage of hound's tongue is followed by one- to two-foot flowering stalks with bold, blue flowers and white centers that resemble forget-me-nots. The uniquely intense blue flower color, with distinct white centers, may have evolved to help pollinators zero in on the pollen. Hound's tongue attracts native bees and hummingbirds and is a larval host plant for the hound's tongue woolly bear moth.

Nuttall's larkspur

Delphinium nuttallianum

This cheerful, widely distributed, and variable larkspur is low-growing, generally one to two feet, with deeply lobed leaves

and a spurred, dark purple to light blue flower. Loved by many pollinators, meadow larkspur can be found in low-elevation open meadows, dry grasslands, chaparral, open woodlands, and at edges of forests or near streams.

Common lomatium

Lomatium utriculatum

Common lomatium is also referred to as spring gold because of its early spring, bright yellow flowers. This perennial wildflower is a member of the carrot family and is native to western North America. It grows in many habitat types, including chaparral, oak woodland, sunny open slopes, dry meadows, and openings in coniferous forest. Common lomatium is a larval host plant for the anise swallowtail butterfly. Many small pollinating insects are attracted to the yellow umbel flowers. It has long been used as a traditional food by Native American tribes and as a medicinal plant.

Henderson's shooting star

Dodecatheon hendersonii

An inhabitant of open woodlands, cheerful Henderson's shooting stars are neighborhood wildflowers for many in the Applegate. The unique, nodding, vibrant magenta flowers arise from a tuber-like root. Henderson's shooting star requires "buzz pollination" from bees for successful pollination and seed production, and bumble bees are their primary pollinator.

Western trillium

Trillium ovatum

Western trillium is an elegant, highly revered, and endearing wildflower that is native to the western United States. The early spring blooms of Western trillium



Douglas' grasswidow is one of the earliest wildflowers to bloom in the spring. Photo: Suzie Savoie.

are unmistakable. The large white petals are one-half to three inches long, fading to pink or dark magenta as they age. Western trillium inhabits moist mixed conifer forest, oak woodland, and riparian areas in the Applegate. It grows from a slowly spreading rhizome and prefers part shade or dappled sunlight and moist, rich soil with good drainage. The flowers are attractive to many pollinators, including bumblebees, moths, and beetles. The seeds are distributed by ants and yellowjackets which are attracted to the fleshy seed coat.

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Photo, left: Common lomatium is a member of the carrot family. Photo, center: Henderson's shooting stars are neighborhood wildflowers for many in the Applegate. Photo, right: Western trillium's seeds are distributed by ants and yellowjackets. Photos: Suzie Savoie.



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