



THE REGION'S HUB FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Each week in this section, you will find the area's most complete guide of what's open and closed; outdoor activities and events; top picks of places to explore; conditions of hiking and biking trails, fishing holes, water flows, camping spots, parks and more — as well as features from outdoor writers and field experts.

Central Oregon in BLOOM

BY MAKENZIE WHITTLE • The Bulletin

Wildflowers across the area have been blooming since late April, and with recent welcome rain along with melting snow, more will start budding out soon.

Here are a few trails to check out for vibrant blooms and verdant landscapes. Bonus: You'll get in some trail hikes in the process. Because this winter was fairly dry in some regions, some growth may be limited.

High Desert blooms

There's still time to catch the lower elevation and High Desert trails with fireworks of color.

As opposed to their higher elevation counterparts, sometimes spotting a wildflower in the High Desert might feel more like a game of eye spy, but it's worth it when you do. That's not to say you won't find something more distinct like a desert lupine or large swaths of paintbrush adding their beautiful red pigment to the dry desert-y landscape. Be sure to look all around you and even in the bushes and trees as they may also be blooming.

Whychus Canyon Preserve

— The preserve has varied terrains that allow for a wide variety of flora to grow each year. From the banks of the Whychus Creek to the dryer flats on the canyon rim, you can spot lupine, milkvetch, larkspur, shaggy daisies and more. You may even catch the tail end of the sand lilies along the rim trails. The Deschutes Land Trust, who manages the 930-acre preserve also offers guided wildflower hikes during the season, but spots fill up quickly so early registration is a must. See deschuteslandtrust.org to sign up.



A lone bitterroot grows out of rocky terrain along Rimrock Springs trail.

Rimrock Springs and Gray Butte

— They may not look like much more than sage and dirt, but look a little closer, and you can find ground covers of tiny purple-flowered phlox, lupine, larkspur and paintbrush — even a stray bitterroot may be creeping out of the sagebrush steppe terrain. Rimrock Springs' easy loop is a good alternative to the more strenuous butte climb, but bring plenty of water for either trek.

Scout Camp Trail — The moderate 2.5-mile trail loops down deep into the Deschutes River canyon, offering not only stunning views of the plateaus and rocky geologic formations, but also in the spring, the trail erupts with color from balsamroot, bitterroot, showy townsendia, yarrow, paintbrush, basalt milkvetch and more.

Painted Hills/Sheep Rock — If you're up for a longer drive, you may still be able to catch some of the stunning displays of wildflowers against the equally stunning paleosols of the national monument near Mitchell. Prairie stars welcome the season and slowly give way to bitterroot, mariposa lilies blazing stars and even prickly pears come July.

Smith Rock — If you get up early enough or luck out and can find a parking spot, the park is full of vibrant colors this time of year along the river trails. Arrowleaf balsamroot welcomes hikers near the parking area and down the Chute and Canyon trails then along the Crooked River where you may find Idaho milkvetch, chokeberry, white campion and yarrow.



A chokeberry blooms at Smith Rock State Park.

Makenzie Whittle/Bulletin photos

Mountain wildflower trails

Early flowers are starting to peak out along the lower elevations in the Ochocos and the Cascades. While many trails may still be under considerable amounts of snow for a while, plan ahead as they may require the newly implemented Central Cascades Wilderness Permit to access this summer.

See **Wildflowers** / B12



Alpine aster grows out of rocky soil along the Whychus Canyon rim.

Behind the scenes of replacing the hardware on area climbing routes

BY CRISTINA PETERSON
For The Bulletin

One of the most common questions climbers get from other visitors at Smith Rock State Park is "How do you get the rope up there?" We climb up and hang the rope, of course! But it's not as simple as it sounds.

Two broad categories characterize climbing routes on ropes, traditional and sport.

The first of the two, traditional, requires placing hardware in existing cracks or other features of the rock as you use the rock itself to grab with your hands and step on with your feet. The hardware protects climbers from a long fall and is removed either by another climber or by the climber that placed it on their way back down to the ground.

The second type of climbing,

sport, has bolts with hangers on them installed in the rock that a climber then clips gear into and then their rope while also using the rock for hand and foot holds.

In most places, both types of climbs have an anchor at the top which consists of two bolts with additional hardware for the climber to clip their rope into and then lower from. Other climbers can then

use that rope to climb up and lower down also.

Both of these types of climbing are widely accepted by climbers and land managers as standard practice. Depending on the type of rock and its features, a climb may either be established as traditional or sport. Central Oregon has both styles but the majority of climbs are sport climbs.

See **Climbing** / B11



The single bolt shows corrosion at its base.

Max Tepfer/Submitted photo