

Protecting and Promoting Native Flora

Protection for Wild Habitat

Hyundai Motor Company, USA was in the Antelope Valley this past spring to create visuals in honor of Earth Day highlighting its commitment to low emission vehicles. While in the area, Hyundai officials became aware of the need to protect habitat at the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve. They contacted the Great Basin District of California State Parks* and subsequently the Poppy Reserve Mojave Desert Interpretive Association to discuss ways in which they could help protect California's state flower, the California poppy. This discussion led to a generous donation that will be directed toward habitat protection at the Poppy Reserve. This donation will finance more than 3,000 feet of barriers to clearly indicate the borders of park trails and public areas including the park picnic area. This will help park visitors avoid venturing off trails and contributing to habitat loss. A total of approximately 85,000 feet of material is needed for this project. PRMDIA has provided 15,000 feet in addition to the 3,000 feet provided by the Hyundai donation. Obviously, we still have a long way to go to finish this project, but this is a great start! Thank you Hyundai!

Cultivated Gardens Where Natives Thrive

We are experiencing summer's first heat wave as I write this message, prompting me to look forward to cooler weather coming in the fall. Fall is a great time to visit the many botanic gardens in Southern California, both cultivated and wild, that preserve native California perennials and annuals. Three of my favorites are in the foothill area near the 210 Freeway stretching from Sun Valley to Claremont. The first of these and undoubtedly the premier source for admiring and purchasing natives is the **Theodore Payne Foundation**. Less than an hour away from the Antelope Valley in Sun Valley, this 22-acre site promotes the use of native flora in California home gardens and public landscapes. The gardens are the home of the Theodore Payne Foundation, a non-profit organization established in 1960 to "rewild Southern California by bringing native plants back into our cities, creating habitat that supports local ecosystems, and helping people embrace our shared natural heritage." It has an education center, book and gift shop, demonstration gardens, a retail nursery and a ¾-mile hiking trail. It is free and open year-round. If you plan a visit, be sure to check the website for more information about days and hours of operation and for driving directions: www.theodorepayne.org.

A short drive from the Theodore Payne Foundation is **Descanso Gardens** in my hometown of La Canada. Descanso is known for its roses and camellias but it also provides extensive habitat for California natives. The 150-acre site is in a woodland of coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*). These magnificent survivors, some of which are centuries old, are a remnant of an extensive forest that once covered the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. Although oaks are found throughout the park, a recently reopened "Oak Woodland" garden provides a path through an area that preserves wild oaks among native chaparral. An additional 8-acres of Descanso Gardens is dedicated to cultivated California native plants. Planted originally in 1959 under the direction of Theodore Payne, the "California Natives" garden includes palo verde, toyon berry, ceanothus, fairy duster and buckeye. Springtime annuals include Matilija poppies, monkey flowers, baby blue eyes, and of course poppies. Just outside Descanso Gardens, adjacent to its parking lot, is the trailhead for a trail that takes hikers on an approximately 3 mile journey through native chaparral in the hills surrounding the gardens (look for yellow posts and take water with you!). For more information about location, admission fees, and activities both inside and just outside the park, visit www.descansogardens.org or call 818 949-4200.

Our last stop takes us through Pasadena to Claremont, the home of the **Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Gardens**, the “largest botanic garden dedicated to California native plants, promoting botany, conservation and horticulture to inspire, inform and educate the public and scientific community about California’s native flora.” It features acres of gardens open to the public, as well as maintaining research facilities. Its scientist and graduate students work with the Claremont Graduate University’s Department of Botany on programs including field studies and plant growth laboratories, and maintains the largest seed bank “dedicated to the long term conservation of California’s native flora.” Currently, a “container garden” that showcases work being conducted by graduate students is open to the public. The total facility stretches across 86 acres with “curated collections of more than 22,000 California native plants.” The gardens provide many activities including guided tours, tram tours, family bird watching, classes on a variety of subjects and a butterfly pavilion (open seasonally, weather permitting). Or visitors may wander through the extensive gardens on self-guided tours. Purchases of native plants may be made at the Grow Native Nursery with all proceeds going to support education, research and conservation efforts. For more information, visit www.rsabg.org or call 909 625-8767.

Links to all of these native gardens are provided on www.prmidia.org. Once on the site, select NEWS and the PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE. Hope you can make time to visit these remarkable gardens where native flora thrives!

*Under a recent statewide reorganization of California State Parks, the Tehachapi District has a new name (and a few new parks). The new name is Great Basin District of California State Parks.