Welcome to Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, home to a wealth of spectacular and surprising wildflowers. In addition to being sources of joy, food, medicine, and materials for humans, wildflowers are extremely important to wildlife and to the land. This guide encourages you to actively experience wildflowers and their roles in Open Space and Mountain Parks. Collecting is prohibited; please take only photos and memories!

Plants are listed by beginning bloom time.

**February**

Oregon grape prevents erosion on steep hillsides. Its stems creep along the ground and grow roots along the way, binding the soil together.

Flagstaff Trail
dry open hillsides, rocky slopes, ponderosa pine forests

These tiny flowers can be very fragrant. Stop and sniff. Check for berries later in the season.

Oregon Grape
*Mahonia repens*

Fuzzy hairs on pasqueflowers keep them warm, allowing them to bloom very early in spring. After blooming, a fluffy ball of seeds with feathery tails will appear.

*Pulsatilla patens ssp. multifida*

Pasqueflower leaves don't grow until after the plant has gone to seed. Try coming back in a few weeks to see what they look like.

**INDEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>(Scientific name)</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine Penstemon</td>
<td>(<em>Penstemon glaber</em>)</td>
<td>Scrophulariaceae</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aster</td>
<td>(<em>Aster spp.</em>)</td>
<td>Asteraceae</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergamot</td>
<td>(<em>Monarda fistulosa var. menthaefolia</em>)</td>
<td>Lamiaceae</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanketflower</td>
<td>(<em>Gaillardia aristata</em>)</td>
<td>Asteraceae</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blazing Star</td>
<td>(<em>Liatris punctata</em>)</td>
<td>Asteraceae</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Flax</td>
<td>(<em>Adenolinum lewisi</em>)</td>
<td>Linaceae</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chokecherry</td>
<td>(<em>Padus virginiana ssp. melanocarpa</em>)</td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Columbine</td>
<td>(<em>Aquilegia coerulea</em>)</td>
<td>Helleboraceae</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death Camas</td>
<td>(<em>Toxicoscordion venenosum</em>)</td>
<td>Melanthiaceae</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Banner</td>
<td>(<em>Thermopsis montana</em>)</td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harebell</td>
<td>(<em>Campanula rotundifolia</em>)</td>
<td>Campanulaceae</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart-leaved Arnica</td>
<td>(<em>Arnica cordifolia</em>)</td>
<td>Asteraceae</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leafy Cinquefoil</td>
<td>(<em>Drymocallis fissa</em>)</td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance-leaved Chiming Bells</td>
<td>(<em>Mertensia lanceolata</em>)</td>
<td>Boraginaceae</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larkspur</td>
<td>(<em>Delphinium nudatum</em>)</td>
<td>Helleboraceae</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lupine</td>
<td>(<em>Lupinus argenteus</em>)</td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariposa Lily</td>
<td>(<em>Calochortus gunnisonii</em>)</td>
<td>Calochortaceae</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monument Plant</td>
<td>(<em>Frasera speciosa</em>)</td>
<td>Gentianaceae</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-sided Penstemon</td>
<td>(<em>Penstemon secundiflorus</em>)</td>
<td>Scrophulariaceae</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon Grape</td>
<td>(<em>Mahonia repens</em>)</td>
<td>Berberidaceae</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasqueflower</td>
<td>(<em>Pulsatilla patens ssp. multifida</em>)</td>
<td>Ranunculaceae</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prickly Pear</td>
<td>(<em>Opuntia macrorhiza</em>)</td>
<td>Cactaceae</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand Lily</td>
<td>(<em>Leucocrinum montanum</em>)</td>
<td>Liliaceae</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Beauty</td>
<td>(<em>Claytonia rosea</em>)</td>
<td>Portulacaceae</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stonecrop</td>
<td>(<em>Amerosedum lanceolatum</em>)</td>
<td>Crassulaceae</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Wallflower</td>
<td>(<em>Erysimum asperum</em>)</td>
<td>Brassicaceae</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Geranium</td>
<td>(<em>Geranium caespitosum ssp. caespitosum</em>)</td>
<td>Geraniaceae</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Iris</td>
<td>(<em>Iris missouriensis</em>)</td>
<td>Iridaceae</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarrow</td>
<td>(<em>Achillea lanulosa</em>)</td>
<td>Asteraceae</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yucca</td>
<td>(<em>Yucca glauca</em>)</td>
<td>Agavaceae</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
February to April

Spring beauty is one of the earliest-blooming flowers. A similar species also grows in forests in the East.

Bluebell-Baird Trail
streamsides, moist grasslands, ponderosa pine forests

Take a look at the delicate pink lines on the flower petals. These guide insects to nectar, like runways.

Spring Beauty
Claytonia rosea

Sand lilies survive the heat of summer by disappearing. They bloom early in spring, and all but the underground part of the plant dies soon after.

Eagle and Red Rocks Trails
open hillsides, disturbed or rocky prairie

Can you see how the flowers are attached to the rest of the plant?

Sand Lily
Leucocrinum montanum

Flax has been used for fiber since ancient times. Linen is made from flax stems cured in water.

Red Rocks, Marshall Mesa, Bluebell Mesa Trails
meadows

Flax flowers open early in the morning and usually die by midday. Look for petals from past flowers on the ground around a flax plant.

Blue Flax
Adenolinum lewisii
A P R I L

Golden Banner
Thermopsis montana

Golden banner forms pods like its relative, the garden pea. It is toxic to humans and many other animals, but caterpillars feed safely on it.

If you find a large patch of golden banner, it could mean that the land has been overgrazed (domestic animals avoid it because it’s poisonous, but will eat everything else around it). Take a look around to see if that has happened here.

Chautauqua, Lower Towhee Trails
meadows, roadsides, damp forests

Lance-leaved chiming bells are survivors. They bloom in early spring, living through snow and freezing temperatures.

Skunk Canyon Trail
meadows, hillsides, open forests

The flowers of chiming bells usually aren’t just blue. Look for other colors in the buds.

Lance-leaved Chiming Bells
Mertensia lanceolata

Most potted geraniums come from South Africa. Our native geraniums flower year after year, making wonderful additions to gardens.

Mesa Trail
forests, meadows, hillsides, roadsides

“Geranium” comes from the Greek word “geranos,” or “crane.” This plant is often called cranesbill because of the shape of the seed pods.

Wild Geranium
Geranium caespitosum
ssp.caespitosum

A S T Y

Asters are important food sources for caterpillars and butterflies. Asters are a sure sign that fall, and the end of the wildflower season, is on its way.

Green Mountain West Ridge Trail
rocky slopes, meadows

Look closely. Each “flower” is actually made up of many tiny flowers. The yellow flowers in the center are called disk flowers. Each one of the purple petals represents a different ray flower.

Prescribed Burns for Wildflower Health
For thousands of years, frequent fires on the plains shaped Colorado’s plant communities and became essential to their health. Prescribed burns are conducted on Open Space and Mountain Parks land to produce some of the positive effects of wildfire. Fire increases plant diversity, adds nutrients to the soil, and serves as a tool in the control of invasive plants. These burns are planned and monitored very carefully to make sure that they are as safe and effective as possible.

Blazing Star
Liatris punctata

The Blackfeet Indians named this plant “crow-root” because they saw ravens and crows eating it in the fall. Butterflies feast on its nectar, too.

Marshall Mesa, Skunk Canyon Trails
dry prairie, meadows

The scientific name contains the word “punctata,” meaning “dotted.” Look for tiny dots on the leaves.
**JUNE TO JULY**

A monument plant in bloom is cause for celebration. These plants grow for up to 60 years, bloom once, and then die.

Enchanted Mesa Trail
moist hillsides, meadow edges, pine forests

Take a look around this place. What did this monument plant experience over the course of a lifetime? What will life be like for one of its seeds?

Stonecrop
Amerosedum lanceolatum

Stonecrop can live in very dry places where other plants can’t. Its succulent stems and leaves store water, and in times of drought stonecrop becomes dormant until rain returns.

Rangeview, Hogback Ridge Trails
dry, rocky hillsides from the plains to alpine

Feel the waxy leaves, and take a close look at the tiny, star-shaped flowers.

Western Wallflower
Erysimum asperum

Mustard comes from the crushed seeds of plants closely related to wallflowers.

Tenderfoot Trail
ponderosa pine forests, meadows

Wallflowers are often very fragrant. Look at all of the variety in petal color on a single plant!

**MAY**

Wild iris looks very much like its cultivated cousin. The Paiute and Shoshone Indians found it to be a cure for toothache. However, like many other medicinal plants, wild iris can be poisonous.

Big Bluestem, Mesa Trails
wet meadows, streamsides

Drink in that gorgeous color for a minute.

Spring Marches up the Mountain

Flowers bloom later at higher elevations, where snow melts reluctantly and temperatures take longer to rise. When a flower stops blooming in Boulder, it is often just reaching its peak in the high country. That means you can follow your favorite flowers up the mountainside and enjoy their presence even longer.

Chokecherry feeds the foothills. Bears, coyotes, foxes, birds, butterflies, bees, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits, and deer all depend on chokecherries for food.

South Mesa Trailhead area
shrublands, canyons, hillsides, streambanks

Take a close look at the cherries. Chokecherry pits may often be found inside scat (animal droppings). Look for tent caterpillars in the branches.

**CHOOSE YOUR TRAILS**

- Enchanted Mesa Trail
- Tenderfoot Trail
- Rangeview, Hogback Ridge Trails
- South Mesa Trailhead area
- Chokecherry

**PLANTS TO LOOK FOR**

- Monument Plant
- Frasera speciosa
- Enchanted Mesa Trail
- Wild Iris
- Iris missouriensis
- Chokecherry
- Padus virginiana ssp. melanocarpa
If you find one arnica plant, you’ll probably find several. Like aspen, arnica spreads underground to form colonies of many connected plants. Arnica has been used medicinally for hundreds of years.

**E.M. Greenman Trail**
Douglas fir forests, meadows

Feel the fuzzy stems and leaves. Do the leaves look heart-shaped to you?

**Heart-leaved Arnica**
Arnica cordifolia

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In 1848 white settlers in Utah faced starvation after crickets, drought, and frost destroyed their crops. The Ute Indians came to their aid by teaching them how to use this plant for food, and today it is Utah’s state flower.

**Chautauqua Meadow**
aspens forests, mountain meadows, mesa hillsides

These flowers are even more beautiful on the inside. Take a close look at all of the colors hidden there.

**Mariposa Lily**
Calochortus gunnisonii

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Yarrow grows in both North America and Europe and has been used medicinally by natives of both continents for centuries. Achilles, a Greek hero, is supposed to have used yarrow to heal the wounds of a soldier. Its scientific name honors him.

**Yarrow**
Achillea lanulosa

The leaves are very aromatic. Smell your fingers after rubbing the leaves.

---

You may have tasted bergamot before - the leaves of European bergamot give Earl Gray tea its special flavor. Butterflies and hummingbirds like how its flowers taste.

**Bergamot**
Monarda fistulosa var. menthaefolia

Penstemon is also called “beardtongue” because of the yellow hairs inside the flower. Pollen brushes off of visiting butterflies and bees and becomes trapped on these hairs, allowing the flower to produce seed.

**Alpine Penstemon**
Penstemon glaber
**JUNE**

Harebells bloom for a long time and provide food for deer, bears, pikas, elk, woodchucks, and butterflies.

- **Mesa Trail**
  - Aspen forests, mountain meadows, dry mountainsides

The harebell grows all over the Northern Hemisphere, and is the “bluebell of Scotland.” Look carefully at what is inside the bell.

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**MAY**

Beautiful larkspur flowers have been used to kill lice. Native Americans and white settlers made a louse-killing shampoo by mixing the seeds and flowers with soap.

- **Larkspur**
  - D. nuttallianum

Some have thought that the flowers resemble the spur on a lark’s foot. “Delphinium” in the scientific name comes from the observation that the buds look like tiny dolphins. If you were to name this plant after its flower’s appearance, what would you call it?

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**Blanketflower**

Gaillardia aristata

The red heads and yellow bodies of gaillardia moths allow them to blend in while feeding on blanketflower nectar, protecting them from predators.

- **Big Bluestem, Marshall Mesa Trails**
  - Dry meadows, slopes

These flowers vary considerably. Try comparing flowers from two different blanketflower plants.

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**Native Plants can be beautiful additions to your garden, and to the environment. These plants evolved to live in Colorado, so they’re easy to grow, and easy on your water bill. Plus, they provide important food and shelter for local wildlife. Many of the wildflowers in this brochure are available at local nurseries.**

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The leaves can be woven into sandals, mats, and baskets; fibers in the leaves can be used as thread or twisted into rope; and the roots and stems make a soapy lather when pounded in water.

- **Hogback Ridge, Red Rocks Trails**
  - Dry meadows, hillsides

A yucca seed pod means that the plant was visited by a yucca moth. Yucca moths only lay their eggs in yucca flowers, and yucca flowers only make seed after being pollinated by yucca moths.
Gardeners have discovered that penstemon seeds grow better if they are stored for a few years before planting. Exposing the seeds to cold and moisture helps, too.

One-sided Penstemon
Penstemon secundiflorus

Mesa Trail
ponderosa pine forests, hillsides

Look closely at the stem to see why this penstemon is called “one-sided.”

Eating this plant can poison people and livestock. All parts of the plant, including the bulb, contain the poison. It is easily confused with wild onion, with devastating results.

Big Bluestem, Gregory Canyon Trails
meadows, forests

Each petal bears a small green spot.

Death Camas
Toxicoscordion venenosum

Prickly pear spines are actually modified leaves. Leaves let water in the plant escape into the air, while spines keep water trapped inside, allowing cacti to live in very dry places.

Prickly Pear
O. macrorhiza

Red Rocks, Hogback Ridge Trails
mesas, plains

Carefully avoiding the spines, touch the center of a prickly pear flower (bees do this all the time). Watch closely - what happens?

Invasive Plants: A Wildflower’s Nightmare

Non-native, introduced plants are taking over wildflower habitat all over the West. Some of these plants like dame’s rocket, butter and eggs, and myrtle spurge escape from gardens, while others like knapweed, downy brome, and bindweed have made their way to Boulder accidentally. You can help by pulling invasive plants that live on your land and by assisting at weedpulls organized by Open Space and Mountain Parks.

This is Colorado’s state flower. The long spurs in the back are filled with nectar.

Upper Chautauqua Trail
aspen forests, moist rocky slopes

The blue found in a columbine changes depending on where you are. The farther north, west, or higher in elevation you travel, the lighter the blue is supposed to become. Do your observations follow these trends?
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**Colorado Columbine**
*Aquilegia coerulea*

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**June**

Harebells bloom for a long time and provide food for deer, bears, pikas, elk, woodchucks, and butterflies.

- **Mesa Trail**
  aspen forests, mountain meadows, dry mountainsides

The harebell grows all over the Northern Hemisphere, and is the “bluebell of Scotland.” Look carefully at what is inside the bell.

**Harebell**
Campanula rotundifolia

---

**Native Plants Wins**

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**Larkspur**
Delphinium nuttallianum

Beautiful larkspur flowers have been used to kill lice. Native Americans and white settlers made a louse-killing shampoo by mixing the seeds and flowers with soap.

- **Towhee, Homestead Trails**
  hillsides, roadsides, forests

Some have thought that the flowers resemble the spur on a lark’s foot. “Delphinium” in the scientific name comes from the observation that the buds look like tiny dolphins. If you were to name this plant after its flower’s appearance, what would you call it?

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**Blanketflower**
Gaillardia aristata

The red heads and yellow bodies of gaillardia moths allow them to blend in while feeding on blanketflower nectar, protecting them from predators.

- **Big Bluestem, Marshall Mesa Trails**
  dry meadows, slopes

These flowers vary considerably. Try comparing flowers from two different blanketflower plants.

---

**Lupine**
Lupinus argenteus

Lupines enrich the soil. Bacteria living on the roots change nitrogen from the air into a form that other plants can use, then release it into the soil.

- **Bluebell Mesa, Eagle, Chautauqua Trails**
  open woods, fields, roadsides

Caterpillars and butterflies feed on lupines. Look closely for these visitors. After rain, look for a droplet of water cradled in the center of each leaf.

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**Yucca**
Yucca glauca

Native Americans discovered many uses for yucca. The leaves can be woven into sandals, mats, and baskets; fibers in the leaves can be used as thread or twisted into rope; and the roots and stems make a soapy lather when pounded in water.

- **Hogback Ridge, Red Rocks Trails**
  dry meadows, hillsides

A yucca seed pod means that the plant was visited by a yucca moth. Yucca moths only lay their eggs in yucca flowers, and yucca flowers only make seed after being pollinated by yucca moths.
MAY

Heart-leaved Arnica
Arnica cordifolia

If you find one arnica plant, you'll probably find several. Like aspen, arnica spreads underground to form colonies of many connected plants. Arnica has been used medicinally for hundreds of years.

E.M. Greenman Trail
Douglas fir forests, meadows

Feel the fuzzy stems and leaves. Do the leaves look heart-shaped to you?

Yarrow
Achillea lanulosa

Yarrow grows in both North America and Europe and has been used medicinally by natives of both continents for centuries. Achilles, a Greek hero, is supposed to have used yarrow to heal the wounds of a soldier. Its scientific name honors him.

widespread
dry meadows, grasslands

The leaves are very aromatic. Smell your fingers after rubbing the leaves.

JUNE

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You may have tasted bergamot before - the leaves of European bergamot give Earl Gray tea its special flavor. Butterflies and hummingbirds like how its flowers taste.

Mesa Trail
ponderosa pine forests, roadsides, meadows

Rub a leaf with your fingers, then smell them. Do you smell oregano, Earl Gray tea, or something different?

Penstemon is also called “beardtongue” because of the yellow hairs inside the flower. Pollen brushes off of visiting butterflies and bees and becomes trapped on these hairs, allowing the flower to produce seed.

Flagstaff Road
gravely slopes, roadsides

Look inside the flower to find the hairs that help in pollination.

Alpine Penstemon
Penstemon glaber
JUNE TO JULY

A monument plant in bloom is cause for celebration. These plants grow for up to 60 years, bloom once, and then die.

Monument Plant

Frasera speciosa

Enchanted Mesa Trail
moist hillsides, meadow edges, pine forests

Take a look around this place. What did this monument plant experience over the course of a lifetime? What will life be like for one of its seeds?

Stonecrop can live in very dry places where other plants can’t. Its succulent stems and leaves store water, and in times of drought stonecrop becomes dormant until rain returns.

Rangeview, Hogback Ridge Trails
dry, rocky hillsides from the plains to alpine

Feel the waxy leaves, and take a close look at the tiny, star-shaped flowers.

Western Wallflower

Erysimum asperum

Mustard comes from the crushed seeds of plants closely related to wallflowers.

Tenderfoot Trail
ponderosa pine forests, meadows

Wallflowers are often very fragrant. Look at all of the variety in petal color on a single plant!

MAY

Wild iris looks very much like its cultivated cousin. The Paiute and Shoshone Indians found it to be a cure for toothache. However, like many other medicinal plants, wild iris can be poisonous.

Big Bluestem, Mesa Trails
wet meadows, streamsides

Drink in that gorgeous color for a minute.

Spring Marches up the Mountain

Flowers bloom later at higher elevations, where snow melts reluctantly and temperatures take longer to rise. When a flower stops blooming in Boulder, it is often just reaching its peak in the high country. That means you can follow your favorite flowers up the mountainside and enjoy their presence even longer.

Chokecherry feeds the foothills. Bears, coyotes, foxes, birds, butterflies, bees, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits, and deer all depend on chokecherries for food.

South Mesa Trailhead area
shrublands, canyons, hillsides, streambanks

Take a close look at the cherries. Chokecherry pits may often be found inside scat (animal droppings). Look for tent caterpillars in the branches.

Chokecherry

Padus virginiana ssp. melanocarpa
**APRIL**

Golden Banner
Thermopsis montana

Golden banner forms pods like its relative, the garden pea. It is toxic to humans and many other animals, but caterpillars feed safely on it.

- Chautauqua, Lower Towhee Trails
  - meadows, roadsides, damp forests

If you find a large patch of golden banner, it could mean that the land has been overgrazed (domestic animals avoid it because it's poisonous, but will eat everything else around it). Take a look around to see if that has happened here.

Lance-leaved chiming bells are survivors. They bloom in early spring, living through snow and freezing temperatures.

- Skunk Canyon Trail
  - meadows, hillsides, open forests

  The flowers of chiming bells usually aren't just blue. Look for other colors in the buds.

Most potted geraniums come from South Africa. Our native geraniums flower year after year, making wonderful additions to gardens.

- Mesa Trail
  - forests, meadows, hillsides, roadsides

  “Geranium” comes from the Greek word “geranos,” or “crane.” This plant is often called cranesbill because of the shape of the seed pods.

**JULY**

Asters are important food sources for caterpillars and butterflies. Asters are a sure sign that fall, and the end of the wildflower season, is on its way.

- Green Mountain West Ridge Trail
  - rocky slopes, meadows

  Look closely. Each “flower” is actually made up of many tiny flowers. The yellow flowers in the center are called disk flowers. Each one of the purple petals represents a different ray flower.

Prescribed Burns for Wildflower Health

For thousands of years, frequent fires on the plains shaped Colorado's plant communities and became essential to their health. Prescribed burns are conducted on Open Space and Mountain Parks land to produce some of the positive effects of wildfire. Fire increases plant diversity, adds nutrients to the soil, and serves as a tool in the control of invasive plants. These burns are planned and monitored very carefully to make sure that they are as safe and effective as possible.

The Blackfeet Indians named this plant “crow-root” because they saw ravens and crows eating it in the fall. Butterflies feast on its nectar, too.

- Marshall Mesa, Skunk Canyon Trails
  - dry prairie, meadows

  The scientific name contains the word “punctata,” meaning “dotted.” Look for tiny dots on the leaves.

Blazing Star
Liatris punctata
RESOURCES


Boulder Mountain Parks - Natural and Cultural History. Available online at www.ci.boulder.co.us/bmp/history.htm

Celebrating Wildflowers Coloring Book. Available online at www.nps.gov/plants/color


Colorado Native Plant Society, P.O. Box 200, Ft. Collins, CO 80522.


The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Available online at www.wildflower.org


FEBRUARY TO APRIL

Spring beauty is one of the earliest-blooming flowers. A similar species also grows in forests in the East.

Bluebell-Baird Trail

STREAMSIDES, MOIST GRASSLANDS, PONDEROSA PINE FORESTS

Take a look at the delicate pink lines on the flower petals. These guide insects to nectar, like runways.

Spring Beauty

Claytonia rosea

Sand lilies survive the heat of summer by disappearing. They bloom early in spring, and all but the underground part of the plant dies soon after.

Eagle and Red Rocks Trails

OPEN HILLSIDES, DISTURBED OR ROCKY PRAIRIE

Can you see how the flowers are attached to the rest of the plant?

Sand Lily

Leucocrinum montanum

Flax has been used for fiber since ancient times. Linen is made from flax stems cured in water.

Red Rocks, Marshall Mesa, Bluebell Mesa Trails

MEADOWS

Flax flowers open early in the morning and usually die by midday. Look for petals from past flowers on the ground around a flax plant.

Blue Flax

Adenolinum lewisii
Welcome to Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, home to a wealth of spectacular and surprising wildflowers. In addition to being sources of joy, food, medicine, and materials for humans, wildflowers are extremely important to wildlife and to the land. This guide encourages you to actively experience wildflowers and their roles in Open Space and Mountain Parks. Collecting is prohibited; please take only photos and memories!

Plants are listed by beginning bloom time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific name</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpine Penstemon</td>
<td><em>Penstemon glaber</em></td>
<td>Scrophulariaceae</td>
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<td>Aster</td>
<td><em>Aster spp.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bergamot</td>
<td><em>M onarda fistulosa var. mentheafolia</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blanketflower</td>
<td><em>Gaillardia aristata</em></td>
<td>Asteraceae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blazing Star</td>
<td><em>Liatris punctata</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>BlueFlax</td>
<td><em>Adenolinum lewisi</em></td>
<td>Linaceae</td>
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<td>Chokecherry</td>
<td><em>Padus virginiana ssp. melianocarpa</em></td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado Columbine</td>
<td><em>Aquilegia coerulea</em></td>
<td>Helleboraceae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death Camas</td>
<td><em>Toxicoscordion venenosum</em></td>
<td>Melanthiaceae</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Banner</td>
<td><em>Thermopsis montana</em></td>
<td>Fabaceae</td>
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<td>Harebell</td>
<td><em>Campanula rotundifolia</em></td>
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<td>Heart-leaved Arnica</td>
<td><em>Arnica cordifolia</em></td>
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<td>Leafy Cinquefoil</td>
<td><em>Drymccallisfissa</em></td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
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<td>Lance-leaved Chiming Bells</td>
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<td>Larkspur</td>
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<td>Lupine</td>
<td><em>Lupinus argenteus</em></td>
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<td>Mariposa Lily</td>
<td><em>Calochortus gunnisonii</em></td>
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<td>Monument Plant</td>
<td><em>Frasera speciosa</em></td>
<td>Gentianaceae</td>
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<td>One-sided Penstemon</td>
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<td>Oregon Grape</td>
<td><em>Mahonia repens</em></td>
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<td>Pasqueflower</td>
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<td>Prickly Pear</td>
<td><em>Opuntia macrorhiza</em></td>
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<td>Sand Lily</td>
<td><em>Leucocrinum montanum</em></td>
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<td>Spring Beauty</td>
<td><em>Claytonia rosea</em></td>
<td>Portulacaceae</td>
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<td>Stonecrop</td>
<td><em>Amerosedum lanceolatum</em></td>
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<td>Western Wallflower</td>
<td><em>Erysimum asperum</em></td>
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<td>Yucca</td>
<td><em>Yucca glauca</em></td>
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</table>

February

Oregon grape prevents erosion on steep hillsides. Its stems creep along the ground and grow roots along the way, binding the soil together.

Flagstaff Trail
Dry open hillsides, rocky slopes, ponderosa pine forests

These tiny flowers can be very fragrant. Stop and sniff. Check for berries later in the season.

Pasqueflower leaves don't grow until after the plant has gone to seed. Try coming back in a few weeks to see what they look like.

Pasqueflower
*Pulsatilla patens ssp. multifida*
Look Closely

Wildflowers of City of Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks

Produced by the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks staff.
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Written and designed by Erin Schaaf