

## The Wild Songs of Wildflowers

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“...the thought repressed and moody with the weather  
Was none the less there ready to be freed  
And sing the wildflowers up from root and seed.”

Robert Frost (1874 – 1963) from *Our Singing Strength*.

In spring the meadows do, indeed, appear to be singing their beauty with colors in full chorus as the weather warms and longer days begin to slip along the edges of this transitioning season. Little by little, they unfurl, unfold, and undulate into our landscape offering relief from a long, cold winter. Coming in all shapes and sizes, our Oregon wildflowers each have their own debut on the grand stage of pollinating plants. Flowers basically exist for plant reproduction, with sepals, petals, stamens, and pistils. While understanding the basic structure enhances an appreciation for our flowering friends, it is their gorgeous hues and the variety of shapes and sizes as well as fragrances that appeal to us.

At the first sign of a warm and sunny day, my husband and I drove to Camassia Natural Area (Nature Conservancy site) in West Linn to greet the early risers. And we were not to be disappointed! There, along the half-mile trail, we were greeted by pink claytonias, sunny yellow violets, tri-petaled rosy trilliums, false lily of the valley hiding in the shadows, curvy white lilies, “red dead” nettles, yet unopened flowers of fringe cups, white saxifrages, clusters of pink valerianas, bundles of yellow bells on Oregon grape bushes, and, without a doubt my favorite, beautiful camas scattered about the park with their bursts of blue-lavender petals opening up to the cloudless sky. Wow. At the height of the path, scattered among timeless lava rocks and mingling with the valerians, the camas stole the show. And as if this all wasn’t gorgeous enough, Mt. Hood rose against the horizon as an osprey watched us from a tall, leafless tree with its nest in the cell tower just a hop away.

Almost any park, preserve, or refuge during May and June will have plenty of wildflowers to greet you with their song. You’ll be entertained by beautiful orchestrations of colors in the meadows. As the early risers take their bow, you can count on a plethora of new wildflowers to take the stage. Wildflowers emerge in waves across the meadows until it becomes too dry by the end of June.

Visit my website under the *Art and Nature Connections* tab for direct links so you can plan your wildflower excursions with the help of *Travel Oregon* and the *Oregon Wildflowers* sites for what is blooming and where. Wildflowers vary from region to region, so what you see here in the Willamette Valley may be very different from coastal meadows and eastern plains. For people living in other states, you’ll find corresponding sites for your area.

If you have even a small planter or large pot, you can start your own wildflower garden. I highly recommend checking with the *Audubon Society* and the *Native Plant Society* in your state as well as asking your local nurseries for lists of native wildflowers for your region. These are the

best choice in terms of attracting our native pollinators, such as bees, butterflies, and other helpful insects.

Photographing flowers and learning their names, sketching and/or painting wildflowers in the field, and drying or pressing flowers are some great activities that engage the whole family. Of course, never collect wildflowers on refuges or parks and never take a rare flower. That's where planting your own wildflower garden is useful if you wish to preserve them beyond a photograph. See my website for wildflower pressing guidelines on the *Art and Nature Connections* page.

There are many connections when exploring the world of wildflowers. One cannot truly know a flower without including our faithful bees and beautiful butterflies. Teaching children the relationship between pollinators and plants is extremely important, especially these days with beneficial insect populations declining. Appreciating and preserving habitats is something we can do now, so that springtime will ever emerge with the wild singing of wildflowers.

Visit <https://mariannebickett.com/> for links mentioned in the article, thank you!  
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