

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing
of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.

The Song of Solomon 2:11,12

It is awakening time of the flowers of the Nipomo Dunes. And real turtle doves are nesting and cooing in leafing-out Hidden Willow Valley (Salix lasiolepis).

Actually, all year long there are flowers to be found blossoming in most of the dunes - such delightful lacy perennials as what Gaylord Jones and Kathleen named Christmas daisy (Corethrogyne filaginifolia var. robusta) and the bright pink of Prickly Phlox (Leptodactylon californicum) in much of the year . . . as well as the silken yellow of the Narrow-leaved Ice-Plant (Conicosia elongata), which late beloved dune botanist "Griff" (Austin Griffiths, Jr.) gave the happy common name of Marigold Ice-Plant. It is a South African ornamental that has become naturalized - no one knows how long ago, nor how it came here from so far away.

But right now, in March, April and May, all color pandemonium is breaking loose, particularly on Coreopsis Hill near Oso Flaco Lake. This is the beautiful dune which landowner Lena Enos Buss calls "My flower garden." The rich floral diversity of Coreopsis Hill already has the delicate frail blue of the Baby Blue-Eyes of-the-Dunes/^(Phacelia douglasii)beginning to carpet pathways here and there. It really is not the well-known Baby Blue-Eyes (Nemophila menziesii) found on hillslopes and meadows of the interior of San Luis Obispo County and many other locations. This little "carpet flower" is scheduled to bloom from March to May. Phacelia douglasii var. douglasii was first identified by the earliest California botanist, David Douglas, who walked our coast and other parts of California in the 1800's. He was an unusual young man and has been described as "an ardent Scotch collector, walking widely in northwestern America, taking nearly 500 species in California alone for the Royal Horticulture Society!"* Whoever reported that frail blue carpet flower is scheduled to begin in March may now be advised that on the Nipomo Dunes it turns up in February! And we were astonished to encounter it on a field trip, with the California Native Plant Society, carpeting the summit footpath of our

* page 1557, Munz & Keck, 1959/1968.

(Mesembryanthemum chilense)

Caliente Mountain; so in San Luis Obispo County it is a surprising gipsy, occurring at sea level on Coreopsis Hill in the Nipomo Dunes and also along the summit footpath of our county's highest mountain; Caliente is 5,106' elevation. (Mesembryanthemum chilense)

Consistently at many seasons rosy-pink magenta ice-plant/is an outstanding spot of color both in the dark vegetation of winter dunes chaparral ~~and among~~ (Coastal Sage Scrub) and among the sprightly wildflowers of the dunes in spring. It is often called "the ice-plant of Chili," because it was first identified by a botanist Chilean Jusuit (Juan Ignacio Molina) in the late 1700's, but in this century it has been found to be native of South Africa. It is not the ice-plant which in the past has been used along highways.

Another flower very easy to find year-round in open sand is the lavender Sea Rocket (Cakile maritima) with four petals, characteristic of the Mustard Family. It's small seed pods, shaped like a rocket, taste like mustard, too. Try a bite.

Among early arrivals is the cheerful little Sand Daisy (Senecio californica) found in many coastal California areas and some inland sandy spots of ~~many~~ counties adjoining southern California. It is from four to fifteen inches high and it's easy to see it is just a pretty little daisy. Some years in the late spring an invasion of this happy yellow takes over a shallow dune valley and one can walk knee-deep in Sand Daisies.

It won't be long now before the Beach Strawberry (Fragaria chiloensis) is dancing out its fresh white flowers. Not on Coreopsis Hill; but take a walk out The Nature Conservancy's new successful Board Walk ... out from the Oso Flaco Lake public parking lot; strawberries are here and there along the Boardwalk.

Marsh Silverweed (Potentilla egedii) you will surely see as you stroll from the Oso Flaco parking lot along the easy, flat, paved "Causeway" with willow woodlands on either side, as you reach Oso Flaco Lake itself, wide on either side of the walkway. This can lead you to the sandy dunes if you choose to go onward to the Boardwalk.

March, April, May and on into June is the period for the most abundant evidence of Nipomo Dunes flowers. But for the full glory of display the one month to come is mid-March through April. (Coreopsis gigantea is the Giant Golden Sea Dahlia of the Sunflower Family.) Botanically significant Coreopsis Hill is the northernmost limit of this spectacular daisy. The plant is a large shrub from two to eight feet tall.

To experience Coreopsis Hill, make arrangements ahead-of-time to take the short, easy

new

stroll (one hour or a little bit more) bringing with you a stone of any size for the modest monument to be erected in appreciation to Coreopsis Hill landowner, Lena Enos Buss and the Enos family, for generosity in welcoming all people to visit her "Flower Garden" for over 32 years. (When the monument is complete, a bronze plaque will be affixed to it

for the modest monument to be erected there. When enough stones have been collected and cemented together, a bronze plaque will be affixed to it in appreciation to the Enos Family and in particular to Lena Enos Buss because for over thirty-two years she has welcomed all people to come on dune walks and enjoy the unique wildflowers of Coreopsis Hill, which she calls "My flower garden." The stones are being piled at the end of a very long prostrate California Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) which her father planted in the early 1900's.

OR take the long, more picturesque walk (2 or 3 hours) via The Boardwalk and Oso Flaco Lake's Oso Flaco

OR take the long, more picturesque walk (2 or 3 hours) from Oso Flaco Lake parking lot, down The Causeway past Oso Flaco Lake, onward by the sand dunes and The Boardwalk to the beach, crossing Oso Flaco Creek barefoot (~~safe, no quicksand~~) (safe, shallow, no quicksand, no pebbles) and hike through the white and wind-sculptured dunes a mile and a half to shining Coreopsis Hill. No advance arrangements need to be made, but Kathleen will gladly act as your leader ~~if you~~ almost any day of the week if you telephone her.

Come - celebrate the glory of the whole of Coreopsis Hill in full golden bloom. Come anytime to enjoy many interesting flowers.

For more information telephone Kathleen Goddard Jones before 8 A.M.

or evenings. Please speak clearly and give your telephone number twice.