

Wildflowers and Weeds of the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness

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Introduction

Welcome to the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness! This unique land is protected to maintain its integrity and natural beauty. Many attractions like wildlife, lakes, waterfalls, and wildflowers attract visitors. While hiking the Mount Timpanogos and Timpooneke trails, you will experience spectacular vistas and the incredible beauty of high alpine meadows. As you walk along the trail, you will also see changes in vegetation. Aspen, Douglas fir and Subalpine fir forests are established below the timberline, which transition to alpine meadows at about 8,000 feet elevation. Aspen stands, which are found at lower elevations, provide excellent habitat for grasses and wildflowers. Some flowers to look for in aspen stands are columbines, bluebells, arnicas, larkspurs, and geraniums.

Douglas fir/subalpine fir stands usually occupy steep north facing slopes, with Douglas firs established at the lower end of these conifer forests. Common wildflowers in and around these forests are columbines, Indian paintbrushes, yarrows, leafy Jacobs' ladder, and sulfur buckwheat.

Alpine ecosystems have high watershed and scenic values; they are fragile and recover slowly from disturbances. Many rare and endemic plants are also found in this landscape.

The best places to see wildflowers are Timpanogos Basin and Hidden Lakes. During late summer these meadows explode with a profusion of colorful wildflowers. Among them are bluebells, Indian paintbrushes, larkspurs, lupines, yarrows, and sulfur buckwheats. Mid-July through mid-September is excellent time for viewing wildflowers.

There are countless wildflowers in the Mount Timpanogos Wilderness. Use this brochure to identify the most abundant and commonly seen on the Mount Timpanogos and Timpooneke trails, and throughout the wilderness area.

Other plants found at the base of the wilderness and along the trails are actually weeds. These unwanted weeds are entering the wilderness by humans and domestic animals. In this brochure, you will find information on some of the most common ones found in the area and tips to prevent their dispersal.

Common Wildflowers of Timpanogos Wilderness

Mountain columbine, *Aquilegia caerulea*, grows in aspen, Douglas fir-white fir and spruce forests. This beautiful flower has pale to purplish blue sepals and blue to white petals that extend backwards into eagle talon-like spurs. Leaves are compound with 3 lacy-lobed leaflets.



April Sorensen



Alpine Wildflowers, D. Strickler

Yellow columbine, *Aquilegia flavescens*, grows in moist areas or riparian sites in aspen, Douglas fir-white fir and spruce forests. Flowers of yellow columbine are similar to mountain columbine, but smaller. Its eagle talon-like spurs are also smaller. Leaves are compound with 3 lacy-lobed leaflets.



April Sorensen

Mountain bluebell, *Mertensia ciliata*, grows along alpine/subalpine streams, where they form large, dense colonies with thousands of drooping bells. Flower color varies from a light blue to purple or very light pink depending on how long the flowers have been opened. Many animals enjoy the lance-shaped leaves and succulent stems.

Wavy-leaf Indian paintbrush, *Castilleja applegatei*, grows in dry mountain ridges, unstable rocky slopes, alpine meadows, and conifer forests. The inflorescence (cluster of flowers) is a dense spike of vivid, scarlet, leafy bracts. These showy bracts hide small tubular flowers. Leaves are alternate, wavy-margined, and covered with sticky hairs. The upper leaves have lateral lobes.



April Sorensen



Royal Indian paintbrush, *Castilleja rhexifolia*, is found in alpine/subalpine meadows, slopes and open aspen-conifer forests, growing in moist or shady areas. Flowers are arranged in a spike with vibrant purple to crimson leafy bracts and inconspicuous flowers. Leaves are broad to lance-shaped with entire margins (see drawing); hairy but without sticky hairs.

Pale yellow Indian paintbrush, *Castilleja rhexifolia* var. *sulphurea*, grows in alpine/subalpine meadows, slopes, and in openings of aspen-conifer forests. Leaves are lance-shaped, sometimes lobed. This, as well as other paintbrushes, is a partial parasite of sagebrush and grasses, attaching to their roots to obtain water and nutrients. Hence they are difficult to cultivate.



April Sorensen

Milfoil yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*, is found in aspen, spruce-fir, and alpine tundra communities. Flower heads are in a flat branching cluster with numerous small and whitish flowers. Leaves are alternate, finely divided (fern-like) and covered with woolly hairs.



Tall larkspur, *Delphinium occidentale*, grows in alpine meadows, aspen stands, conifer forests, and moist sites. Its intense blue-purple flowers are arranged alternately along the upper stem. The upper sepal of the flower extends back and upward into a long, tubular spur. The stems are hollow and the leaves are

palmate (arranged like the fingers on a hand) with lobed or divided blades.

Lupine, *Lupinus argenteus*, grows in dense colorful clumps in the Timpanogos basin, mainly in alpine meadows.

This plant is an associate to mountain bluebell and Indian paintbrush. Flowers are blue to purple and pea-like shape. Fruit is a hairy pod. Each leaf has 6-9 leaflets radiating from a common point (palmately compound).



Seep-spring arnica, *Arnica longifolia*, grows in unstable rocky slopes and streambanks in aspen and conifer



forests. This plant has 1 to 9 beautiful bright yellow sunflowers per stem, and around 8-13 petals (ray flower) per flower head. The lower leaves are opposite and lance-

shape, covered with short soft hairs. It is a common associate to lupines, blue bells and paintbrushes.

Sulfur buckwheat, *Eriogonum umbellatum*, grows in various habitats, open rocky slopes, sagebrush, and subalpine conifer forests openings. There are several varieties but



typical characteristics are the rosette-like basal leaves and minute yellow flowers arranged in an umbel inflorescence (see drawing). Another typical feature of this plant is the numerous small leaves grow-

ing close to the ground forming a mat. The flowering stalks can reach 10 to 14 inches high.

American bistort, *Polygonum bistortoides*, grows in

subalpine meadows, moist areas, and streambanks. The spike inflorescence is a dense cluster of small white flowers with long stamens. Other characteristics are the lance-shape basal leaves and erect flowering stems that reach up to 20 inches high. The root is thick, twisted, and snakelike and has been used by Native Americans in soups and stews.

