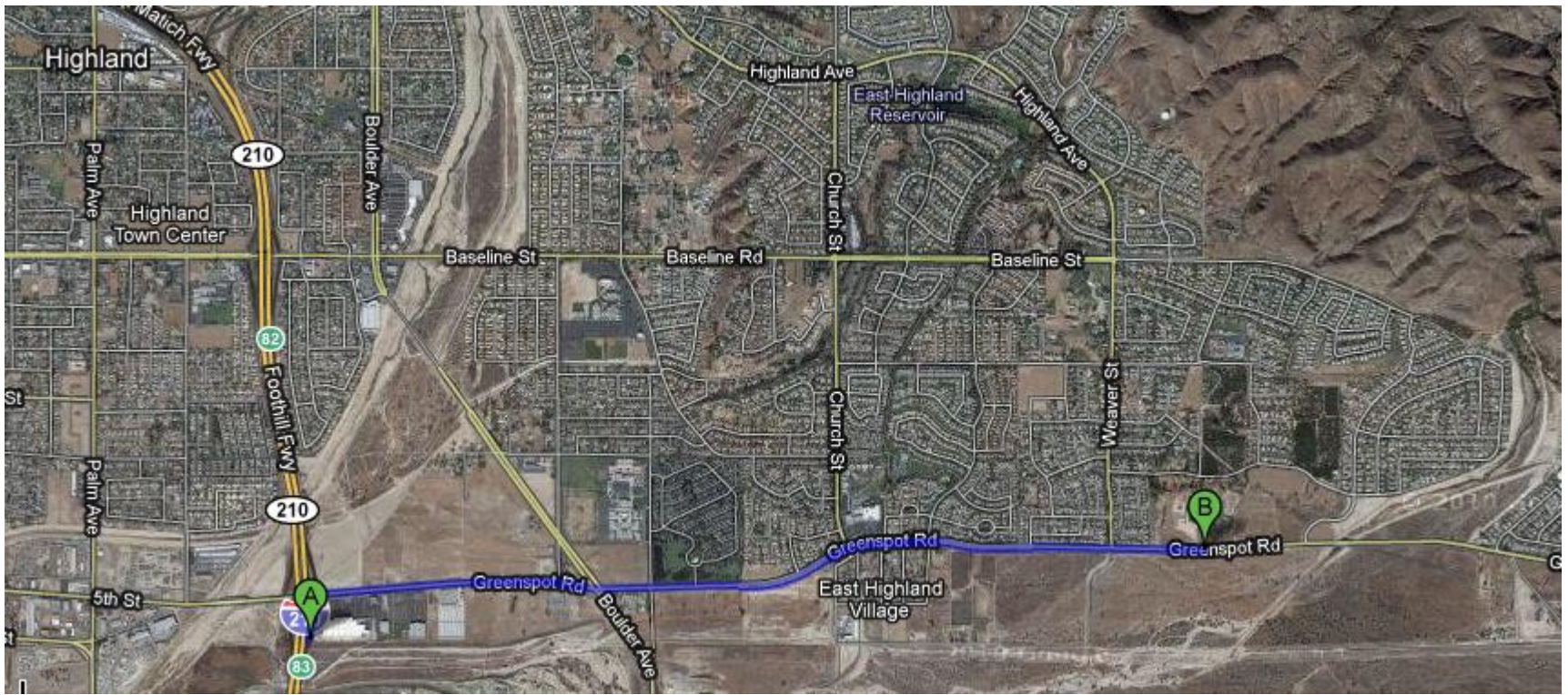


The Wildflowers of Aurantia Park and East Highlands

A presentation by Scott Klemm





Aurantia Park
29624 Greenspot Road
Highland, CA 92346

Fiddlenecks

Amsinckia menziesii var. *intermedia*



Boraginaceae (Borage family).

This bristly annual has orange-yellow flowers that are tightly coiled. One of the first plants to appear in late winter or early spring, it is abundant on open, grassy fields. With the first days of hot weather, all traces of it are gone until the following year.

Blue Dicks

Dichelostemma capitatum



Liliaceae (Lily Family)

Also known as Wild Hyacinth these purple-blue flowers bloom February to May. The flower stems are 1 – 2 feet tall and the leaves are grass-like.

Yellow Pincushion

Chaenactis glabriuscula



This annual found in sandy areas blooms between March and May. Its thickish leaves are divided into narrow lobes.

Asteraceae (Sunflower Family)

Phacelia or Wild Heliotrope

Phacelia distans

About a fourth of an inch long, these somewhat bell-shaped flowers are arranged along a coil. The stems and fern-like leaves are hairy. This plant is usually seen growing through other shrubs and can reach a height of two feet.

The early Spanish called this flower *Vervenia*. It does not appear to have been used by the local Indians, although there is one reference of it being used by the Kawaiisu (east of Bakersfield) as a food item. The leaves were steam cooked and eaten as greens.

Hydrophyllaceae (Waterleaf
Family)



Purple Clarkia

Clarkia purpurea ssp. *quadrivulnera*

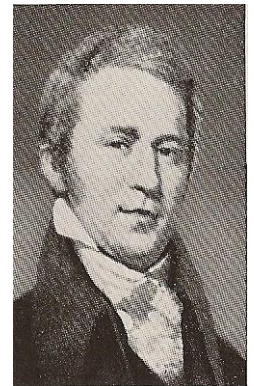
Onagraceae (Evening Primrose Family)



Purple Clarkia, an annual between 4 to 11 inches high, is common in grassy areas. The stems are often reddish.

It does not appear that this plant was used by any of our local tribes. However, it is reported that Mendocino Indians ate the seeds and used the leaves to make a wash for sore eyes.

The plant was named after William Clark (1770-1838) of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific.



Deer Weed

Lotus scoparius



Fabaceae (Pea Family)

This is common plant among the chaparral and coastal sage scrub community. Its yellow pea-shaped flowers arise from a single point on the stalk. Its leaves are usually made up of three leaflets.

Orchard or Stinging Nettle

Urtica urens

Urticaceae (Nettle Family)

Orchard nettle, a non-native annual of European origin, is often found in orange groves or moist places. Its leaves are covered with little hairs. Each hair is like a tiny, glass hypodermic needle. When broken it releases formic acid which feels like ant bites.

Nettle loses its sting and is an excellent potherb when boiled. Several related species of nettle were used by Indians throughout California as a cure for rheumatism.



Tree Tobacco

Nicotiana glauca

Solanaceae (Nightshade family)



This small tree, a native of South America, is poisonous. It has become widespread particularly in disturbed areas.

The long tubular flowers are attractive to hummingbirds. The bluish green leaves are smooth.

Pauline Murillo of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians wrote that the leaves were used to heal a sore. A leaf was toasted on a stove. Then the first layer was peeled off. The shiny bottom layer was placed on the sore or wound.

Jimson Weed or Toloache

Datura wrightii (formerly *D. meteloides*)

Solanaceae (Nightshade Family)



This plant found in sandy areas or rocky slopes is highly poisonous. The Indians used its leaves to produce a hallucinogen in rituals, and in recent years newspapers have reported teenagers being hospitalized while experimenting with the plant.

The plant is easily recognized by its large, white trumpet-shaped flower that may reach 10” in length. Its fruit consist of a prickly capsule that ruptures releasing large, flat seeds.

Castor Bean

Ricinus communis

Euphorbiaceae (Spurge Family)



This tree-like shrub is a native of Africa and is the source of castor oil that has been used as a laxative and lubricant. The oil is extracted from its seeds. The seeds also contain the highly poisonous ricin. As few as 2 or 3 seeds can kill a child. The plant can be seen growing along Greenspot Road.

Prickly Pear Cactus and Pepper Trees



Peruvian Pepper Tree

Schinus molle

Anacardiaceae (Cashew and Sumac Family)

Introduced from South America, it is said that the first pepper tree in California was planted by Father Antonio Peyri at the Mission San Luis Rey about 1830. Today it is such a common sight that its often called the California pepper tree.

When dried and crushed, the seeds, enclosed in a red papery membrane, have a taste and odor resembling commercial black pepper.

The trees have been used for many things by the Indians of South America including an alcoholic beverage from the fruits. An essential oil from the tree has been shown to have antibacterial and antifungal properties.



Coastal Prickly Pear

Opuntia littoralis

Cactaceae (Cactus Family)



This cactus produces light yellow flowers that become edible, reddish-purple fruit. The pads are also edible. Of course the spines must be removed from the fruit and pads.

The white patches are colonies of cochineal scale (*Dactylopius*). It is a source of a natural red dye. The tiny insect with nonfunctional legs is usually not visible unless crushed and then the color seeps out.



Beavertail Cactus

Opuntia basilaris

Beavertail is easily distinguished from Prickly Pear Cactus not only by its flower color, but by its lack of long spines. Instead it has what are called glochids – tiny tufts of bristly, barbed spines. Like Prickly Pear, the fruit and pads of the Beavertail were eaten by the Indians.

Although typically a desert species, it is also found on alluvial fan areas. The specimen shown here was photographed on Greenspot Road in the vicinity of the old bridge.

Cactaceae (Cactus Family)



Valley Cholla

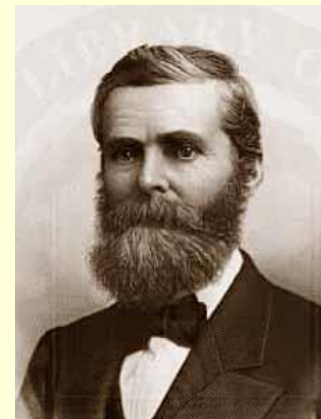
Opuntia parryi



Cactacea (Cactus Family)

This cactus of the interior valleys grows from 2 to 8 feet. Its flowers, that bloom in May and June, are yellow.

The plant was discovered by Charles Christopher Parry during the U.S. – Mexican Boundary Survey (1850-51).

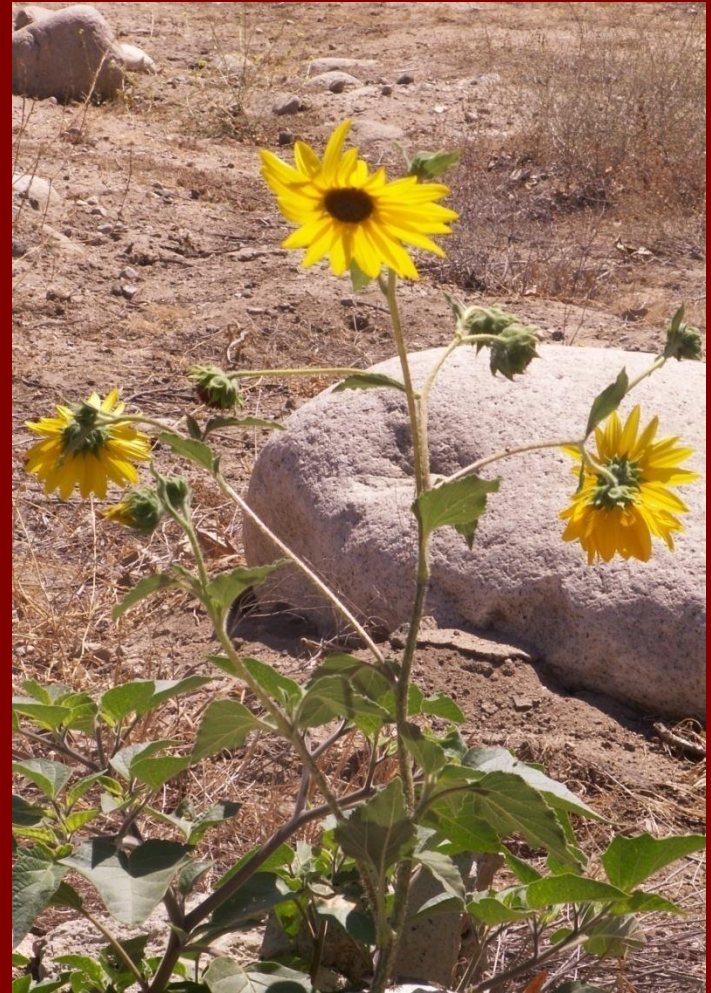




Common Sunflower

Helianthus annuus

Asteraceae (Sunflower Family)



This common plant of 1 to 4 feet in height is found in a wide variety of habitats including roadsides. Although smaller than the commercial sunflowers, the seeds are edible and were used by native Americans.

Sun Cups

Camissonia bistorta



Onagracea (Evening Primrose Family)

This showy, yellow flower is a prostrate annual usually no more than 2 or 3” high. It is found on sandy soil or grassy openings in chaparral. They bloom from March to June.

Evening Primrose

Oenothera elata ssp. *hirsutissima*

(Formerly *O. hookeri*)



Onagraceae (Evening Primrose Family)

This perennial, associated with moist areas, may reach a height of 4 feet. Its fragrant, flowers open around sunset and last until they wither in the heat of the next morning. The 4 branched stigma distinguishes the *Oenothera* from the *Camissonia*.

California or Wild Buckwheat

Eriogonum fasciculatum

Polygonaceae (Buckwheat Family)



California buckwheat is one of the signature plants of the California Coastal Sage Scrub plant community. Little pinkish-white flowers are in dense terminal heads. The plant blooms between April and October and is loved by the bees.

Flowers of California buckwheat may vary from all-white to pinkish in color.



Dodder or Witch's Hair

Cuscuta californica



Dodder is a parasitic plant. It has tiny white flowers that produce seeds that fall to the ground. Seedlings then arise from the soil and attach themselves to a host plant. The roots disappear as the dodder coils around its host and produces root-like structures that penetrates the host plant to tap into its nutrients.

Convolvulaceae (Morning Glory Family)

Mockingbird on Juniper



California Juniper

Juniperus californica



Cupressaceae (Juniper and Cypress Family)

This shrub to small tree has scale-like leaves. Its berries are actually small seed-cones.

It is reported that California Indians ate these “berries” fresh or prepared into mush or cakes. The cones were ground up into a yellow meal that was said to have a sweet but resinous flavor.

Dense Mistletoe

Phoradendron densum

Vicaceae (Mistletoe Family)



Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that absorbs food from the sap of the host plant through specialized roots. Mistletoe is a flowering plant. The inconspicuous flowers produce white, sticky berries that are eaten and distributed by birds.

Big-Leaf Mistletoe

Phoradendron macrophyllum

This species of mistletoe is most often found on western sycamore trees.

The Cahuilla sprinkled the powdered seeds into wounds to facilitate healing. One report claimed that the berries were eaten, although another warned that the berries were poisonous causing intestinal irritation, diarrhea and slow pulse.

Among the Chumash a tea made from mistletoe was used to bring on menstruation (i.e. induce abortion).

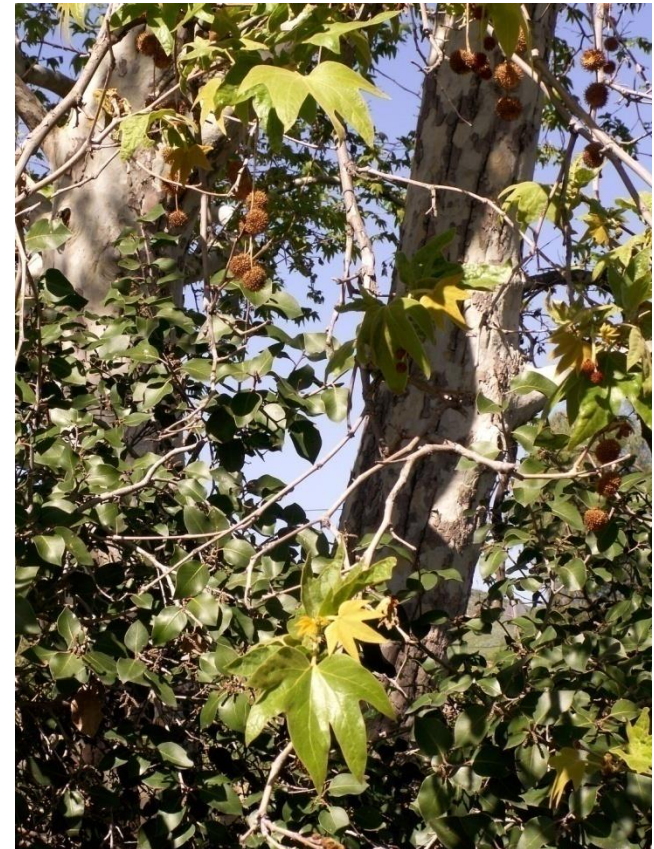
Viscaceae (Mistletoe Family)



Western Sycamore

Plantanus racemosa

Platanaceae (Sycamore Family)



This tall tree can be easily identified by its whitish peeling bark and deeply lobed leaves resembling that of the maple. Its fruit are prickly balls that hang from the tree in strings.

The trees and shrubs of Aurantia Park provide a home for many bird species.



The Phainopepla (left) feeds on mistletoe berries. The Morning Dove (right) eats seeds.



The Nuttall's Woodpecker is an insect eater. It creeps along tree trunks in search of wood-boring insects.

Sugarbush

Rhus ovata

Anacardiaceae (Sumac Family)



Sugarbush (*R. ovata*) and lemonade berry (*R. integrifolia*) are mid-sized evergreen shrubs. Lemonade berry is usually found towards the coast while sugarbush predominates in the interior.

The Cahuilla and other tribes soaked the berries in water to make a beverage. They were also dried and ground it into a flour to make a mush.

Holly-Leafed Cherry

Prunus ilicifolia

Rosaceae (Rose Family)



This shrub received its name from the thick, spiny-toothed, holly-like leaves. Its small fruit consists of a large stone with a thin fleshy coating that is sweet or sometimes described as bittersweet. The Indians cracked open the pits and extracted the kernels (i.e. seeds). Before eating, the seeds needed to be ground and leached.

Yerba Santa

Eriodictyon trichocalyx

Hydrophyllaceae (Waterleaf Family)



Yerba Santa is probably most easily recognized by its distinctive leaves. They are dark green, leathery, and saw-toothed edged.

The padres gave this plant the name *yerba santa*, “holy herb.” The boiled leaves were used as a remedy for colds, cough, and as a blood purifier. Late 19th century settlers also made use of the plant.

Mexican or Blue Elderberry

Sambucus mexicana

Adoxaceae (Elderberry Family)



The cream colored flowers of this tall shrub or tree turn into blue-black berries. The Cahuilla Indians ate them either fresh or dried. They also boiled the roots as a remedy for constipation. The coastal Chumash hollowed out the pithy stem to make flutes.

Butter and Eggs

Linaria vulgaris



Scrophulariaceae (Figwort family)

This delicate flower is native to the Mediterranean region. It is not common in our area, although it is widely naturalized elsewhere.

At Aurantia Park it may be found among the cultivated flowers near the parking lot.

Mule Fat

Baccharis salicifolia (formerly *B. glutinosa*)

Asteraceae (Sunflower Family)



This willow-like shrub is common along stream beds. In spite of its name, it is not especially good as livestock fodder.

The Cahuilla Indians steeped the leaves to make an eyewash, and also used it as a preventative for baldness.

Chamise

Adenostoma fasciculatum

Rosaceae (Rose Family)

This coastal sage and chaparral shrub has needle-like leaves and clusters of white flowers. Also known as greasewood, it is very flammable when dry.

Indians used the hard wood for a number of useful tools. The Cahuilla boiled the leaves and branches to bathe sore or infected areas of the body.



Brittle Bush

Encelia farinosa

Asteraceae (Sunflower Family)

This shrub 1 to 3 feet tall is common throughout lower foothills of the San Bernardino Valley and into the desert.

Also known as *inciense* (Spanish for incense), the early padres burned the crystals of resin which exude from the woody stems as incense.

The Cahuilla Indians made a decoction of the leaves, stems and blossoms to be held in the mouth for relief of a toothache.



Spanish Bayonet

Yucca whipplei

Agavaceae or Agave Family (Formerly Liliaceae)



The dagger-like tips of the leaf are what gives this plant the name Spanish Bayonet. It is also known as Our Lord's Candle and Chaparral Yucca.

Unlike the desert species, this plant dies after it flowers. It has an interesting life cycle. It is dependent on the pollination by a yucca moth (*Tegeticula muculata*) that visits the plant only at night.

Chia

Salvia columbariae

Lamiaceae (Mint Family)

Even though this plant belongs to the mint or sage family, it is not aromatic. It was, however, an important food source for the Indians. The parched seeds could be ground into a meal. It was claimed that a teaspoon of chia seeds could sustain an Indian on a 24 hour forced march. This is undoubtedly an exaggeration, but the seeds do have a high nutritional value of 20.2% protein.



White Sage

Salvia apiana

Lamiaceae (Mint Family)



The species name, *apiana*, refers to the bees that are attracted to this plant. The honey made from it is clear, pale and very fine. Indians ate the parched, ground seeds. The leaves were used in the sweathouse and as a cure for colds.

Spotted Monkey Flower

Mimulus guttatus



Found along slow moving streams and moist places, these bright yellow flowers with red speckles in the throat bloom from March to August.

Scrophulariaceae (Figwort Family)

Santa Ana Woolly Star

Eriastrum densifolium ssp. *sanctorum*

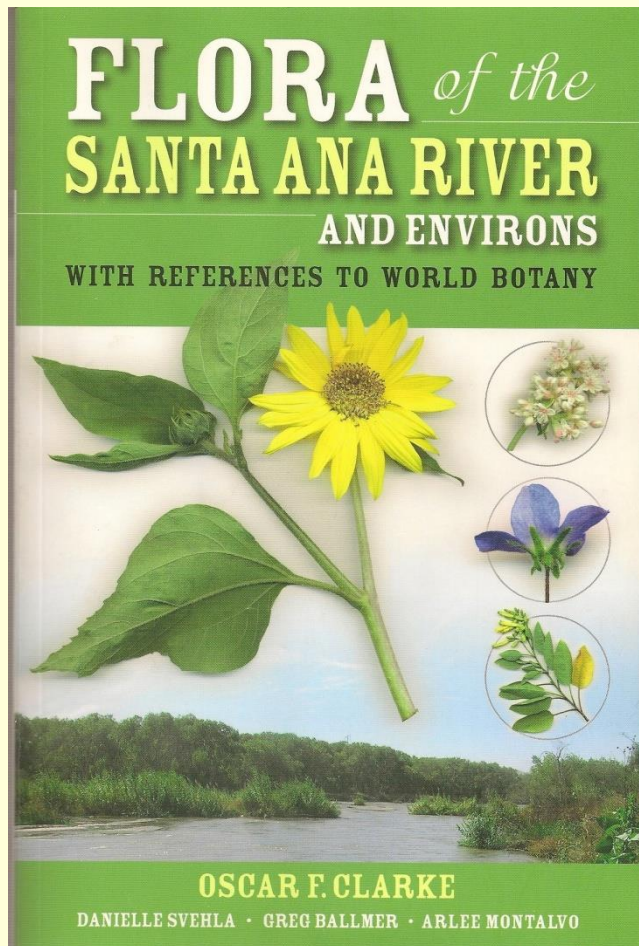
Polemoniaceae (Phlox Family)



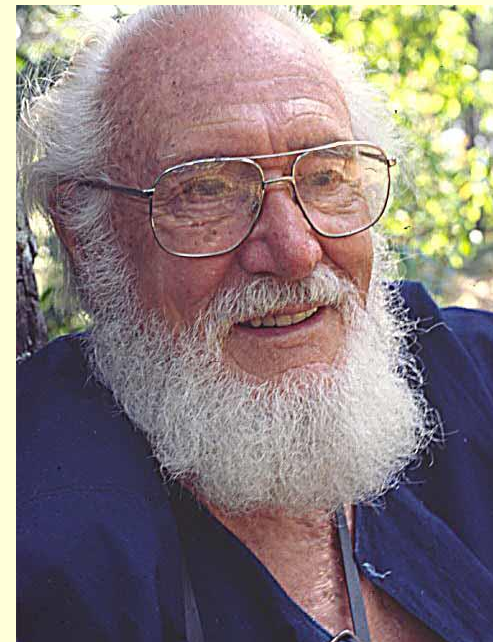
This endangered species may be found along City Creek south of Baseline. Its lavender-blue flowers can be seen in late spring or early summer. It has gray-green foliage.

What is the best book for identifying our local wildflowers?

The Flora of the Santa Ana River and Environs was published by Heyday Books, Berkeley, California, 2007.



Oscar Clarke established the Herbarium at the University of California, Riverside.





The Smith Brother's stone pillars

The Smith Brother's stone pillars at the entry to the parking area as well as other native stone work are examples of the type of work done by early stone masons in this area. An effort was made in 1999 to move the pillars from their original location, which was approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ miles East of the park, but it was unsuccessful so these are recreations.

Documented evidence as to why the term Cronycroft was used on the original "Smith Bros." pillars has not been found. One theory is that they used the term Cronycroft as the name of their ranch and that they arrived at that by combining the word crony, meaning friend, colleague, companion and the word croft meaning a small farm or plot of land into Cronycroft.