



## Wildflowers continue color display

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Wildflowers to see this spring:

Foothills aster, *Aster Bigelovii*. The plants are perennial, somewhat woody at the base and freely branched. Leaves are narrow, the lower to four inches long, the upper much shorter. The parallel edges of the leaves are toothed with tiny spines. *Asteris* a composite with the central disk flowers yellow and the ray flowers violet. Only one blossom blooms at the tip of each branch of the branched inflorescence. Spring aster blooms may be one and one-half inches in diameter, but summer blooms are usually smaller. The involucre is composed of many narrow greenphyllaries of which the outer turn downward.

Special *Bigelovii* grows in the canyons or washes and on the rocky slopes of the desert foothills while a very similar species, *Aster Tephrodes* prefers sandy or clayey soil. Both species may be found at higher elevations up to 7,000 feet.

Owl-clover, *Orthocarpus Purpurascens*, is one of our most showy spring flowers especially when occurring many together. Owl-clover is an annual; the slender leafy stems are from 4-12 inches high. Leaves are divided into narrow lobes. The inflorescence is usually a compact spike but may be more or less elongated. It is composed of bracts and flowers. The lower bracts may be green but most are purple with brownish bases. The calyxlobes that surround each flower are colored like the bracts. The flowers scattered among the bracts are two-lipped. The two narrow, hairy lobes of the upper lip enclose the pistil with the stigma protruding from between the lobes as a bright purple spot. The three lobes of the lower lip are broad, curved and rolled inward forming a sac-like structure which is bright pinkish-purple with the upper part bright yellow. The anthers are under these lower lobes. This is a most interesting flower under the microscope or with a reading glass or hand lense. The owl-clover seems to be especially profuse this year, growing in dense patches and often interspersed among the desert lupine.

Wildflower hikes: The wildflower hikes sponsored by the Conservation Committee have been great. We have seen a dazzling display of many kinds of wildflowers. Don't miss the two remaining hikes scheduled for April 23, and April 30. We will be meeting at the Cave Creek School parking lot on these dates at 9:30 a.m. Both will be easy hikes.



Owl Clover

Desert Aster