Identifying High Country Wildflowers

$140 per person / $125 for Mono Lake Committee members
limited to 15 participants

Welcome to our field seminar on identifying the wildflowers and other plants found in the Mono Basin high country. This will be an introductory level workshop designed to teach you how to identify plants using the keys in Norman Weeden’s *A Sierra Nevada Flora*. Although it has no photos and few illustrations, this book (fondly referred to as “Weeden”) is the most complete field guide to Sierra plants and provides identification keys and plant descriptions that minimize the use of special terminology.

There is however some terminology you’ll need to get familiar with, such as *stem*, *leaf*, and *flower*. Actually, it’s a little more than that, but we’ve enclosed a couple of pages that have diagrams of plant parts illustrating some basic terminology. You DO NOT need to memorize everything on those pages, but if you look it over and especially focus on parts of the flower (*pedicel*, *sepals*, *petals*, *stamens*, *pistil*), the basic parts of a leaf (*petiole*, *stipule*, *blade*, *midrib*, *veins*, *margin*), and inflorescence types (*solitary flowers*, *raceme*, *spike*, *panicle*, *umbell*, *helicoid cyme*, *head*) you will have most of what you’ll need. If you want more than just diagrams, Weeden has a glossary in the back which will cover the terms. If you really want to prepare for the seminar, you might look over Weeden’s list of abbreviations and symbols (p. viii) and read the section on *How to Begin* (pp. 5-6).
Mark Bagley is a consulting botanist in the Eastern Sierra and Mojave Desert who has been leading field seminars in the Mono Basin since 1988. He is well known among past seminar participants for his easy-going pace and engaging teaching style in the field.

We’ll start with a three-hour session on Friday evening to go over the basics of plant parts and using keys, looking at real plants which Mark will bring in. On Saturday and Sunday we’ll be in the field on easily paced walks at high elevations (generally above 9,000 feet). Actually, we’ll spend much more time stopping and keying out plants than we will walking, but we may walk up to two or three miles in a day at the most. It’s a good idea to bring a cushion or a lightweight folding stool or chair to sit on while we’re keying—bring something you can carry that can keep you comfortable and off the possibly wet ground. Our time will be spent in the upper reaches of Lee Vining Creek, generally between Tioga Pass, Saddlebag Lake, and down to the Warren Fork, and possibly in Lundy Canyon. We’ll linger in the sub-alpine forests, along streams, meadows, and on rocky slopes where we’ll see a diverse array of plants.

**ITINERARY**

On **Friday, July 27, from 6:00-9:00 pm**, we’ll be at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining. After registration and brief introductions, Mark will make an introductory presentation on basic plant structures and using identification keys. Mark will bring in some garden flowers for you to look at and practice with.

On **Saturday, July 28, meet at 8:00 am**, at the Tioga Lake overlook parking area. The meeting place is located about ¾ of a mile north of Tioga Pass, just off Highway 120 overlooking the south end of Tioga Lake. There are a couple of picnic tables and toilets there. We’ll assemble there and spend the day in the high country identifying wildflowers, along with some of the trees and shrubs. Specific locations will depend on what’s blooming at that time. Possible locations include the Hall Natural Area in the upper reaches of Lee Vining and Slate Creeks, the Warren Fork, Tioga Lake, Tioga Tarns, or the Bennetville trail. We’ll end the day at 5:00 pm.

On **Sunday, July 29, meet at 8:00 am**, at a place to be announced Saturday. We’ll continue to practice keying plants at different locations. We will finish up around 4:00 pm.

**High Altitude Cautions:** The seminar will take place at elevations of approximately 9,000-10,500 feet above sea level. Our walks will be at a leisurely pace over mostly gentle terrain with a few moderately steep slopes. Twenty-four hours of acclimation at the elevation of Lee Vining is advisable (approximately 7,000 feet) before beginning this seminar. **Those restricted to lower elevations should not enroll.** Anyone with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consult with their doctor. Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at high altitudes. Experts recommend that you begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is intense at high elevations, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly, using sunscreen, sunglasses, and hat.

**MEALS**

Bring picnic lunches. We’ll probably have lunch on the trail both days.
ESSENTIALS TO BRING  (this means you really need to have them)

__ the 2 pages of diagrams included in this packet
__ 10X handlens (available for sale at the Mono Lake Committee bookstore)
__ a safety pin to use for dissecting small flowers
__ a small ruler, about 15 centimeters or 6 inches long, marked in millimeters and centimeters
__ day pack including plenty of water, sun protection, mosquito repellent, etc.
__ packed lunch for each day
__ portable, lightweight cushion or small folding chair or stool that you can carry, so you can sit comfortably as we key plants in the field

Optional:
__ pen or pencil, notebook or clipboard with paper
__ scotch tape (to tape little pieces of the plants you’ve identified into your notebook)
__ the plant list included in this packet, it lists most every plant we’ll see in the seminar
__ tweezers to dissect and hold small flower parts
__ a small sharp knife or scalpel to use for dissecting flowers and fruits
__ folding chair for use near your vehicle if we key plants near a parking area (this might be a larger, more comfortable chair than the one you’ll carry on walks away from the vehicles)

RECOMMENDED BOOKS
While you really only need to bring Weeden, these wildflower photo books may be available at the Mono Lake Committee Bookstore.


