

Welcome to Hell's Half Acre

Nevada County

California Hell's Half Acre is a special bit of botanical heaven in the Sierra Nevada foothills where acres of brilliant wildflowers bloom in spring. Surrounded by pine and oak forest, Hell's Half Acre is a distinctive open habitat sometimes called a "Mehrten meadow". The forest opening is formed by shallow soils underlain by a hard volcanic mudflow, or lahar. Geologists call this a Mehrten Formation. Due to the cement-like layer and gentle slopes, rainfall collects in shallow depressions before slowly draining off or evaporating. Showy, mostly native, annual plants thrive with little competition from invasive species.

Saving a Mehrten Meadow

In the spring of 1997 the re-zoning and impending development of the 360-acre Kenny Ranch was announced. About 50 acres of the Ranch has been known as "Hell's Half Acre" from its use as a hobo camp, illegal dump, and, possibly, from its rocky, desert-like landscape. Kenny Ranch, on the western edge of the town of Grass Valley, is prime open land planned for commercial and residential development. In reaction to the news about the future of Kenny Ranch, California Native Plant Society members and concerned neighbors campaigned to save the 27-acre parcel south of Rough and Ready Highway from destruction.

The property is privately owned and the future of this Mehrten meadow is still very uncertain. Redbud Chapter, CNPS, and other friends of Hell's Half Acre envision a botanical preserve here, accessible to wildflower lovers of all ages and abilities.

The Wildflowers

The following is a list of selected spring-flowering plants from over 100 species observed by botanists. The largest local populations of two rare native species are found at Hells Half Acre: Sanborn's Onion *Allium sanbornii* var. *sanbornii*, and Pratten's Buckwheat, *Eriogonum prattenianum* var. *prattenianum*. Both of these plants flower in June. In addition, at least ten species of plants typical of vernal pools grow here at 2,600 feet on volcanic soils, making Hell's Half Acre a Nevada County treasure.

Native species are shown in **bold print**, exotic species in normal print. *(Notes by Karen Callahan, May 12, 2007)*

ANACARDIACEAE (Sumac or Cashew Family)

- *Toxicodendron diversilobum* Poison Oak

APIACEAE (Carrot Family)

- *Ammi visnaga* Bishop's Weed
- *Perideridia bolanderi* ssp. *involucrata* Yampah
- *Sanicula tuberosa* Tuberous Sanicle
- *Tauschia hartwegii* Hartweg's Tauschia

ASCLEPIADACEAE (Milkweed Family)

- *Asclepias cordifolia* Purple Milkweed

ASTERACEAE (Aster Family)

- *Achyraea mollis* Blow Wives

- *Agoseris heterophylla* Annual
- *Agoseris grandiflora* Large Flowered Agoseris
- *Calycadenia truncata* Rosin Weed
- *Camomilla suaveolens* Pineapple Weed
- *Cirsium occidentale* var. *venustum* Red or Venus Thistle
- *Erigeron strigosus* Prairie Fleabane
- *Filago gallica* Fluffweed
- *Hypochaeris glabra* Smooth Cat's Ear
- *Madia exigua* Threadstem Tarweed
- *Madia rammii* (type locality Nevada City) Ramm's Madia
- *Madia elegans* Common Madia
- *Micropus californicus* Slender Cottonweed
- *Psilocarphus brevissimus* var. *brevissimus* Dwarf Woolly Marbles
- *Rigiopappus leptocladus* Wireweed
- *Solidago californica* California Goldenrod
- *Tragopogon dubius* Yellow Salsify
- *Tragopogon porrifolius* Purple Salsify
- *Uropappus lindleyi* Silver Puffs

BORAGINACEAE (Borage family)

- *Cryptantha affinis* Side-grooved Cryptantha
- *Pectocarya pusilla* Little Pectocarya
- *Plagiobothrys greenei* Greene's Popcornflower
- *Plagiobothrys stipitata* v. *micrantha*
- *Plagiobothrys scriptus* Scribe Popcornflower
- *Plagiobothrys tenellus* Pacific Popcorn Flower

BRASSICACEAE (Mustard Family)

- *Draba verna* Whitlow Grass
- *Lepidium nitidum* Peppergrass
- *Streptanthus tortuosus* Mountain Jewelflower
- *Thysanocarpus curvipes* Fringedpod

CAMPANULACEAE (Bellflower Family)

- *Githopsis specularoides* Blue Cups

CAPRIFOLIACEAE (Honeysuckle Family)

- *Lonicera hispidula* var. *vacillans* Hairy Honeysuckle
- *Lonicera interrupta* Chaparral Honeysuckle
- *Symphoricarpos albus* var. *laevigatus* Common Snowberry

CARYOPHYLLACEAE (Pink Family)

- *Minuartia douglasii* Douglas' Sandwort
- *Petrorhagia prolifera* Wild Carnation
- *Spergularia rubra* Ruby Sand Spurry

CONVOLVULACEAE (Morning-glory Family)

- *Calystegia occidentalis ssp. occidentalis* Western Morning-glory

CRASSULACEAE (Stonecrop Family)

- *Crassula connata* Pygmy Weed
- *Parvisedum pumilum* Sierra Stonecrop

CUCURBITACEAE (Gourd Family)

- *Marah watsonii* Wild Cucumber, Manroot

ERICACEAE (Heath Family)

- *Arctostaphylos viscida* Whiteleaf Manzanita
- *Arctostaphylos mewukka ssp mewukka* Indian Manzanita

FABACEAE (Pea Family)

- *Cytisus scoparius* Scotch Broom
- *Lathyrus latifolius* Perennial Sweet Pea
- *Lotus purshianus* Spanish Lotus
- *Lupinus bicolor* Miniature Lupine
- *Lupinus nanus* Sky or Douglas Lupine
- *Pickeringia montana* Chaparral Pea
- *Trifolium ciliolatum* tree clover
- *Trifolium depauperatum* Sack Clover, Cowbag Clover
- *Trifolium dubium* Little Hop Clover
- *Trifolium glomeratum* Maiden Clover
- *Trifolium pratense* Red Clover
- *Trifolium repens* White Clover
- *Trifolium variegatum* White-tipped clover
- *Trifolium wildenovii* Tomcat Clover (formerly *Trifolium tridentatum*)
- *Vicia americana var. truncata* American vetch
- *Vicia sativa* Spring Vetch

FAGACEAE (Oak Family)

- *Quercus douglasii* Blue Oak

- *Quercus garryana* var. *breweri* Shin Oak, Brewer's white oak
- *Quercus kelloggii* Black Oak
- *Quercus lobata* Valley Oak
- *Quercus wislizenii* Interior Live Oak
- *Quercus chrysolepis* Canyon Live Oak

GENTIANACEAE (Gentian Family)

- *Centaurium venustum* Canchalagua

GERANIACEAE (Geranium Family)

- *Erodium cicutarium* Red-stemmed Filaree

HYDROPHYLLACEAE (Waterleaf Family)

- *Eriodictyon californicum* Yerba Santa

IRIDACEAE (Iris Family)

- *Iris hartwegii* Hartweg's Iris

JUNCACEAE (Rush family)

- *Juncus balticus* Baltic Rush
- *Juncus bufonius* Toad Rush
- *Juncus capitatus* Leafybract Dwarf Rush
- *Juncus effusus* Smooth Rush
- *Juncus tenuis* Slender Rush
- *Juncus uncialis* Moss Rush

ISOETACEAE (Quillwort family)

- *Isoetes orcuttii* Orcutt's Quillwort

LAMIACEAE (Mint Family)

- *Monardella lanceolata* Mustang Mint
- *Salvia sonomensis* Creeping Sage
- *Scutellaria tuberosa* Skullcap
- *Trichostema oblongum* Mountain bluecurls
- *Trichostema simulatum* Siskiyou bluecurls

LILIACEAE (Lily Family)

- *Allium amplexans* Paper Onion
- *Allium sanbornii* Sanborn's Onion (CNPS sensitive species)
- *Brodiaea elegans* Harvest Brodiaea
- *Brodiaea purdyi* Purdy's Brodiaea
- *Calochortus monophyllus* Yellow Star Tulip
- *Chlorogalum pomeridianum* Common Soap Plant
- *Dichelostemma capitatum* Blue Dicks
- *Fritillaria micrantha* Brown Bells
- *Fritillaria recurva* Scarlet Fritillary
- *Lilium humboldtii* ssp. *humboldtii* Humboldt Lily (CNPS sensitive species)
- *Triteleia hyacinthina* White Brodiaea
- *Triteleia ixioides* Pretty Face
- *Zigadenus venenosus* Death Camas

LIMNANTHACEAE (Meadowfoam Family)

- *Limnanthes alba* White Meadowfoam

MALVACEAE (Mallow Family)

- *Sidalcea hartwegii* Hartweg's Sidalcea
- *Sidalcea malvaeflora* Checkerbloom

ONAGRACEAE (Evening primrose family)

- *Clarkia gracilis* Graceful Clarkia
- *Clarkia purpurea* ssp. *quadrivulnera* Winecup Clarkia
- *Clarkia rhomboidea* Diamond Clarkia
- *Clarkia williamsonii* Williamson's Clarkia
- *Epilobium brachycarpum* Panicked Willowherb
- *Epilobium ciliatum* Ciliate Willowherb

PINACEAE (Pine Family)

- *Pinus lambertiana* Sugar Pine
- *Pinus ponderosa* Ponderosa Pine
- *Pinus sabiniana* Grey Pine, Foothills Pine
- *Pseudotsuga menziesii* Douglas Fir

PLANTAGINACEAE (Plantain Family)

- *Plantago erecta* California Plantain

POLEMONIACEAE (Phlox Family)

- *Linanthus liniflorus* Flax-flowered
- *Linanthus Navarretia divaricata* Mountain Navarretia
- *Navarretia intertexta* Needleleaf Navarretia
- *Phlox gracilis* Slender Phlox

POLYGALACEAE (Milkwort Family)

- *Polygala cornuta var. cornuta* Sierra Milkwort

POLYGONACEAE (Buckwheat family)

- *Chorizanthe polygonoides* Knotted Spineflower
- *Eriogonum prattenianum var. prattenianum* Pratten's Buckwheat Type locality: Nevada City, collected by Henry Pratten in 1851. Uncommon shrub.
- *Polygonum californicum* California Knotweed
- *Polygonum parryi* Parry's Knotweed
- *Polygonum persicaria* Lady's Thumb

PORTULACACEAE (Purslane Family)

- *Claytonia perfoliata ssp. perfoliata* miner's lettuce

PRIMULACEAE

- *Dodecatheon hendersonii* Henderson's Shooting Star

PTERIDACEAE (Brake Family)

- *Pentagramma triangularis* Goldback Fern

RANUNCULACEAE (Buttercup Family)

- *Delphinium gracilentum* Pine Forest Larkspur
- *Delphinium patens* Spreading Larkspur
- *Thalictrum fendleri var. polycarpum* Many Fruited Meadow Rue

RHAMNACEAE (Buckthorn Family)

- *Ceanothus cuneatus* Buckbrush
- *Ceanothus integerrimus* Deerbrush
- *Ceanothus lemmonii* Lemmon's Ceanothus
- *Rhamnus tomentella* Hairy Coffeeberry (formerly a var. of *R. californica*)
- *Rhamnus ilicifolia* Hollyleaf Redberry

- *Rhamnus rubra* Sierra Coffeeberry

ROSACEAE (Rose Family)

- *Chamaebatia foliolosa* Mountain Misery
- *Heteromeles arbutifolia* Toyon, California Holly
- *Horkelia tridentata* Three-toothed Horkelia
- *Prunus subcordata* Sierra Plum
- *Rosa canina* Dog Rose
- *Rubus discolor* Himalayan Blackberry

RUBIACEAE (Madder family)

- *Galium aparine* Goosegrass
- *Galium parisiense* Wall Bedstraw
- *Galium porrigens var. tenue* Climbing Bedstraw

SAXIFRAGACEAE (Saxifrage family)

- *Lithophragma parviflorum* Prairie Star
- *Saxifraga californica* California Saxifrage

SCROPHULARIACEAE (Figwort family)

- *Antirrhinum cornutum* Spurred Snapdragon
- *Castilleja lineariloba* Valley Tassels
- *Collinsia parviflora* Maiden blue-eyed Mary
- *Collinsia sparsiflora* Spinster's blue-eyed Mary
- *Gratiola ebracteata* Hedge Hyssop
- *Mimulus angustatus* Pansy Monkeyflower
- *Mimulus guttatus* Seep-spring Monkeyflower
- *Mimulus layneae* Layne's Monkeyflower
- *Mimulus pulsiferae* Candelabra Monkeyflower
- *Mimulus torreyi* Torrey's Monkeyflower
- *Penstemon heterophyllus* Foothills Penstemon
- *Triphysaria erianthus* Johnny Tuck, Butter & Egg

VIOLACEAE (Violet family)

- *Viola purpurea ssp. purpurea* Mountain Violet
- *Viola purpurea ssp. quercetorum* (formerly *V. quercetorum*) Mountain Violet