



**Sierra Larkspur**

*Delphinium glaucum*  
Ranunculaceae (Buttercup) family  
July–September

A distinctive characteristic of larkspurs is the tail, or spur, at the back of the blossom. Most larkspurs are fairly intense blue-to-purple in color. Sierra larkspur, also called mountain larkspur or tower larkspur, has an especially tall inflorescence (the part of the plant where the flowers are located), with many blossoms.



**Sierra Morning Glory**

*Calystegia malacophylla*  
Convolvulaceae (Morning Glory) family  
July–August

There are over 1,000 species of morning glory world-wide. Many bloom in the early morning hours, giving the family its name. Tahoe Donner is near the upper elevation of the range for Sierra morning glory.



**Snow Plant**

*Sarcodes sanguinea*  
Ericaceae (Heath) family  
May–June

Appears almost as soon as snow melts. Saprophytic plant: obtains nutrients from decaying organic matter in the soil (no photosynthesis).



**Varileaf Phacelia**

*Phacelia heterophylla*  
Hydrophyllaceae (Waterleaf) family  
April–July

Many phacelias grow in the characteristic shape shown here, with the flowers on a coiled cyme and with double, symmetrical cymes. Flowers can be white/cream to light purple for different species.



**Western Buttercup**

*Ranunculus occidentalis*  
Ranunculaceae (Buttercup) family  
April–June

This early bloomer announces the arrival of spring. It prefers to grow in wet meadows and along streams.



**Willow**

*Salix spp.*  
Salicaceae (Willow) family  
March–June

There are several types of willow in the Tahoe Donner area, with blooming seasons that extend from March at least through June. The picture shows typical early-spring catkins (buds) that are getting ready to bloom, and gives the smaller types of willow the familiar name pussy willow.



**Woolly Mule Ears**

*Wyethia mollis*  
Asteraceae (Sunflower or Aster) family  
June–July

The most common species of mule ears around Tahoe Donner, woolly mule ears are easily identified by touching the leaves: they do feel woolly!



**Woolly Mullein**

*Verbascum thapsus*  
Scrophulariaceae (Figwort) family  
June–September

Also called common mullein, this distinctive plant is a non-native considered by some to be invasive. With its tall flower stalk it can grow up to 6-feet tall.



Photos and plant descriptions courtesy of Susan Kelso.

More descriptions and photos can be found online at [www.tahoedonner.com/trails/wildflower-guide](http://www.tahoedonner.com/trails/wildflower-guide)

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**Anderson's Thistle**

*Cirsium andersonii*  
Asteraceae (Sunflower or Aster) family  
July–August

Although there are several species of thistles in the Tahoe Donner area, Anderson's thistles are noted for attracting hummingbirds.



**Aster**

*Symphotrichum sp.*  
Asteraceae (Sunflower or Aster) family  
July–August

In some cases several wildflowers look very similar and are difficult to distinguish. This is actually one example, since some asters and daisies look similar from the top/front side, with

differences on the bottom/back side. Fairly common in Tahoe Donner, this is most likely Eaton's aster (*S. bracteolatum*).



**California Rayless Daisy**

*Erigeron inornatus*  
Asteraceae (Sunflower or Aster) family  
July–September

Flowers in the aster family are composites, consisting of ray flowers and disc flowers. The California rayless daisy has only disc flowers, hence the name rayless.



**Checkerbloom**

*Sidalcea glaucescens*  
Malvaceae (Mallow) family  
June–August

Several species of checkerbloom, or checkermallow, are found in the area around Tahoe Donner.



**Common Yarrow**

*Achillea millefolium*  
Asteraceae (Sunflower or Aster) family  
June–August

The name *millefolium* means “thousand leaves,” a great description of the finely divided, feathery leaves. Yarrow is found widely across the Americas, Eurasia, and Australia. A yellow form is found in Tahoe Donner landscaping.



**Coulter's Daisy**

*Erigeron coulteri*  
Asteraceae (Sunflower or Aster) family  
July–September

Coulter's daisy is a native daisy, with numerous white ray flowers. A similar flower with fewer ray flowers is oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), a non-native common in Tahoe Donner landscaping. The name *vulgare* means common.



**Lupine**

*Lupinus sp.*  
Fabaceae (Pea) family  
June–August

Lupines are recognizable by their leaves, which have so-called palmate shapes, resembling an open hand with 5 or more fingers spread out. The flowers are on stalks and bloom from the base toward the tip of the stalk. Most lupines are blue-purple, but some are white and some are yellow.



**Mahala Mat**

*Ceanothus prostratus*  
Rhamnaceae (Buckthorn) family  
May

Common in Tahoe Donner, growing in large patches or masses. Leaves stay green all summer after the (relatively brief) blooming season. Also called squaw carpet. Whenever *prostratus* is the species name, look for a low-growing plant!



**Manzanita**

*Arctostaphylos sp.*  
Ericaceae (Heath) family  
May–June

The most common shrub-like manzanita in the Tahoe region is Greenleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos patula*). There is also a lower, mat-like manzanita called pine-mat manzanita (*Arctostaphylos nevadensis*).



**Monkshood**

*Aconitum columbianum*  
Ranunculaceae (Buttercup) family  
June–August

The distinctive upper part of the monkshood flower looks like a monk's cowl. The reproductive parts are greenish-yellowish. Flowers are pollinated by a specific bumblebee species with the correct size, weight, and anatomy. All parts of the plant are toxic.



**Paintbrush**

*Castilleja sp.*  
Scrophulariaceae (Figwort) family  
June–August

Of the several species of paintbrush found in the Tahoe Donner area, the most common is Applegate's paintbrush. Paintbrush come in a variety of colors and have differing shapes (number of lobes) of the bracts, the colorful part of the plant people usually notice.



**Pennyroyal**

*Monardella odoratissima*  
Lamiaceae (Mint) family  
June–August

A minty odor, square stem, and opposite leaves are characteristic of the mint family. Flowers can be pale purple, white, or lavender.



**Penstemon**

*Penstemon sp.*  
Scrophulariaceae (Figwort) family  
June–August

This is one of the several species of blue-to-purple penstemons found in the area around Tahoe Donner.



**Rabbitbrush**

*Ericameria sp.*  
Asteraceae (Sunflower or Aster) family  
August–October

This shrub is common throughout the Tahoe Donner area. The tips of the branches look yellow throughout the blooming season.



**Ranger's Buttons**

*Sphenosciadium capitellatum*  
Apiaceae (Carrot) family  
July–August

Often found in wet or swampy places. Though there are many other members of the carrot family, ranger's button is the only species in the *Sphenosciadium* genus.