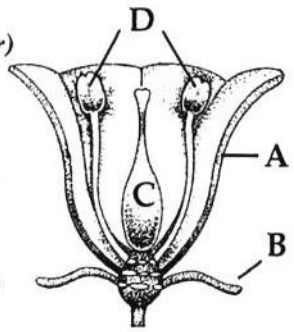
Wildflowers have always been a source of delight for people. We have marked our seasons by their arrival, designed fabric in their likeness, named our children after them, incorporated them into ceremonies and festivals, and given them mystical powers. With thousands of different kinds in California, there's a lot of variety to inspire us!

Reason for flowers

While looking at a hill colored blue by lupine or delighting in the brilliance of a single poppy, we tend to forget that flowers did not evolve merely for our pleasure. Flowers perform the special job of producing seeds for plants. Seeds cannot be made until the flower is pollinated (the process where pollen from a stamen reaches its own pistil or the pistil of another flower). Flowers have different designs to lure or assist their pollinators. This remarkable assortment of colors and shapes is what we enjoy each spring and summer.

Parts of a typical flower:

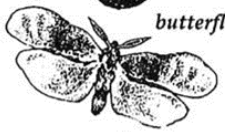
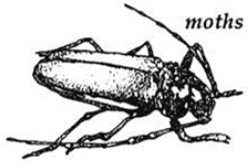
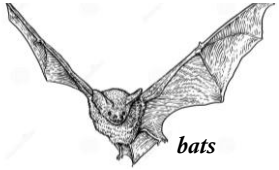
A. corolla or petals *(colored portion of flower)*
B. calyx or sepals *(often green; flower bud envelope)*
C. pistil *(female portion, where fruit and seeds develop)*
D. stamen *(male portion, where powdery pollen is produced)*



While you're out enjoying wildflowers, look closely; you may be fortunate to see the pollinators!

Wildflower watching and pollination ecology guide

The general shape and color of a flower is often a clue to what pollinates it.

Pollinator	Flower Design	Flower Benefit	Examples
 *wind*	lots of pollen; no scent; very small; inconspicuous petals	Wind is the least accurate pollinator, so lots of pollen ensures success.	 *meadow rue*
 *hummingbirds*	lots of nectar; little scent; often red or bright orange; tube-shaped	Hummingbirds have a poor sense of smell so these flowers don't need a strong scent.	 *Indian paintbrush*
 *flies*	strong scent; open and flat; yellow, white, greenish, or bluish	Some flies are attracted to a smell resembling rotting meat.	 *giant trillium*
 *bees*	blue, purple, or yellow and showy; sweet scent; nectar guides (often lines or dots); landing platform	Bees don't see red. Like other animal pollinators, they are attracted to pollen and nectar for food.	 *checker bloom*
 *butterflies*	long, slender flower tubes; brightly colored; landing platform	Butterflies prefer sucking nectar from narrow tubes.	 *phlox*
 *moths*	cream, white, or pale yellow; strong scent; tube-shaped	Pale colors are easily seen in the dark.	 *soap root*
 *beetles*	lots of pollen; many petals; fruity scent	Lots of pollen ensures that some will get stuck to the beetles as they walk around and feed.	 yarrow
 *bats*	**pale or white; strong scent; lots of nectar; open at night**	**Pollen gets on fur, bats can pollinate plants that aren't near each other.**	 *agave*
 *ants*	**lots of nectar on plant stems or sepals; seeds have 'elaiosomes', or fat bodies; low-growing plants**	**Sometimes defend plants from other insect herbivores, spread seeds.**	 *fetid adder's tongue*