



EMERALD KEEPERS

For an Emerald Green, Ocean Blue Coronado

SUPER BLOOM PRETTY BUT PROBLEMATIC

Winter rains spurred this spring's super bloom in Coronado and around San Diego County. Empty lots and open spaces have covered with colorful blooms. While these flowers are pretty, they are highly problematic for our local environment.

THE PROBLEM

Many of the flowers are invasive plant species that were introduced decades ago. Invasives grow aggressively, spread rampantly, and displace native plants that are essential to the survival of local animals and insects. Invasive plants pose a long-term threat and are hard to eradicate as their seeds stay underground, sprouting after the rain. They prevent native plant growth, reducing biodiversity needed for a healthy ecosystem.

INVASIVE PLANT TYPES

Some of the most common invasive plants in the region include:

Ice plant. A familiar flowering succulent, ice plant thrives on our sandy beaches and dunes. The plant's rapid growth creates a large, thick ground cover that chokes out native plants and degrades the soil. The seeds spread easily by wind, water, and animals, and because it's a succulent, even broken stems can start a new growth. As a non-native, ice plant does not support local pollinators, and its shallow 3- to 6-inch roots along with its heavy leaves contribute to coastal erosion.

Crown daisy. Found flourishing along local roads and coastal areas, the crown daisy has yellow or white flowers on a dense shrub that can grow up to 5 feet tall. As an annual, the plant dies every year, but the seeds disperse and the bushy dead plant can remain in place for many years crowding out native plant growth. The crown daisy's shallow roots also contribute to erosion.

Black mustard. Another beautiful but destructive flower is the mustard plant, which has small, yellow flowers that bloom in clusters that cover hillsides along the California coast. This plant sprouts in early winter, before natives, and quickly grows to more than 6 feet tall. Its thick stalks block sunlight while its deep roots take up water and release harmful biochemicals into the soil to the detriment of native plants. Mustard plants dry out by mid-summer becoming highly flammable.

YOU CAN HELP

Many harmful invasive plants, often labeled as drought tolerant, are sold at local nurseries. Avoid bringing invasives into your garden as their seeds will spread beyond your yard to the detriment of local plants and wildlife. Instead, focus on native plants that thrive in our climate and support local biodiversity.

Dedicated volunteers meet regularly to pull invasives and maintain native plants at the Grand Caribe Shoreline Park in the Coronado Cays. The San Diego Audubon Society also offers volunteer opportunities to remove invasive plants along the bay.

While invasives are nearly impossible to eradicate, diligent workers are helping to limit their spread and destruction in Coronado and beyond.



Crown daisy



Ice plant



Mustard

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