



Clearly one of the best subalpine landscapes in the park; many would argue the best anywhere. While not all that easy to get to the lush meadows weaving amongst clusters of alpine firs provide a full array of wildflowers making it a popular destination. The best time in normal years would be the height of the flowering season in mid-late July and August.

1st Leg - Mowich Lake to Grant Creek: *Approximately 2.60 mi., +1,220', -720', average grade 19%.* This up and down section of fully canopied forest begins by dropping 120' and losses a net -373' the first mile. At a little over a mile a clearing is reached which is an old avalanche chute. Look for the common but not so commonly seen Monkshood. Within another half mile look for a way path to the Eagle Cliff viewpoint, the only view of the mountain in the first leg. Alas the meadows await but not until traversing .55 mile of switchbacks (26% grade) before reaching the Grant Creek crossing.

2nd Leg - Grant Creek to Upper Spray Park: *Approximately .82 mi., +680', average grade 15%.* After crossing the creek a large field of cotton grass provides an introduction to the premier subalpine zone of Spray Park just ahead. After a series of stepped sections the trail reaches the upper section which is more open exposing views of Echo Rock and the mountain. In a flat area is a junction with a boot path (or paths) which will probably be unmarked. A field of buttercups (and cinquefoil) cover this area.

3rd Leg - Heather Boulder Garden: *Approximately .33 mi., -130'.* Carefully choose the dominant path heading north (approximate route shown in dashed green on the map). This path(s) apparently was created to access the views down into Mist Park but also provides a route over to Knapsack Pass. Remarkable boulder gardens are within a short distance. Caution!: this is a very fragile environment so meandering must be avoided.

INDEX OF FLOWERS SHOWN ON MAP:

- 1 - **Queens' Cup**, *Clintonia uniflora*
- 2 - **Woodland Penstemon**, *Nothochelone nemorosa*
- 3 - **Western Corydalis**, *Corydalis scouleri*
- 4 - **Broadleaf Arnica**, *Arnica latifolia*
- 5 - **Monkshood**, *Aconitum columbianum*
- 6 - **Foamflower**, *Tiarella trifoliata*
- 7 - **Goat's Beard**, *Aruncus dioicus*
- 8 - **Green False Hellebore**, *Veratrum viride*
- 9 - **Beargrass**, *Xerophyllum tenax*
- 10 - **Cusick's Veronica**, *Veronica cusickii*
- 11 - **Subalpine Lupine**, *Lupinus latifolius* var. *oreopola*
- 12 - **Western Pasqueflower**, *Anemone occidentalis*

Guides and Map: Hike 29 in Tami Asars' *Day Hiking Mount Rainier* (2nd edition), Hike 51 in Ron Judd's *Day Hike! Mount Rainier* (4th edition) and Tracy/Giblin *Alpine Flowers of Mt. Rainier*. Greens Trails Maps, No. 269, Mount Rainier West, WA. or Mount Rainier Wonderland, No. 269S.

Distance and Difficulty: The total distance is 3.75 miles, or 7.5 miles round trip. The guide books describe portions of this hike. Judd's end in lower Spray Park below Mt. Pleasant and he classifies the difficulty as "moderate." Asars' route extends to the pass at 6,400' (and beyond) and also considers it "moderate." While the elevation difference is just 1,060', the net elevation gain hiked round trip is more like 2,750' - so it's "difficult." The 1st leg on the way out may seem particularly laborious with its up and down sections. Snow may linger late into the season which can make route finding difficult so staying on marked trails is important. Also, fog and whiteouts are fairly common here making it easier than imagined to get lost! Lots of reasons to stay on the trail during this hike! Don't let a moderate difficulty rating fool you - be prepared!

Preparation: This is a remote area of The Park so hikers need to be well prepared especially for any type of weather condition. The *Ten Essentials* are always a good idea. The trail is usually fairly well maintained and heavily used but has its share of rocks, roots and other ankle twisters so good footwear is important. The up and down nature of the route plus trail steps in the upper section make trekking poles desirable. Please see "Preparedness for Mount Rainier Hiking" on the *Flowers of Rainier* website, <http://www.flowersofrainier.com>.

Weather Forecast: http://www.atmos.washington.edu/data/rainier_report.html

Trail Conditions: <http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/trails-and-backcountry-camp-conditions.htm>

Ranger Station: Carbon River Ranger Station, (360) 829-9639 (may be a summer number only).. Call Longmire Wilderness Information Center, (360) 569-6650, for year-round assistance.

- 13 - **Showy Sedge**, *Carex spectabilis*
- 14 - **Narrow-leaf Cotton Grass**, *Eriophorum angustifolium*
- 15 - **Bistort**, *Bistorta bistortoides*
- 16 - **Strickland's Tauschia**, *Tauschia stricklandii*
- 17 - **Subalpine Buttercup**, *Ranunculus suksdorfii*
- 18 - **Avalanche Lily**, *Erythronium montanum*
- 19 - **Mountain Daisy**, *Erigeron glacialis*
- 20 - **Magenta Paintbrush**, *Castilleja parviflora*
- 21 - **Pink Mountain Heather**, *Phyllodoce empetriformis*
- 22 - **White Mountain Heather**, *Cassiope mertensiana*
- 23 - **Bracted Lousewort**, *Pedicularis bracteosa*
- 24 - **Bog Laurel**, *Kalmia microphylla*

Trail notes, other flowers observed, highlights:

Date of hike: / /