



Clearly one of Rainier's classic hikes to experience some of the best wildflower habitats of the forest, subalpine and alpine zones all in one day. A popular hike so expect company. The best time in normal years would be August to mid September (narrowed further to the last two weeks in August). Only a fraction of what you'll see is represented here. All the flowers are easily viewable from the trail so there is no need to meander off trail. The meadows at Summerland are particularly fragile.

**1<sup>st</sup> Leg – Trailhead to Panhandle Creek Crossing:** *Approximately 3.1 mi., +1,317', average grade 11%.* A short connector trail of approx. 0.1 mi. brings you to the Wonderland Trail (WLT). The first approx. 2.0 mi. will be in a fully canopied old growth forest. Keep an eye out for saprophytes like pine saps and coralroot. Eventually avalanche chutes and other forest clearing will provide varied habitats. Shrubs, such as White Rhododendron, will become more prevalent.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Leg – Creek Crossing to Summerland Camp:** *Approximately .95 mi., +848', -63', average grade 19%, steepest grade 24% (switchbacks).* Immediately after the crossing a seep provides a wet area with Leatherleaf Saxifrage and Fringed Grass-of-Parnassus. As the trail enters more open areas with views of the mountain the trail cuts through large areas of hellebore. A series of switchbacks provides the final ascent to Summerland camp where the meadows await.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Leg – Summerland to Panhandle Gap:** *Approximately 1.25 mi., +870', average grade 16%, steepest grade 20%.* After crossing a small stream the WLT continues into Upper Summerland, the alpine zone and onward to Panhandle Gap. The barren landscape is accented with bright pink areas of Lewis Monkeyflower and Pink Heather. After about half way, above the elevation of the tarn, plant communities become more scarce and single species are found in rock crevices and niches to endure the harsh alpine conditions. More matted plants will be seen, such as Spreading Stonecrop, which will turn from yellow to red in dry conditions.

## INDEX OF FLOWERS SHOWN ON MAP:

- 1 - Pinesap, *Monotropa hypopitys*
- 2 - Queens' Cup, *Clintonia uniflora*
- 3 - Devil's Club, *Oplopanax horridus*
- 4 - Foamflower, *Tiarella trifoliata*
- 5 - Gray's Lovage, *Ligusticum grayi*
- 6 - Edible Thistle, *Cirsium edule*
- 7 - White Hawkweed, *Hieracium albiflorum*
- 8 - White Rhododendron, *Rhododendron albiflorum*
- 9 - Crimson Columbine, *Aquilegia formosa*
- 10 - Fringed Grass-of-Parnassus, *Parnassia fimbriata*
- 11 - Green False Hellebore, *Veratrum viride*
- 12 - Pink Mountain Heather, *Phyllodoce empetriformis*
- 13 - Lewis Monkeyflower, *Erythranthe lewisii*

**Guides and Map:** Hike 17 in Tami Asars' *Day Hiking Mount Rainier* (2nd edition), Hike 33 in Ron Judd's *Day Hike! Mount Rainier* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) and Tracy/Giblin *Alpine Flowers of Mt. Rainier*. Greens Trails Maps, No. 270, Mount Rainier East, WA.

**Distance and Difficulty:** The distance to Summerland Camp is approximately 4.0 miles (8.0 mi. round trip), 2,165' net elevation gain, and would be considered a moderately difficult hike. However, extending the hike to Panhandle Gap, the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg, adding another 2.5 mi. RT increases the difficulty considerably. In heavy and/or late snow years the final ascent to Panhandle Gap may be across a snowfield. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Leg should not be attempted in bad weather and poor visibility. The total distance of 10.5 mi. RT with a little over 3,000' net elevation gain (with sections of steep grades) will provide a full day. The return trip through the forest of the 1<sup>st</sup> Leg may be "psychologically" difficult (as in "will we ever get out!").

**Preparation:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> Leg of the hike is in an alpine environment which can produce unexpected hazardous conditions including wind, rain, cold, and whiteouts, as well as dehydrating extreme sunlight and heat (possibly all in the same day!). All of the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg is in the open, so if its hot be prepared with sun screen and twice the water normally carried. The *Ten Essentials* are always a good idea. The trail has its share of rocks and ankle twisters so good footwear is important. Keep a telephoto lens handy for goat and bear sightings. 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](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:** White River Wilderness Information Center, (360) 569-6670 (may be a summer number only).. Call Longmire Wilderness Information Center, (360) 569-6650, for year-round assistance.

- 14 - Avalanche Lily, *Erythronium montanum*
- 15 - Subalpine Buttercup, *Ranunculus suksdorfii*
- 16 - Mountain Bog Gentian, *Gentiana calycosa*
- 17 - Cusick's Veronica, *Veronica cusickii*
- 18 - Magenta Paintbrush, *Castilleja parviflora* var. *oreopola*
- 19 - Bird's-beak Lousewort, *Pedicularis ornithorhyncha*
- 20 - Leatherleaf Saxifrage, *Leptarrhena pyrolifolia*
- 21 - White Mountain Heather, *Cassiope mertensiana*
- 22 - Yellow Mountain Heather, *Phyllodoce glanduliflora*
- 23 - Sweet Coltsfoot, *Petasites frigidus* var. *nivalis*
- 24 - Mountain Monkeyflower, *Erythranthe tilingii*
- 25 - Spreading Stonecrop, *Sedum divergens*
- 26 - Spearleaf Arnica, *Arnica longifolia*

Trail notes, other flowers observed, highlights:

Date of hike: / /