

Sand Lily (*Leucocrinum montanum*)



The manzanita may be the first native plant to bloom, but the sand lily (also known as star lily) seems to be the real sign that spring is on the way. This small and low-lying plant lies dormant most of the year, appearing as grass-like leaves up to six inches long in the early spring, followed by a beautiful white flower approximately two inches in diameter that has no stem.

Although the flower appears to have six narrow petals, three are actually sepals; the outermost whorl of the flower that is located at its base and on most flowers function to

protect the flower in bud and support when in bloom. When the petals and sepals are difficult to distinguish, as in this case, they are called tepals. Once the flowering period is completed the flower and leaves wither away. The seeds that are formed remain underground. How the seeds are distributed appears to be somewhat of a mystery, although it's speculated the seeds are pushed out by new bud growth the following year, or that ants and other insects find and distribute them beyond the parent plant.

The sand lily is common within its range, which extends from Oregon and California to the Midwest. It is typically found in sandy and rocky soil of grasslands, desert, and open forest. They can be found throughout the UUFCO site almost anywhere that doesn't remain damp. It's well worth the time to walk along our pathways to see the blooms.

Native Americans used the roots for food and to treat skin disorders. As an early bloomer, the Sand Lily is very important for pollinators, especially bees.

