

Camas Season!



April & May are Camas Season!

Camas (*Camassia quamash*) is a native plant that grows in moist meadows, emerging in early spring. Camas grows to a height of 12 to 50 inches, varying in color from pale lilac or white to deep purple or blue-violet.

In addition to its beauty, the camas plant was an essential food source for the Atfalati band of the Kalapuya Indians, the first people to live in Washington County. The camas bulb, rich in carbohydrates that convert to usable fructose when cooked, was harvested annually during the Kalapuya's seasonal round of hunting and gathering. Locating the flower, gathering the bulb, baking it in pit ovens, and processing the camas root required a large amount of labor, mainly done by women. For at least 600 years prior to the Kalapuya's removal from this area in the 1850s, the Kalapuya maintained camas fields by managing local land through annual burns. The benefits of the burns were many, including stopping the natural succession of plants toward a forest and keeping the camas fields open from the shade and crowding of trees. While large portions of the Tualatin River Valley were once covered with camas, it has virtually disappeared from this area. Once the Kalapuya population had been ravaged by illness and disease and the survivors were removed to the Grand Ronde reservation the prairies were left to natural succession and forests grew up in their place. Buildings and roads were constructed, land was altered, and camas became harder and harder to find.

Students in our educational programs, impressed by the beauty of the flower and the ingenuity of the Kalapuya, often ask where they can see camas growing. It's easy to mention the Columbia River Gorge or Camassia Natural Area in West Linn; however, they want to know where they can find it near their homes, right here in Washington County.



With a bit of persistence, we have found several locations throughout Washington County, primarily where restoration activities have taken place, where camas has begun to pop up again. Starting in April and continuing through mid to late May, camas will begin appearing in open fields, hillsides and areas of recent restoration, right around us.



Below are a few locations in the county where camas is known to grow.

Beaverton – Camille Park (near Washington Square Mall)

What we know: Small fields of camas grow in several areas around the park.

Address: 10299 SW Marjorie Ln, Beaverton, OR 97008

Website: [Camille Park](#)

Beaverton – Cooper Mountain Nature Park

What we know: THPRD reports that camas grows sporadically.

Address: 18892 SW Kemmer Rd, Beaverton, OR 97007

Website: [Cooper Mountain Nature Park](#)

Beaverton – Howard M. Terpenning Recreation Complex – THPRD

What we know: Camas can be seen along a short trail leading through a small, wet, wooded area. To find it, walk south from the parking lot at the NE corner of the complex, accessed from NW Schlottman Pl. off Blueridge Dr.

Address: 15707 SW Walker Rd, Beaverton, OR 97006

Beaverton – Kaiser Woods Natural Area

What we know: A little camas comes up around the soft surface trails.

Address: Powerline Corridors, east of NW Kaiser Rd. and north of NW Laidlaw Rd.

Website: [Kaiser Woods Natural Area](#)

Beaverton – Lowami Hart Woods Park

What we know: A small patch appears in a wet area near the south end of the Madrone Trail.

Address: 14895 SW Hart Rd., Beaverton, OR 97007

Website: [Lowami Hart Woods Park](#)

Beaverton – Schlottman Creek Greenway

What we know: An abundance of camas grows along both sides of the paved trail around the corner from the park entrance. A sign declaring a portion of the park a “camas preserve” can be found along the trail.

Address: Just west of Terpenning Complex. Turn west onto NW Blueridge Rd., from NW 158th Ave. and access the park entrance from NW Foxborough Circle.

Website: [Schlottman Creek Greenway](#)

Forest Grove – Fernhill Wetlands (Call first to avoid blocked access due to construction)

What we know: Recent landscaping highlights the trailside camas.

Address: 1399 SW Fern Hill Road, Forest Grove, Oregon, 97117

Website: [Fernhill Wetlands](#)

Hillsboro – Jackson Bottom Wetland Preserve

What we know: Check in with a center guide at the Nature Center for help, but it can be seen on the trail to Vic’s Grove and the Riparian trail along the Tualatin River.

Address: 2600 SW Hillsboro Hwy, Hillsboro, OR 97123

Website: [Jackson Bottom Wetland Preserve](#)

Sherwood – Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge (on 99W)

What we know: In the bioswale of their parking lot, a few have been planted.

Address: 19255 SW Pacific Hwy, Sherwood, OR 97140

Website: [Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge](#)

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