



Figure 3-5: California poppy, *Eschscholzia californica*, and sky lupine, *Lupinus nanus*

Aptly named for its profusion of flowers, the annual sky lupine can cover a meadow in sheets of blue. The genus *Lupinus* includes both annuals and perennials and has hundreds of species, which grow all over western North America. All lupines have compound leaves; the leaflets grow from a single point, extending out to form a circle. The flowers grow in tiers along the stem, and each flower has the banner-and-keel form shared by most Pea family plants. From a distance, the sky lupine looks pale above and blue below, like the eastern sky after sunset.

Of all the flowers in the grassland, however, the best known is the state flower, the California poppy. Poppies cover some campus hillsides during springtime in a blaze of orange, each flower a delicate, four-petaled chalice of brightness. “With its elegantly sinuous curve from flower base to rim and its dazzling color,” writes Judith Lowry (1999) the California poppy “is familiar to all.” To demonstrate the persuasive beauty of the poppy, Lowry quotes a passage from the work of ethnographer J. P. Harrington, who collected the stories of many Central Coast Indians in the 1920s. These lines come from the Chumash of the Santa Barbara area:

“Tell your daughters that they... should not place any belief in youthful talk nor the enjoyment of poppies. People used to say that poppies were the ruin of girls. Boys would take girls out gathering poppies, and their beauty would overcome them and cause them to yield to the boys.”