

The Great Tide Pool

TALES OF PACIFIC GROVE, CALIFORNIA
by local award-winning author, [Brad Herzog](#)

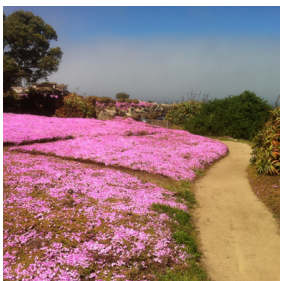


PINK-PURPLE PARADISE

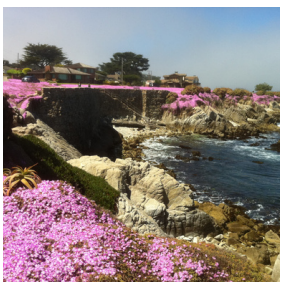
I've seen the color described as bright fuchsia, magenta, lavender, lilac, fluorescent pink, metallic purple, and vibrant pinkish-purple. The succulent plant goes by many names, too: rodondo creeper, rosea ice plant, pale dewplant, showy dewflower. Its official name sounds like a Harry Potter wizarding spell: *Drosanthemum floribundum*! Which make sense. Because in Pacific Grove, we simply call it the Magic Carpet.



The ice plant that explodes into color each spring atop the craggy bluffs of PG is a brag sheet in photographic form. When I want to show a never-been-there acquaintance the wondrous pleasure of visiting and residing in Pacific Grove, I pull out my phone and call up a snapshot of our pink-purple paradise. The image never fails to elicit a "wow." It's as predictable as the April bloom.



But what the visitors - and probably many locals - don't know about the Magic Carpet is that it is the product of one man, one vision, one intensive effort.



Hayes Perkins has been described as a cantankerous and adventurous soul, the kind of guy who traveled to Congo and Borneo and rowed hundreds of miles down the Yukon River. When he settled in PG in the 1930s, he encountered a coastline covered in poison oak. Well, that wouldn't do. Here's how he put it: "I grubbed out poison oak... because children were always catching the 'itch.' I was immune. After I grubbed, I planted." Perkins spent nearly a decade-and-a-half, from 1943 to 1957, clearing the area and replacing the vegetation with plants that had captured his attention during one of his global escapades.

It's tempting to call it a curious choice. This plant, native to the Eastern Cape in South Africa, is known to be ideal for gardeners living in climates with hot, dry summers. That ain't PG. On the other hand, it is noninvasive, favored for erosion control, and salt tolerant. So maybe ol' Hayes knew what he was doing.

He watered the flowers himself - filling 150 buckets a week along the one-mile stretch of coastal cliff-top now known as Perkins Park. Or, as an NBC Los Angeles report once put it, "Perkins Park, where the pink petals are



known to grow into profusion.” (It’s hard not to wax positively poetic about this picture postcard place).

“For 14 years I toiled to make true a dream I have entertained since I was a small boy,” Perkins later wrote in a letter. “I wished to have a beautiful garden beside the sea and... have made it come true.”



In 1968, a few years after Perkins passed away, renowned photographer Peter Gales captured an image of a half-dozen smiling bicyclists in capri pants, resting amid the horticultural wonder and looking like extras in a Frankie-and-Annette movie. The photo - he called it “Teenagers on Bicycles” - was turned into a 60-by-18-foot backlit transparency image at New York City’s Grand Central Terminal, part of a Kodak Colorama Display Collection that featured changing views of scenic America - places like Jasper National Park, Yosemite National Park... and Pacific Grove.

Think that about that for a moment: Because a man planted some South African ice plant along the bluffs of his adopted hometown, millions of people from around the world passed through Manhattan and marveled at the splendor of PG. I picture harried travelers stopping just long enough to say, “Wow.”

Along with the likes of Point Pinos Lighthouse and Lovers Point, the still-dazzling carpet of *Drosanthemum floribundum* has become an iconic image synonymous with our little sanctuary by the sea.

So yeah, Hayes Perkins knew what he was doing.

*The Great
Tidepool*