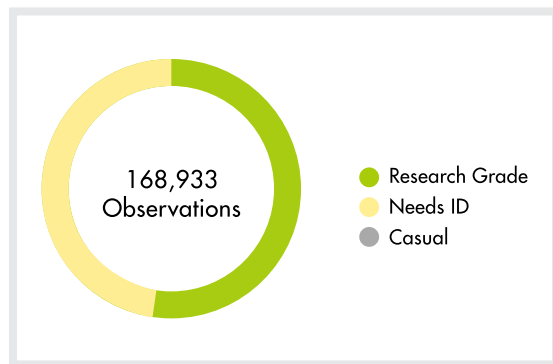


## Make the Grade

Great job everyone – in 2021, more than 66,800 observations of plants and fungi were made in the Denver-Boulder metro area! However, over 34,500 of these observations are still waiting to make research grade status. In fact, of all 168,933 observations included in the Denver EcoFlora project, 48% have not made research grade. This month, we encourage you to practice your identification skills by reviewing some of these observations so they can make the grade.

To make research grade, two or more reviewers must agree on the same species name. Once they've made the grade, these observations are uploaded to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF; [gbif.org](http://gbif.org)) database of more than 1 billion biodiversity records. Your observations can then be used by researchers worldwide to answer questions such as the past and potential spread of invasive species, the influence of climate change on biodiversity, the role of rare species in protecting critical ecosystem functions and the identification of priority areas for plant conservation.



You can also use this opportunity to hone your plant identification skills. Pick a few species – maybe your favorite wildflowers, or a group you've always been interested in. Learn the characteristics of these, and then apply this knowledge to Denver EcoFlora observations. From the project page on [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/denver-ecoflora), simply click on "Observations" and then "Identify." You can narrow this list down by entering a specific species in the search box. We can't wait to see how many observations make the grade!

## December EcoQuest Results – Blooming Bioblitz

Ten species of plants were recorded blooming in the month of December: *Berberis repens* (Oregon grape), *Chenopodium* sp. (goosefoot), *Dieteria bigelovii* (Bigelow's tansyaster), *Ericameria nauseosa* (rabbitbrush), *Grindelia squarrosa* (curlycup gumweed), *Lamium aplexicaule* (henbit), *Malva neglecta* (dwarf mallow), *Senecio vulgaris* (groundsel), *Symphotrichum lanceolatum* var. *hesperium* (western line aster) and *Taraxacum officinale* (dandelion).

### What is an EcoQuest?

EcoQuests are part of the Denver EcoFlora Project. These monthly quests challenge citizens to become citizen scientists and observe, study and conserve the native plants of the Denver – Boulder metro area via iNaturalist, an easy-to-use mobile app.

### How Do I Get Started?

1. Download the iNaturalist app or register online at [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org).
2. Take photos of the plants in bloom that you find on your daily neighborhood walk. It is okay if they are weeds! Avoid taking photos of cultivated plants in gardens or in your home.

3. If you are concerned about revealing the location of sensitive plants or observations at your own house, you can hide the exact location from the public by changing the "geoprivacy" of the observation to "obscured."
4. Post your findings on iNaturalist via the app.
5. Your observations will automatically be added to the Denver EcoFlora Project.
6. Sign up to be a member of the [Denver EcoFlora Project](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/denver-ecoflora) on iNaturalist to receive updates and additional information.

### What is the Goal?

The Denver EcoFlora Project is designed to meaningfully connect citizens with biodiversity and to assemble novel observations and data on the metro area's flora to better inform policy decisions and conservation strategies.



Photo by Scott Dressel-Martin