



Oregon grape (*Berberis repens*) flowering this January. Typical flowering time for this species is early to mid-spring, with peak flowering April – June. [frwildflowers](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.



Front Range twinpod (*Physaria bellii*) flowering this February. This species is endemic and imperiled, meaning it only occurs in Colorado and is at high risk of extinction. Usually Front Range twinpod flowers March – May. [christian_nunes](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.

March EcoQuest: Early Bloomers Bioblitz

Have you noticed more flowers than usual for this time of year? Out-of-season blooming has been noted along the Front Range this winter. It is well documented that dry weather can lead to drought stress and trigger plants to bloom at unusual times of the year. This winter has been particularly dry and warm for the Denver metro area, causing it to look like spring earlier than usual.

Plant phenology is the timing of botanical life-cycle events, such as flowering or the development of leaves. Abnormal phenology, like these winter blooms, is a strong indicator of climate change impacts—with many spring events occurring

earlier and fall events happening later than they did in the past. Phenology not only affects the plant itself but any organism that depends on this plant for food. For example, insect emergence is often synchronized with host plants leafing out, or pollinators emerge when plants are blooming. Because ecosystems are a web of interconnected biodiversity, shifts in plant phenology can disrupt many organisms.

You can contribute to our understanding of which species are blooming early by documenting flowering plants you see in March and April. Post your findings to [iNaturalist](#) and they will be automatically added to the Denver EcoFlora Project.

What is an EcoQuest?

EcoQuests, part of the Denver EcoFlora project, challenge citizens to become citizen scientists and observe, study and conserve the native plants of the City via iNaturalist, an easy-to-use mobile app.

How Do I Get Started?

1. Download the iNaturalist app or register online at [iNaturalist.org](#).
2. Take photos of the plants in bloom that you find on your daily neighborhood walk. It is ok if they are weeds! But avoid taking photos of cultivated plants in gardens or in your home.
3. If you are concerned about revealing the location of sensitive organisms 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. You can add an identification to your photo when you post your findings on iNaturalist, or leave it blank for others to identify.

What is the Goal?

The 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