

May EcoQuest: American Black Currant



American Black Currant (*Ribes americanum*), [frwildflowers](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.



American Black Currant (*Ribes americanum*), [jessbee](#), some rights reserved, CC BY-NC.

This spring, join us in documenting American black currant (*Ribes americanum*). This species was first collected in Denver County in 1910 and 1911. Local botanists believed *Ribes americanum* was locally extinct in Denver until it was collected a hundred years later in 2011 along the Cherry Creek bike trail. To this day, only three collections exist in herbaria of American black currant in Denver.

More collections do exist in the wider Denver metro area, in places like Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms; additionally, there are a handful of [observations on iNaturalist](#). Documentation of this native shrub are especially meaningful because this species is listed as imperiled in Colorado (Globally Secure, State Imperiled, G5S2) yet can be found in our own local green spaces.

This species tends to grow in wet, shaded areas, often along streams or in riparian corridors. It has also been documented in natural areas such as along Bear Creek in Bear Valley Park, South Platte Park and Carson Nature Center, Roxborough State Park and Castlewood Canyon State Park.

American black currant belongs to the genus *Ribes*, a group that includes both currants and gooseberries. These shrubs have alternate, palmately veined leaves that often resemble small maple leaves. Gooseberries typically have spines, while currants (including this species) are unarmed. Around Denver, you're more likely to encounter golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), with bright yellow flowers, or wax currant (*Ribes cereum*), which has pink to white blooms and waxy foliage. To identify American black currant, look for a thornless shrub with 3-5 lobed leaves and small, bell-shaped flowers that are yellow-green to white. The key feature is the yellow, glandular dots on the underside of the leaves.

If you come across this species, document your observation on [iNaturalist](#) and be sure to include a photo of the yellow dots on the bottom of the leaf as it is essential for confirming an identification. Biodiversity records like this for rare, endangered or imperiled species are essential for conservation. We'll check back at the end of May to see what new populations you've helped uncover.

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](https://www.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.

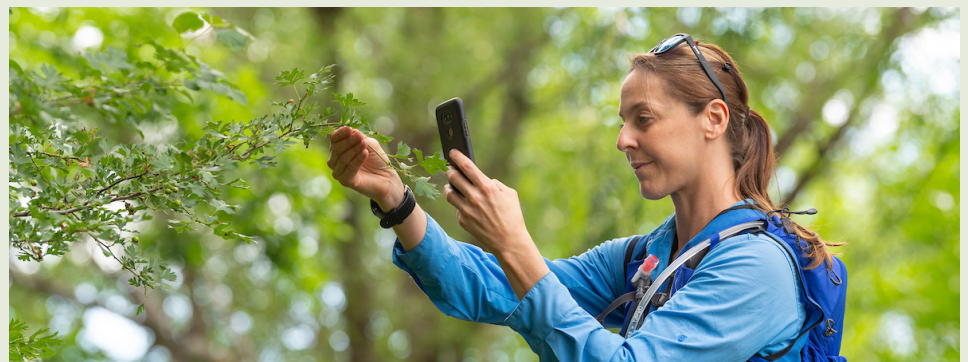


Photo by Scott Dressel-Martin