

# Researchers endeavor to document plant regions

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The science of seasonal observation has always mattered, but never has it been so urgent.

Each year, our seasons unfold. Perhaps they feel the same to us each time, or maybe we notice the slight differences. A lack of rain in the west, and a barrage of snow in the east. Flowers are blooming earlier, fruit is ripening sooner. So what's the big deal with some slightly confused flora? Well, that confusion ripples outward, and that matters because of how beholden all living things are to other living things. The complicated timing of our ecosystem is off-kilter.

[The California Phenology Project](#), led by UC Santa Barbara researchers, endeavors to document plant regions, flowering dates and other relevant data. This will allow them to understand the effects of climate change throughout the state of California. In the UC Natural Reserve System there are 3,300 [plant species](#). The list reads like a poem of plants you may have never heard of: Awned Fescue, Ripgut Grass, Winecup Clarkia. The idea is that when these plants bloom within the season (and how that differs year to year) actually is a clue, indicative of the world they are blossoming into.

The phenological observations of scientists and citizens alike will all contribute to the project's online resource, Nature's Notebook, a kind of Facebook for plants. (We would totally friend request the California Poppy, golden and archetypal as it is; and Winecup Clarkia too, in all its hot pink, magenta splendor.) But unlike the existential quandaries posed

by the social media site, this online notebook will begin to reveal some of the patterns of our natural world and what that might mean for our future. The task at hand to collect all of this data is too large for just the professional scientists; now is the chance for people to reconnect with their environment and become contributors to this project, citizen-scientists observing and noting the plant species in Golden Gate Park or in their own backyard. We all are capable of observing the plants around us. The California Poppy accepts your friendship request! What will you do now?

Provided by University of California

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