

# PHENOLOGY

By MG Bruce DuPlessis

The Miriam-Webster dictionary defines phenology as:

- 1:** a branch of science dealing with the relations between climate and periodic biological phenomena (such as bird migration or plant flowering)
- 2:** periodic biological phenomena that are correlated with climatic conditions

Simply, it is the study of the timing of the life-cycle events in plants and animals, such as flowering, leafing, hibernation, reproduction, and migration, just to name a few, and then letting nature's timing help us understand when to plant and harvest. People who study phenology are interested in and record the timing of events in relation to changes in season and climate.

Every Spring we wonder if we are ahead or behind where we should be, if Spring is early or late and how this year compares with previous years. By practicing phenology and maintaining records, we can gather information which is both interesting and useful. Here are a few examples of phenology, keeping in mind that nature's signs are different in every region.

- Blooming crocus are your cue to plant radishes, parsnips, and spinach.
- Look for dandelions to bloom before planting potatoes
- When the apple blossoms fall, plant pole beans and cucumbers

Also, be aware of the seasonal cues where you live. Observe the connection between "firsts" and what's happening in your yard and garden:

- record the dates of the first and last frost of the season
- record the first snowfall and when the snow finally leaves your yard in the Spring.
- record when various plants emerge from the soil
- record the first blooms of various plants
- record the first appearance of different insects
- record soil temperatures. (I begin April 1st and continue weekly well into the fall.)

These are only a few of the practices that can be used to develop your own phenological data.