

Project Budburst

by Paul Alaback

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Using your favorite local trail or nearby park, you can join the national effort to document how wildflowers and trees are responding to climate change.

A new nationwide initiative enables volunteers to track climate change by observing the timing of flowers and foliage. Project Budburst, operated by the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research and a team of partners that includes The University of Montana, allows students, gardeners and other citizen scientists in every state to enter their observations into an online database, giving researchers a detailed picture of our warming climate.

The project, which started Feb. 18, will operate year-round so that early- and late-blooming species in different parts of the country can be monitored throughout their life cycles. Project Budburst builds on a pilot program carried out last spring, when several thousand participants recorded the timing of the leafing and flowering of hundreds of plant species in 26 states.

UM researchers Carol Brewer and Paul Alaback are collaborators on the project, along with the Chicago Botanic Garden and UCAR. The project also is supported by the National Science Foundation and Windows to the Universe, a UCAR-based Web site that will host the project online as part of its citizen science efforts.

Contact Paul Alaback (palaback@gmail.com) or visit www.windows.ucar.edu/citizen_science/budburst.