



**Questions and Answers from the webinar  
“Basic Botany and Tricky Phenophases”  
April 21, 2015**

**1. How often – daily or weekly – would you like observations?**

We generally suggest observing your plants at least once a week during the growing season, but up to 2 or 3 times a week when the life stages are changing quickly, such as in the spring or fall. When your plants are dormant you can observe far less frequently, such as during the cold winters of the northern US.

**2. How can I edit my observations once I have entered them?**

If you wish to correct your observation data for a particular visit, navigate to that column using the arrows at the top or bottom of your *Nature's Notebook* Enter Observations page. Then change the “y”, “n”, and “?” responses to the correct ones for that visit. If you entered the wrong date or time and need to change it, click “Delete” at the top of each species' column for that visit to remove those records. Then create a new column with the correct date and time and reenter your observation data. If you wish to deselect a circled “y”, “n”, or “?” to leave all choices uncircled for a phenophase (meaning you did not check for that phenophase on that visit), you will need to delete that visit's column for the species and reenter the data.

**3. For “Flowers or flower buds”, what do you report if you see unopened buds but you can't tell yet if they are leaf buds or flower buds?**

It may take a year of observation before you become familiar enough with your plant species to know whether you are seeing the development of leaf or flower buds. In the meantime, watch carefully as the bud develops and use the “?” option to indicate you are not sure whether you are seeing the “Flowers or flower buds” phenophase. Once the bud breaks and you can determine whether it was a leaf or flower bud, you can go back and edit your “?” observations to either “yes” or “no” as appropriate.

**4. How do we track pollen, such as in red maple?**

There is a phenophase called “Pollen release” for those *Nature's Notebook* species whose pollen can cause allergic reactions. The definition reads “One or more flowers on the plant release visible pollen grains when gently shaken or blown into your palm or onto a dark surface”. Look for pollen once the male flowers have opened. Note that red maple (*Acer rubrum*) can be dioecious and therefore some individuals may not have male flowers, and thus no pollen. Also note that if the flowers are out of reach in a tall tree, you may not be able to determine whether pollen is being released. If this is the case you may choose to ignore this phenophase and not report any pollen observations for your individual tree.

**5. If I have a patch of Trout Lily, and some of the leaves are breaking through, but others are unfolded, can I report that “Yes” they are starting their initial growth?**

Yes. If any of the individual plants within your patch have sprouted but not yet unfolded their first leaf, you should report “yes” to the “Initial growth” phenophase. For trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*), each individual has only one or two leaves that sprout from the ground tightly rolled up, then gradually unroll as the leaf grows longer. If they are sprouting through dense leaf litter, then may already be unrolled by the time they become visible. If this is the case in your patch, you might not observe the “initial growth” phenophase, and that is fine. It is not recommended that you disturb the leaf litter in order to catch this phenophase.

**6. In estimating percent canopy cover, would you count dead limbs as part of the estimation?**

No. When a large portion of the tree is dead and never produces leaves, ignore this part of the branching canopy when estimating percentages. Use a photo or “mind’s eye picture” of the tree when it is fully leaved out in summer as your basis for what 100% full with leaves looks like.

**7. Are pictorial guides of phenophases available?**

Not yet. We are developing a Phenophase Primer to be released in the spring of 2016 that will illustrate the phenophases in detail for different plant functional groups (e.g. forbs, grasses, deciduous tree and shrubs, evergreen trees and shrubs, conifers). This primer will not include an exhaustive collection of photos for all of the *Nature’s Notebook* species, but we hope will include enough information for observers to better understand what to look for on their particular species of interest. Pictorial guides for specific species are being developed by some of our partners and we will share those with the larger community when they are available.

**8. If we're not sure of what we're seeing, can we send a photo for help?**

We are a small office and have limited capacity to help identify species or phenophases at your site. If you have access to a local phenology leader, we’d would prefer if you ask them your questions before contacting the USA-NPN National Coordinating Office. However, if you cannot find help locally, you can send us your questions at [observe@usanpn.org](mailto:observe@usanpn.org). We probably will not be able to help you unless you send us relatively high resolution, up-close photos that are in sharp focus.

**Helpful links:**

Botany Primer: [www.usanpn.org/files/shared/files/USA-NPN\\_Botany-Primer.pdf](http://www.usanpn.org/files/shared/files/USA-NPN_Botany-Primer.pdf)

Frequently Asked Question page: [www.usanpn.org/nn/faq](http://www.usanpn.org/nn/faq)

Become an Observer: [www.usanpn.org/nn/become-observer](http://www.usanpn.org/nn/become-observer)

Learn How to Observe: [www.usanpn.org/nn/guidelines](http://www.usanpn.org/nn/guidelines)

Join a Nature’s Notebook Campaign: [www.usanpn.org/nn/campaigns](http://www.usanpn.org/nn/campaigns)

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