

# Live Free and Dig

## with the Littleton Garden Club

### *Following nature*

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Littleton Garden Club

Do you jot notes on your calendar about when natural events occur? Maybe you record the arrival of bluebirds, when the wood frogs begin quacking in the ponds, or when you see the last hummingbird of the season.

Lots of people do this, often keeping previous years' calendars and checking to see if the events they record occur on the same day of the year, or a little earlier or later. While the timing of natural phenomena isn't exactly the same from year to year, it's been remarkably similar over the eons, often within a few days of a given date for a given location. The timing of cyclic and seasonally occurring events, especially related to plant

and animal life, is called phenology.

When I think of phenology, I think of naturalist Mary Holland and her award-winning book, "Naturally Curious." As the cover of the book notes, it's a photographic field guide and month-by-month journey through the fields, woods, and marshes of New England.

Holland also has a Web site called Naturally Curious. Her book is divided into chapters that outline what happens in nature each month. The book begins with March because this is the month that so many things in nature are waking up and coming alive.

Each chapter alerts the reader to the natural changes and events to look for in mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, and plants. I thumb

through the pages regularly. They are rich with photos, so I know what to look for and be conscious of when I'm outside.

My friends sometimes comment on how much I seem to know about nature. In truth, I owe this to Holland's book and use it as a "cheat sheet" every month.

Awareness of natural cycles provides a sense of connection with the earth. While the dates of some natural events may be shifting due to climate change, the annual cycle of natural phenomena comforts.

These cycles and events, whether it's the arrival of the red-winged blackbird or the first bright yellow coltsfoot flower bursting through the gravel on the side of a country road, are something to anticipate

with certainty in our ever-changing world.

Do you make notes on your calendar of what you're observing in nature? Spring is a great time to start the habit or get back into it.

As Mary Holland notes, tuning in to seasonal lives, activities, and the adaptations of animals and plants fosters curiosity and a sense of stewardship of the natural environment. Join me in building your awareness and curiosity about what's happening in our natural world. If you have the opportunity, bring a child on this wonderful journey. It will be a lifelong gift.

For more information about the club and our meetings, please visit [www.littletonnhgardenclub.org](http://www.littletonnhgardenclub.org).