

About This Project

The phenology project was originally established to support the Garden's application for Level II accreditation under the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program, through the photographic documentation of key seasonal stages in a selected group of trees.

That objective has now been achieved, with the Garden attaining Level II Accreditation.

With this milestone complete, the focus of the project is evolving. While ongoing phenological observation remains valuable, the emphasis is now shifting toward expanding coverage beyond the original selection of trees and contributing to a more complete record of the Garden's living collection.

In practical terms, this involves photographing and documenting additional species and aligning those records with the Hortis database, supporting the development of a comprehensive and accessible inventory of the Garden's plants.

A recent change to the Phenology website is the addition of a page for each plant – “Phenology Walk”. This page collects information about the plant, potentially beyond Hortis, such as Medicinal Uses – useful for tour guides.

While the Phenology website is publicly accessible, its content is intended primarily for internal use by project participants and Garden staff. Visitors are welcome to explore, but please note that the material here is technical in nature and tailored to the specific objectives of this phenological research.

How the Project Operates

- The Garden is conceptually divided into two sections which I call Front and Back.
- Trees are photographed on a rotating schedule (Front on Saturday, Back on Wednesday)
- Images document observed phenological stages (leaf, flower, fruit, etc.)
- Observations are published on the website and shared with the Project Coordinator who then correlates with the Garden's Hortis system.
- Data is visual-first, supported by notes as appropriate.

Roles & Definitions

To support the clarity and consistency of the Phenology Project at The Garden, the following roles and terms help define how participants contribute and how the project operates.

Project Roles

1. Project Coordinator

Currently: Sarah D. (Horticulture Manager)

Leads the overall direction of the Phenology Project. Responsible for setting scientific standards, approving candidate specimens, reviewing submitted observations, and ensuring alignment with ArbNet Level II accreditation requirements.

2. Photographer / Image Archivist

Currently: John

Responsible for photographing selected trees and shrubs throughout the year to document seasonal changes. Maintains an organized digital archive, names and catalogs phenology entries, and provides visual data to support the arboretum's phenological record.

3. Field Observer / Contributor

Currently: None assigned

Assists in locating and tagging potential new candidates for inclusion in the project. Provides written field notes, morphological observations, and/or preliminary documentation for review. Collaborates with the Coordinator for plant verification and relevance.

4. Arboretum Accreditation Reviewer (external role)

Currently: None assigned

Associated with ArbNet, this role pertains to individuals or groups outside The Garden who evaluate submitted documentation as part of the Level II accreditation process. Not directly involved in day-to-day project activities.

Definitions

Phenology

The study of recurring biological events and how these are influenced by seasonal and climatic changes—such as flowering, fruiting, leafing, and dormancy in plants.

Eligible Trees/Shrubs

Plants growing within The Garden that meet the following criteria:

- Are individually identifiable (via signage, coordinates, or consistent traits)
- Exhibit clear, observable seasonal changes
- Are considered viable candidates for inclusion in the Arboretum Database under ArbNet guidelines

Tagged Candidates

Unlabeled or unregistered trees/shrubs identified by contributors as potentially eligible for

phenological tracking. These are proposed to the Managing Herbalist for evaluation before formal inclusion.

Phenology Entry

A collection of photographs and written notes capturing specific seasonal changes (e.g., bud break, first bloom, fruiting, leaf fall) for a registered tree. Each entry is timestamped and stored in that tree's digital folder for review and selection.

The Garden

Refers to the St. George Village Botanical Garden in St. Croix, USVI—the physical site of study and observation.