

## **Topic: Where to find the first flowers of spring.**

Rocuses, snowdrops, hellebores, and daffodils are some of the flowers that tend to bloom earliest in spring gardens. While these varieties are not native to the United States, they have been planted for decades in gardens across the country and often have naturalized, meaning they can reproduce in the wild without human intervention. Other blooms include wildflowers, such as violet-indigo spikes of Texas bluebonnet that crop up on roadsides in the state; trumpet-shaped Virginia bluebells appearing across eastern North America; and desert blooms that bring color to parts of the West.

In 2026, the first blooms of the year are already visible in the southernmost parts of Texas, Arizona, and California, according to the National Phenology Network's First Bloom Index. That index is based on lilacs and honeysuckles, which the network notes are the first woody plants to leaf out and bloom in the springtime.

In general, spring—as measured by first leaf dates between 1991 and 2020—has been arriving earlier across much of the continental United States, driven by climate change. However, first bloom dates over the same period, compared to the 20th-century average, are more mixed, with earlier-than-average flowering centered in the West, parts of the Midwest, and the Northeast.

Regardless of when spring begins, there are a few reasons why certain flowers are the first to usher in the season. Many early-flowering plants take advantage of the fact that deciduous trees have not yet grown out their leaves, allowing light and warmth to reach them as the days lengthen. Many bulb and corm varieties that are planted in the fall, such as daffodils and snowdrops, benefit from the dormancy of winter. They grow their roots and convert water to energy during the cold months, in the process bypassing competition from trees and surrounding plants for nutrients.