

Real Spring Or Just A Temporary Warm Spell?

You wake up and it's a bright, sunshiney day, and the feeling of spring is in the air. You think that tomorrow may be a great day to put out your seedlings and uncover your bushes.

Unfortunately, tomorrow dawns bleak and chilly, and that hint of spring is nowhere to be found. Good thing you waited to [put your plants out](#).

There are some signs that will give you a good idea of whether or not spring is here to stay, and that's what we're going to discuss today.

[The old timers](#) didn't have news and weather channels to tell them what the forecast for the next week or month was going to be, nor was there a national weather center to monitor cold fronts and weather patterns to determine if winter was finally at an end. They had to depend upon the signs of nature around them, and they learned quickly what those signs were.

After all, if they set their plants out too early, they'd lose them to a late frost. If they set them out too late, they wouldn't be mature by harvest time. Survival depended upon knowing the signs of spring, and it's important that you know these signs as well. If SHTF, you may just find yourself back in the days where you have nothing but those signs to go on.

First off, know that Punxsutawney Phil definitely doesn't know what he's talking about, at least not on a scientific level. It's said that if he comes out and stays out on Groundhog Day in early February, spring is here to stay, but if he sees his shadow and goes back in, then we're in for another 6 weeks of bad weather.

He's only been right 39% of the time, so don't count on that.

Speaking of which, who actually took the time to figure that number? Oh well, on to the important stuff.

Birds

The first sure-fire sign that spring is on the way is that [birds start returning](#) and getting ready to mate. Some birds are around all year, but even those start to act differently when winter is coming to an end.

Owls, including great horned, barred, and eastern screech owls, start getting noisy in late winter because they're establishing territory and getting ready to breed. If you listen closely at night and hear owls, you know that winter is about to end.

Hawks start grouping together and begin to act like they're really having a good time, showing off for their mates by diving, screaming, and practicing acrobatics. You'll start to see them in late winter /early spring. When you do, warm weather isn't far behind.

Woodpeckers start drumming in early spring and carry on til late fall. You may not know it, but they use their drumming for attracting mates as well as to find bugs for breakfast or dinner.

Blue birds and cardinals really start showing up in force in spring. You may see a stray one around during the winter, but when you start seeing them regularly, you can be sure that spring isn't far behind.

Songbirds and peepers show back up in early spring. When you start hearing these birds happily tweeting their tunes, you can start breaking out your gardening tools.

Look To The Clouds

You've probably noticed that winter clouds are heavy and ominous looking. Spring clouds, like spring herself, are

lighter and have a bit more spring in their steps. Mare's tail clouds are a great indicator that spring has arrived.

As warm fronts move in, they start to melt the high-altitude ice clouds, blowing them away as the ice melts. They look wispy and similar to hair blowing.

Kittens and Other Baby Animals

Kittens and sheep in particular wait til it warms up to start having babies. If you see kittens and lambs in abundance, spring is here to stay.

Trees and Shrubs Bloom

Believe it or not, trees actually grow their buds in the fall. In the spring, they start to grow and become obvious because they start to change colors.

Maple trees are some of the earliest trees to show their leaves. Easter lilies show up fairly early, too.

Pear trees actually bloom with their beautiful flowers before they get leaves, but they're a fabulous harbinger of warm weather. If you see dogwoods and magnolias in bloom, spring has officially arrived.

The Smell of Spring

That's right – spring has a specific smell. It smells like damp earth, ozone and organics. You know the one. It smells fresh and clean, like the entire world has been washed clean after a thunderstorm.

Greens are Popping Through

Small greens like sorrel, vines, clover and ramps (found in Appalachia) start to poke through the earth.

You'll also notice that grass is starting to shoot through the ground, as are all kinds of little green shoots. You may even

notice your manure pile is starting to grow sprouts.

You Drive Home Before it's Dark

As spring slips quietly over us, the days begin to get longer. You'll have some daylight left when you get home and you'll notice that your sleep patterns may start to change as well.

Allergies Kick In

Aww, you didn't think *everything* on the list was going to be positive did you?

If you have allergies or hay fever, you'll know that winter is over because you'll start that entire cycle of itching, watery eyes, headache and sneezing begins with a bang. Grab the Kleenexes and allergy meds along with your lighter spring jacket.

Mosquitoes and Flies Reappear

Again, not such a positive thing, but the reappearance of [flies and mosquitoes](#) won't happen until the spring thaw is over.

Since they have such short lifespans, you won't see these pests until winter is well and truly over.

Caterpillars, Butterflies and Hummingbirds

These lovely creatures are definitely harbingers of spring. When you see the caterpillars on the sidewalks and in the trees, and the hummingbirds start flitting around begging for sugar water, warm weather is sure to follow.

Thunderstorms

Again, this has to do with the warm air rushing in and clashing with the cold air. Spring thunderstorms are a true [weather indicator](#) because there's no doubting science. If the warm air is up there, it's going to be making its way down to

us in a more permanent fashion shortly.

There are many indicators that spring is coming, and even more that it's here to stay. Be sure to wait until you're relatively sure that you're through the cold stuff to plant your tender young plants outside.

With that being said, a light frost can be dealt with simply by covering your plants with plastic or irrigating them with water to keep them from freezing, so if you happen to have one or two more light frosts after you put your plants out, it's probably not going to be the end of the world.

I'm sure that I've missed other signs that winter is over for good, so if you know of one, please share it with us in the comments section below!



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Took With Them When They
Traveled For Months**

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