

update on the

phenology project

landscapeperformanceLAB | auburn university



investigation 001 plant list

In 2009, a rogue group of people [landscape architecture and horticulture] at Auburn University united forces, under the alias of the Landscape PerformanceLAB, to advocate that the landscape be understood as an operable, performing, dynamic component of the built environment. We believe that plants in particular are dynamic, spatial, active, structural, relational, functional, performative. As such, we need to more aggressively and carefully understand plants and how they grow and change through time. A modest seed grant was garnered for investigation 001 of the LandscapePerformanceLAB entitled "the quantification + representation of landscape ephemerality," but affectionately rechristened as the Phenology Project. Phenology is simply the study of annual life cycles of plants and animals. Seasonal observations, called phenophases, have been recorded for ages by gardeners and naturalists, such as Robert Marsham, Thomas Jefferson, Aldo Leopold, and William Felker. These records document the exact date particular plant species leaf out, flower, seed, and/or drop their leaves. More recently, the science of phenology is experiencing

a resurgence of interest as climatologists have employed the early phenological records to understand and quantify climatic variation.

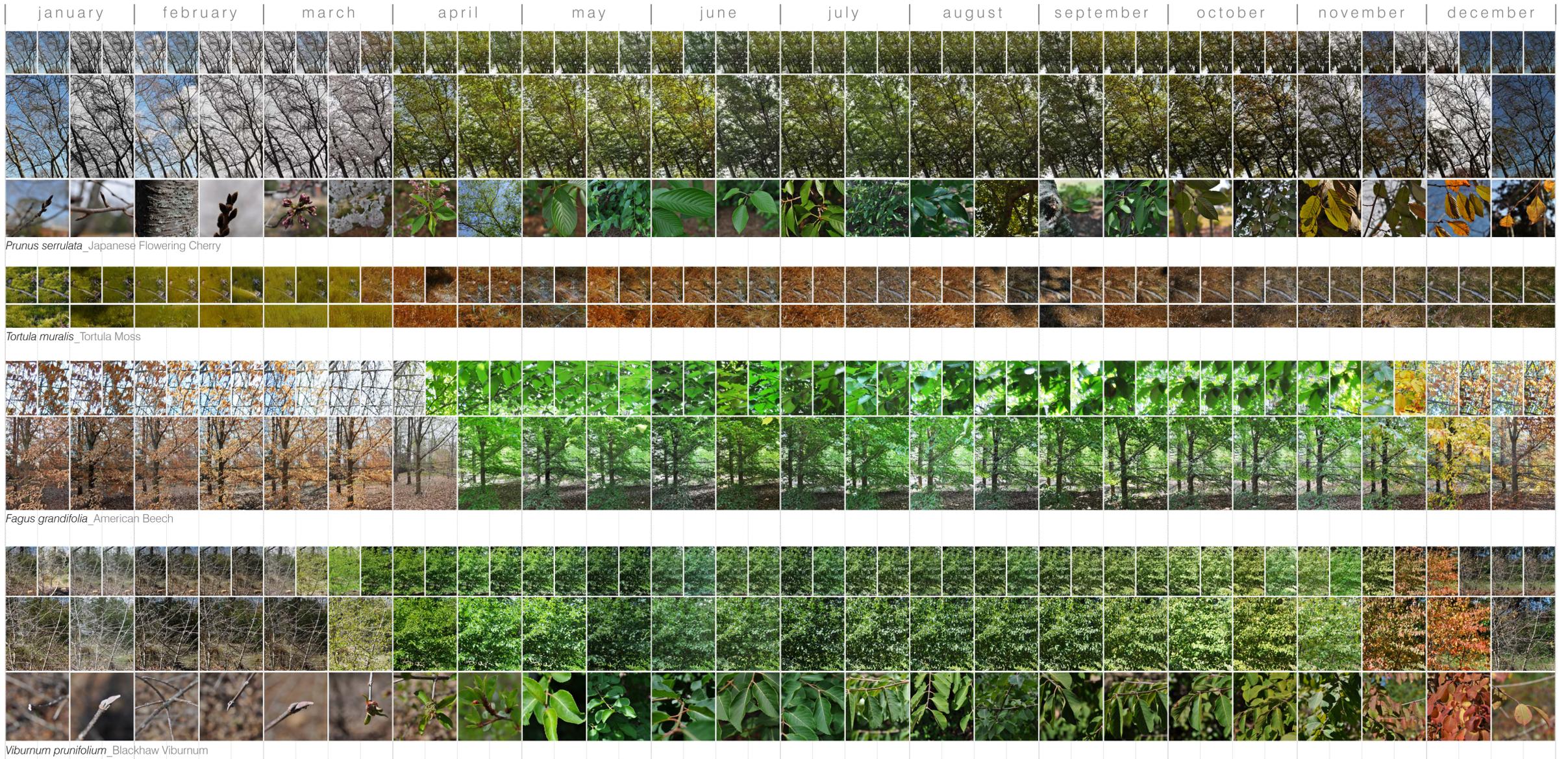
To date, the majority of data collected on phenological events of a plant have been recorded in the form of written descriptions. For example, in A Sand County Almanac, published in 1949, Aldo Leopold records "This year I found the Siphium in first bloom on 24 July, a week later than usual; during the last six years the average date was 15 July." The LandscapePerformanceLAB's Phenology Project will begin to integrate the work of climatologists, ecologists, and naturalists with landscape architects to advance the documentation of plant phenology beyond mere textual descriptions by capturing the spatial and textural qualities of the plants during each phenological event. Through a series of still photographs taken from the same vantage point at the same time each week, the ephemerality of a specific palette of plants will be chronicled through an entire season.

As the spatial and textural qualities of each plant were gathered, the investigation team experimented with various representational strategies that conveyed the dynamic qualities of the plants. These representational inquiries will be continued, compiled, refined, and incorporated into an interactive website that chronicles the select palette of plants through the entire season. Eventually, a designer will be able to maneuver through this virtual site to observe the seasonal spatial relationships between multiple plants and intentionally choreograph that dynamism in a design proposal. Beyond simply visual stimulation of flower sequences, this ephemeral performance could have intentional, strategic bearing on textural and spatial relationships. Treewoods could be reconceived as scirms that provide opacity in the summer and transparency in the winter. Landscape rooms defined by deciduous shrubs and perennials could emerge and vanish through the cycles of the seasons. The study of phenology reveals tremendous opportunities for the dynamic engagement of plants in the landscape.

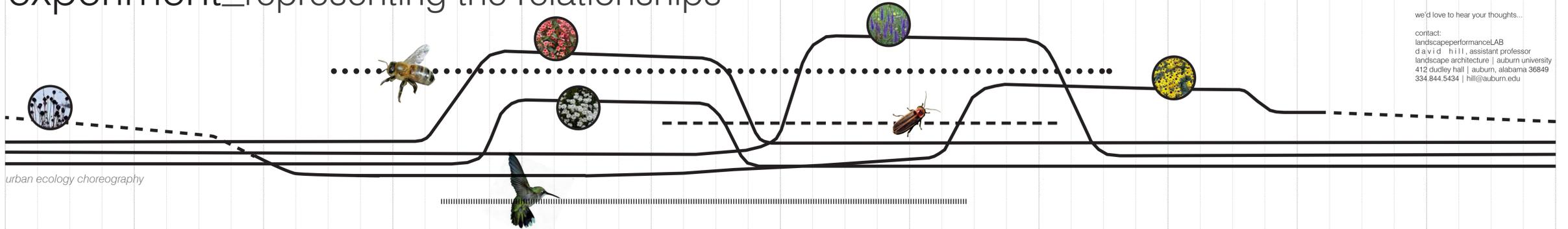
15,396 photographs of 32 species captured every 7 days for 1 year

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|-------|---|--|------------------------|---|---|
| trees | <i>Amelanchier alabamensis</i>
<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>
<i>Amelanchier laevis</i>
<i>Betula nigra</i>
<i>Carya glabra</i>
<i>Catalpa bignonioides</i>
<i>Celtis laevigata</i>
<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>
<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>
<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>
<i>Ilex decidua</i>
<i>Prunus serrulata</i>
<i>Sassafras albidum</i>
<i>Viburnum prunifolium</i>
<i>Viburnum rufidulum</i> | Alabama Serviceberry
Downy Serviceberry
Allegheny Serviceberry
River Birch
Pignut Hickory
Southern Catalpa
Sugarberry
Fringetree
Persimmon
American Beech
Possumhaw
Japanese Flowering Cherry
Sassafras
Blackhaw Viburnum
Rusty Blackhaw | shrubs | <i>Aesculus parviflora</i>
<i>Asimina parviflora</i>
<i>Calliopsis americana</i>
<i>Corylus americana</i>
<i>Croton alabamensis</i>
<i>Fothergilla major</i>
<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>
<i>H. quercifolia</i> 'Snowflake'
<i>Itea virginica</i>
<i>Rhododendron alabamense</i>
<i>Rhododendron austrinum</i>
<i>Rhododendron prunifolium</i> | Bottlebrush Buckeye
Dwarf Pawpaw
American Beautyberry
American Hazelnut
Alabama Croton
Fothergilla
Oakleaf Hydrangea
Snowflake Hydrangea
Virginia Sweetspire
Alabama Azalea
Florida Azalea
Plumleaf Azalea |
| | | | forbs, ferns, & mosses | <i>Athyrium filix femina</i>
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>
<i>Oncoclea sensibilis</i>
<i>Tortula muralis</i>
<i>Woodwardia areolata</i> | Southern Lady Fern
Purple Coneflower
Sensitive Fern
Tortula Moss
Netted Chain Fern |

observe_recording the richness



experiment_representing the relationships



texture



transparencies