



THE HUNT IS ON
Find a local Easter event
FRONT RANGE, A3



SPRING RECREATION
Take advantage of sun, snow
OUTPOST, B1

REPORTER-HERALD

winter



spring



summer



autumn



Reporter-Herald/JENNY SPARKS

A honeybee takes flight after collecting nectar from a Japanese iris flower Wednesday near the Loveland Public Library.

Spring is here

The official start to state's most unpredictable season arrives

REPORTER-HERALD STAFF

You pause, lifting your face to the sun. A light breeze carries the scent of spring. A thin veil of clouds on the far horizon gives way to a full blue sky. This is why you live in Colorado.

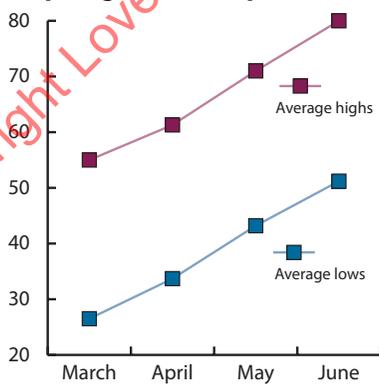
Twenty minutes later, it's snowing.

"That's the neat thing about spring," said Colorado State Climatologist Nolan Doesken. "It's the one time of year practically everything happens — the only thing we lack ... is subzero temperatures."

Starting today, and in the next eight weeks, people living on the Front Range should expect "every weather element there is — rain, snow, thunderstorms, lightning, hail, warm days, cold days, fog and even the possibility of severe weather, especially in May," said

SEE SPRING, PAGE A2

Springtime temperatures



Springtime in history

April 12, 1997: Low temperature sinks to 9 degrees, the latest for single digits.

April 30, 1992: High temperature of 88 degrees is the warmest April day on record.

May 29, 2000, and June 7, 2000: Highs reach 98 and 97 degrees, respectively, helping to dry out the forest before the Bobcat Gulch fire west of Loveland, which started in June.

When do I plant my tomatoes?

Area gardeners often get the urge to plant hothouse plants such as tomatoes in mid-April, when daytime high temperatures climb into the 70s and even the low 80s.

Take note, however, that the average final freeze date for the region is in the second week of May.

According to the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, gardeners have a 70 percent chance of losing their plants to a freeze if they put them in the ground by May 1.

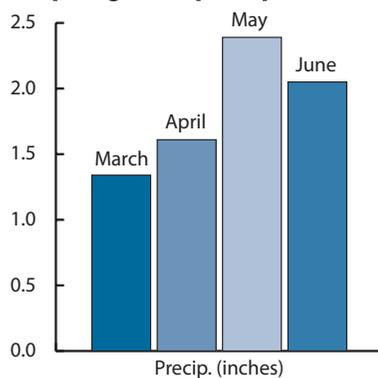
But we need the moisture ...

Forecasters say of all seasons, the weather in spring is the toughest to predict. When cold and warm air systems collide, they can wreak havoc, or at least crimp people's plans.

And when systems bring moisture from the Gulf of Mexico, all bets are off. "We could be thinking there will be drought conditions," Nolan Doesken said, "and in one fell swoop, there's a total change in the picture."

Doesken said without spring snow, the region thirsts.

Springtime precipitation



Springtime in history

April 11, 2005: More than a foot of snow falls in Loveland, only a day after sunny, warm weather.

April 24, 1997: Snow fell at more than an inch an hour through most of the day, totaling 2.33 inches of precipitation as recorded by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.



May 3, 2001
Loveland



May 22, 2003
Alpine Visitor Center, RMNP



March 27, 2000
Benson Sculpture Park



June 18, 2000
Bobcat Gulch

SPRING:

Season is full of surprises in Colorado

FROM PAGE A1

Don Day Jr. of DayWeather in Cheyenne, Wyo.

Spring is the one time of year when the Front Range can have several cloudy days in a row, said Doesken, often a source of irritation for sun-loving Coloradans. April, he said, is usually the snowiest month of the year in the foothills, and May is historically the wettest month in Loveland.

Those spring storms often come in the form of thunder and lightning storms that begin gradually in March and early April, Doesken said, hitting their stride in May and early June.

SPRING MEMORIES

Even the weather forecasters have spring days that surprise them.

Doesken said that in 1999, he and his family had driven to Laramie, Wyo., on a sunny 70-degree spring day.

"We noticed that every time we'd drive by an electric thermometer, it would show it was getting 10 degrees colder by the hour," he said. "Then it started to snow, so we drove back to Fort Collins on 287. We were going about 50 miles per hour, and the wind was driving the snow so powerfully it was passing us."

Day said he laughs a bit each spring, because "people forget so easily — it's amazing how our weather memory goes away so quickly."

Last year in early June, for example, much of the area got snow, he said. It has happened before, but many were surprised, because they'd had glimpses of sunny, warm weather.

"The only two months in the Front Range that don't usually have measurable snow are July and August," Day said. "We're usually safe from snow by the third week of May, but you never know."

SO WHAT'S AHEAD?

What do Day and Doesken predict for this spring?

"We're seeing a lot of really stormy weather in the Midwest and on the East Coast," Day said. "Across the lower 48 states, it's going to be a very active March and April in terms of storms. The eastern and central areas of the country will get it worse than here, but Colorado will get in on some of it."

Doesken said that rapid change characterizes spring.

"We will probably see an abrupt change from one condition to another from one day to another," he said, "or we could see a whole line of weather conditions all in the same day."

It's spring as usual.