

Four Seasons or Six?

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Everyone knows the four seasons, Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter.

In the spring we cherish the appearance of the very first bulbs- snowdrops, which sometimes actually peep through the snow. They are followed by a riot of colorful blooms: crocuses, aconites, squill, then the larger bulbs, daffodils and tulips. Then come the precious woodland ephemerals: trillium, ladies slippers and trout lilies. As the soil warms up, it's time to plant early vegetable seeds: spinach, peas, kale, and radishes.

Summer is the time for glorious displays of perennial and annual flowers,. That is time to plant all manner of vegetables and go fishing.

Harvesting vegetables begins soon and into Fall, when we think of putting the garden to bed. In November, hunting season, many people fill their freezers with meat for the whole year if they are lucky.

Winter is a time for hunter gathers to rest. Devoted gardeners browse catalogs for vegetable and flower seeds. We grow herbs and sprouts under indoor lights. Then, as Spring approaches, we start vegetable and flower seeds indoors. This progression seems obvious and natural to us.

My sister, who lives in Western Australia, tells me that Indigenous people (Noongar) marked the seasons and divided the year in another way. It reflects their different and much warmer climate. Hunters and gatherers, they were guided by signs in nature. Which animal and plant resources were plentiful at each time. There are six named seasons and each season has a color associated with it.

Birak. December - January. Color: red, symbolizing heat, sun and fire. The Australian summer begins. It is hot and dry. Traditionally scrub was burned to encourage seeds to germinate and new shoots to grow.

Bunuru. February - March. Represented by orange, and the hottest season. There is no rain. A great time to go fishing by the coast, or in the rivers and estuaries, rather than tending the garden. Freshwater foods and seafood were important in the Noongar diet at this time.

Djeran. April - May. Green is the color of this season. Cooler nights and dewy mornings. Leaves fall. Seed cones form. Foods at this time of the year were seeds from storage, root crops, and freshwater fish. The beautiful Australian Banksia flower, providing nectar for the many small mammals and birds that rely on them. The traditional houses of the Noongar were repaired in preparation for the colder winter months to come.

Makuru. June - July. This season is represented by the color **dark blue**, symbolizing rain and cooler weather, with rain and storms. Blue lilies and purple flags bloom. Families who had moved to the coast during the summer months moved back inland away from

the coastal winds. Very occasionally snow might be seen on the high peaks. This is the inland hunting season, the game being kangaroo, emu, goanna, possum and bandicoot.

Djiba. August - September. The color of the season is *pink*, the hue of many wildflowers blooming at this time. Like our Spring, weather alternates between cold, clear days and warmer, rainy days, with welcome sunny periods from time to time. Flowering plants and fruit trees begin to sprout. Food sources continue to be grazing animals, whose young are coming into the world.

Kambarang. October - November. Represented by the color *yellow*, symbolizing the coming of longer days and warmer weather. Colorful flowers explode into full bloom and plants used for food, medicine, crafts tools and ceremonies are harvested. Snakes and other reptiles emerge from hibernation.

What I really like about the Noongar seasons is that each is represented by a color.

What colors would we give our seasons?

Should Hunting Season and Mud Season take their place in our calendar year? Some would say that we have six seasons too.

Something to think about!

The Littleton Garden Club is an active group welcoming new members from around the area! Learn more about our club and meetings at: <https://www.littletonnhgardenclub.org/>



The flower of Banksia prionotes, the Iconic Western Australian Tree