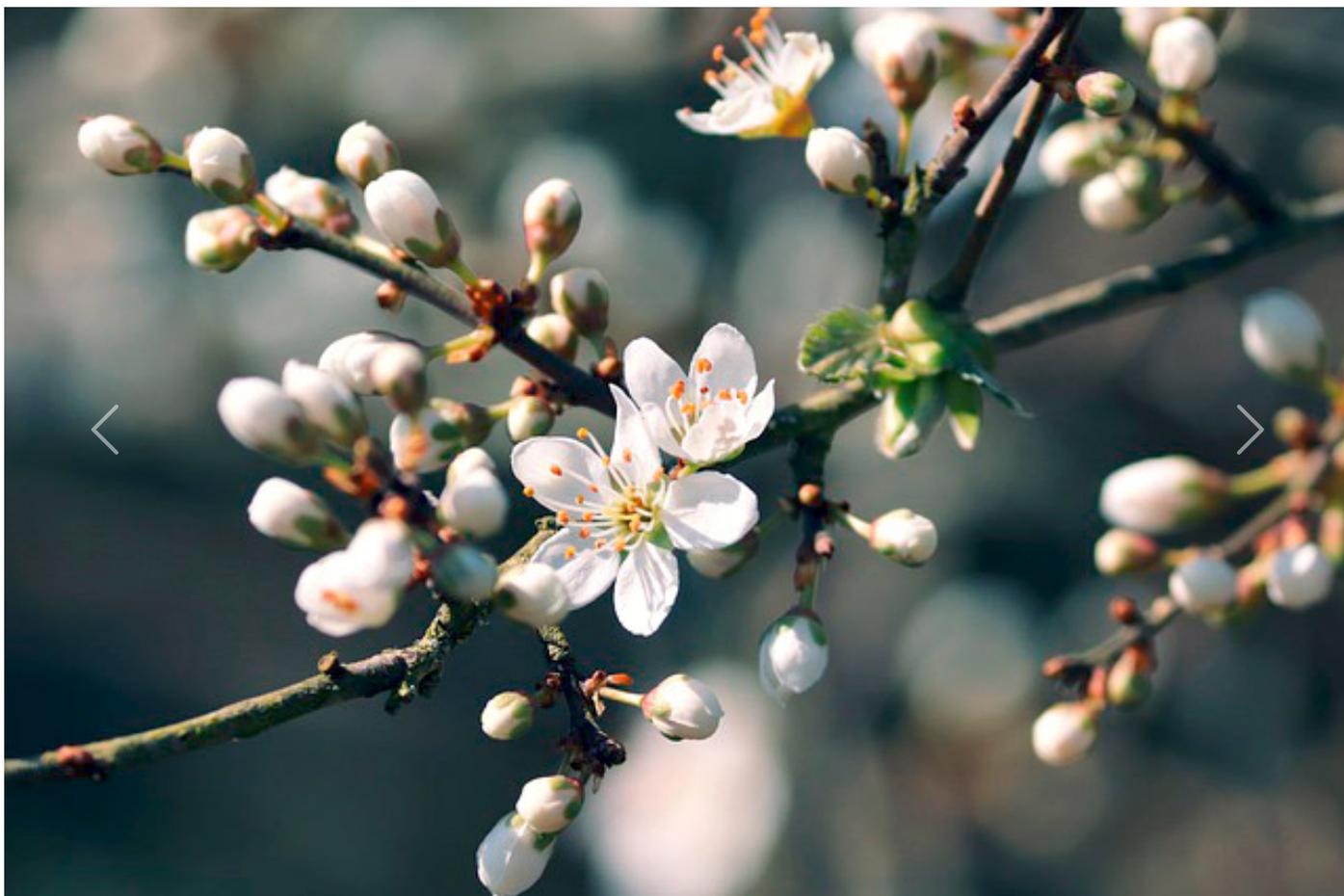


In anticipation of spring

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This year the spring equinox occurs today, 20 March, precisely at 17:33 Bulgarian time. At that moment the Sun will be in the Northern Hemisphere instead of the Southern. The day will become equal to the night, and from 21 March its duration will be longer. It is considered that from this moment the frosts come to an end and the warming of the Earth begins.

And although the calendar shows that it is time for more sunshine and a spring mood, we will have to endure a little longer the caprices of the month of March.

On Monday to Tuesday, winter is expected to show its temper for the last time – icy wind and low daytime temperatures with slight fluctuations.

The agrometeorological conditions will be determined by temperatures significantly below the climatic norms for the second half of March, which will hold back the development of the autumn-sown crops and the permanent crops. The forecast negative minimum temperatures at the end of the second ten-day period, in places down to minus 7-8°C, are above the critical levels for fruit crops in the stages of bud swelling and bud burst. These values, if they persist for a longer time, will once again threaten with damage the most advanced stone fruit species (almond, apricot).

From Thursday a substantial increase in temperatures is forecast and average daily values in the lowland areas close to the biological minimum required for the resumption of vegetative processes in winter cereal crops. In wheat, at the beginning of spring vegetation, the tillering stage will prevail. In the third leaf stage are mainly some of the late-sown stands.

By the end of next week the conditions will be unsuitable for carrying out pre-blossom plant protection spraying in fruit crops. The expected precipitation during the second half of the period will maintain high moisture content in the upper soil layers, which will hinder the pre-sowing tillage of the areas designated for sowing early and medium-early spring crops. For this reason, in some of the southern regions the optimal agrotechnical deadlines for sunflower sowing, by the middle of the third ten-day period of March, will be missed.