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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
Secretary, American Meteorological Society
says:

SPRING SHOWERS ARE DIFFERENT

Spring showers are characteristic of the season. They have an individuality of their own. They come at a time when the ground is still damp from the melting snows and early spring rains, and when the atmosphere at moderate heights is still cold after the winter temperatures. The warm sun of the lengthening days heats up the earth's surface, and the lower air levels become warm and moist. The result is a sharp temperature contrast between the lower air and the atmosphere not very high above it.

The ground air expands, convection starts, and the vertical currents begin to flow, the hot light air being forced up by the adjacent cool heavy air. The rising air expands and cools quickly, and clouds form at a low level, much lower than under similar conditions in summer.

After a while showers begin to fall. Sometimes thunderstorms are formed. A peculiarity of the spring shower is its short duration. Very often the day has alternate spells of showers and sunshine, as the clouds drop their larger particles as rain, only to be replaced by other clouds as the pumping caused by the sun's heat sets the vertical currents in motion again.

(Tomorrow: Beware Late Spring Frosts.)