

No. 93

A Science Service Feature

August 28

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,
Secretary, American Meteorological Society,
warns of:

AUTUMN FROSTS APPROACHING

The period of the first destructive frosts of autumn is approaching. The extreme northern United States and southern Canada sometimes have them as early as September 1. The arrival of frost is progressively later as latitude is more southerly, but there is no uniformity to the rule. Climatic conditions govern, independent of latitude.

For instance, the average period between the spring and autumn frosts is the same, 180 days, along a line beginning in southeastern Massachusetts, and extending southwestward through Rhode Island, Connecticut, and extreme southern New York; Central New Jersey, southeastern Pennsylvania and on across the central portions of Maryland and Virginia. Thence the line loops southwestward round the southern Appalachians and the Cumberland plateau, and on northeastward to West Virginia, and from there is not far from the 39th parallel, until on the Great Plains it trends southwestward to the Texas Panhandle.

Prophecy of local frost is not difficult. If in the early evening the sky is clear, the air still, and the thermometer as low as 45 degrees, there is almost a certainty of frost. If the air is very humid, however, an evening temperature as high as 45 degrees need cause no apprehension, and with a high humidity and also a good breeze blowing even a temperature of 40 degrees may not be followed by frost. Should a fog or low clouds form they are likely to prevent loss of much heat from the ground and serve as a protection against frost.

Ordinarily in an early frost tender plants can be safely guarded by covering them with some poor radiator of heat, such as paper, the purpose being not to keep the cold out, but to keep the heat in by preventing rapid loss of heat from the ground.

(TOMORROW: Coast Thunderstorms)
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