

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

ICE FLOWERS

Frost flowers of beautiful, indescribably delicate design are sometimes formed on the exposed ice of northern lakes and streams in periods of intense cold. They appear in highest degree of perfection on surfaces that are close to open water, where they may rear their fern-like petals even as high as several inches. Or they may lie about like feathers, as if the plumage of some white bird has been strewn over the ice and frozen flat upon it.

They result from the building up of ice crystals of types which are also found in snowflakes. The reason for some of the strange forms, notably the feathers, is believed to be the presence of chemical impurities in the air, especially ammonia. The most favorable conditions for their formation is when intense cold follows a warm spell during which vapor coming from open water has drifted over near-by ice, where much of it is deposited on nuclei as wonderful flowers and feathers.

John Burroughs, writing of the Hudson River, said: "A beautiful phenomenon may at times be witnessed on the river in the morning after a night of extreme cold. The new black ice (formed where ice-harvesting has been in progress) is found to be covered with a sudden growth of frost-ferns - exquisite fern-like formations from a half-inch to an inch in length, standing singly and in clusters, and under the morning sun presenting a novel appearance. They impede the skate and are presently broken down and blown about by the wind."

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