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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Dr. Charles F. Brooks,  
of Clark University,  
discusses:

TEMPERATURES FOR SPRING SEEDING

The various staple crops differ widely with regard to the temperatures most favorable for the germination of their seeds. Spring oats and wheat, for instance, prefer a rather cool soil at planting time, while corn and cotton must have more warmth. It has been found that "a seedling blight attacks wheat seedlings grown in a warm soil and corn seedlings grown in a cold soil". The temperature of the surface soil parallels so closely the temperature of the air, that the date of the beginning of seeding of various crops follows the movement of definite air temperatures northward. Spring wheat can be planted when the average temperature for the 24 hours reaches about 37 degrees Fahrenheit. When the average daily temperature rises to 43 degrees it is time to plant spring oats; and potatoes need only a slightly higher temperature, 45 degrees. Corn should not be planted, however, until the daily average reaches 55 degrees, a date corresponding closely to the average date of the last killing frost in spring. Cotton requires the highest temperature of any staple crop grown in the United States, an average of 62 degrees being necessary for satisfactory germination. In the far south, oats may be seeded about two months earlier than cotton, and when cotton is being planted in the south, the northern states are about ready to start their oats.

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