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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WEATHER AND CROP YIELDS

If your garden fails to meet your expectations, it may be tactful, though not always just, to blame the weather. A study of crop statistics shows that adverse weather factors may reduce the yield of staple crops from 20 to 30 per cent. while plant diseases, insect and animal pests, and defective seed usually are not responsible for a loss of over 5 to 15 per cent. At certain stages in crop development, known as critical periods, weather conditions are of especial importance. Thus, for corn, it has been shown that an extra half inch or quarter inch of rain is most valuable in the 10 days immediately following the blossoming. The temperature, as well as the moisture, of a critical period exercises an important control over crop development. For instance, in the case of the cotton belt, for the best yield of cotton May should be dry, June both warm and dry, and August cold and wet. Hence it is sometimes possible to predict the yield of a crop more accurately from mathematical analysis of these weather factors than from the reported condition of the crop itself.

(Tomorrow: Summer Drouths)

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