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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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## OUR ANNUAL RAINFALL

As our newspapers begin for 1925 a new set of accumulated departures of precipitation it is interesting to note the basis used. Precipitation, or "rainfall", includes all forms of water falling from the clouds, - rain, snow, sleet, and hail. In estimating total precipitation the frozen forms must be changed to an equivalent amount of rain. For instance, an inch of snowfall usually melts down to about 1/10th inch of water, though wet, heavy snow has a higher water content than cold light snow. Reliable averages are made up from many years' observations.

East of the Mississippi, the Gulf coast, with 50 to 60 inches, and the southern face of the Appalachians, with somehwat more, have the greatest annual precipitation. Boston averages about 43 inches, Chicago 33. Going west across the Great Plains, it becomes increasingly drier, the totals of precipitation falling locally even to less than 15 inches. The Rockies are somewhat wetter, the plateau drier. On the Pacific coast the heavily forested slopes of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia receive over 100 inches a year, while in the desert near the mouth of the Colorado River the average is five inches or less.

The humid character of the East and the far West is due to their open exposure to moderately warm oceans whence numerous passing storms frequently draw and precipitate water vapor. Distance from the sea and high mountain barriers deprive the Great Plains and interior plateaus of a fair rainfall and reduce them to their semi-arid or arid condition.

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(Tomorrow: Our Rainy Season.)

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