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A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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FALL FROSTS

It's often a race between killing frost and that last planting of corn and beans. Frost does not usually trouble the gardener before September first, though in the mountain regions of the West it is likely to occur at any time during the summer. In northern New England and the mountains of New York and Pennsylvania frost may be expected during September. So, too, frost is feared before October 1 over large areas in the northern plains states. Only the southern and Pacific coast states are usually free from frost up to November first. In the United States, Key West, Florida, is the only Weather Bureau station which has never recorded frost. Local variations from the average for the latitude are caused by mountains and large water bodies. Frost occurs relatively early in valleys, and mountain or plateau regions, and late along lake or ocean shores.

Even if we know the average dates for our locality there is still plenty of chance for a gamble, for the first frost may be expected from ten days earlier to ten days later than the official date. Frost comes even 20 days early at times. For instance, along the shore of Connecticut and Rhode Island and part of eastern Massachusetts, the first frost usually occurs about October 21, but about once in ten years gardens are nipped as early as October 1. Frost dates are most uncertain throughout the western states and in southern Florida and Texas.

(Tomorrow: Protection From Frost)

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