

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SAP SEASON WELL ADVANCED

According to the Department of Agriculture, maple sugar makers often lose half their crop by not tapping early enough. The first runs of sap, which are usually the sweetest and best sugar producers, may be missed entirely if the producer is not on the lookout for early "sugar weather". The sap runs best when the days are growing warm, the temperature rising above freezing, but while the nights are still frosty, ~~Very~~ bright warm days start the sap with a rush, but the flow soon slackens. High winds and heavy freezes also check the sap. Thus may come the anomaly of bruised trees heavily hung with icicles having a thin flavor of maple syrup.

In southern sections, such as the southern Appalachians, the sugar season opens during the middle or latter part of February. In Vermont and New Hampshire it is a month or more later. Records of an Ohio sugar camp show opening dates as early as February 13, and as late as March 27. The sugar season usually lasts about a month, but may be as short as 9 days or as long as 50. This year the mild weather at the end of February gave the trees a relatively early start in southern and central districts. The season has been late, however, in the deeply snow covered Northeast.

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