

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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SPRING DROUGHTS

On both Atlantic and Pacific coasts, particularly in the northern portions the spring tends to be dry. In winter we can count on snows and rains from the almost continuous procession of storms, now on one track, now on another, now strong, now weak. And in summer we can be practically certain of at least an occasional thunderstorm even if general rains do not occur. If lows of sufficient strength to make a widespread cloud sheet and an "all day" rain are lacking, the sun can shine and heat the lower air enough to produce local instability showers.

But what of the transition seasons? When winter storms die down early and summer showers begin late, the stage is set for a spring drought. There may be moisture present in reasonable abundance in the air, but there is nothing to precipitate much of it. Neither of the principal precipitators, strong lows or intense local convection, is at work. In any climate under marine influence the chilliness of ocean and lake waters in spring favor stable conditions rather than storms. If, after a cold February and March, the waters are icier than usual, and the snow slow to disappear, spring lows are distinctly discouraged. The same conditions likewise hinder the development of locally heated large bodies of muggy air that on overturning with the cold air higher up bring the heavy spring showers.

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