

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University

HOW SPRING ADVANCES

No matter how early or late, the progress of spring follows a fairly definite course northeastward and upward. Judging from the budding of native plants and from insect activities, Dr. A. D. Hopkins has shown that in general spring travels northward at the rate of 1 degree of latitude, or about 70 miles, in four days, and upward about 400 feet of altitude in the same time. Moreover, taking the countrywide average, five degrees of longitude eastward makes the same difference of about 4 days in the earliness of the season, the interior and Pacific coast being warmer than the Atlantic seaboard.

Such broad rules are greatly modified by local factors. Water always warms more slowly than land in the spring, therefore, spring is characteristically 10 to 14 days "late" along the shores of large lakes as well as on the seacoast. A snow-covered area is a notable dawdler. Dry sandy soil, on the other hand, heats rapidly, and is far ahead of wet clay soil. Southern slopes and dooryards are, naturally, several days more advanced than those facing north. So are the southern sides of trees; Dr. Hopkins reports that beetles have awakened 30 days earlier on the sunny side than on the shady side of the same tree.

Some springs provide peculiar contrasts. A spell of warm weather early in spring awakens early trees and insects in mid-latitudes but not in the North. Then a period of three weeks of cold weather is followed by another balmy spell which takes spring northward another step. This "steady by jerks" advance has been characteristic of the late spring of 1926; and large contrasts in short distances north and south and east and west have developed.

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21st and B Sts.,
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