

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE VEGETATIVE SEASON

The vegetative season usually begins when the daily mean temperature reaches 43 degrees Fahrenheit. Not till the daytime maxima reach 50 or 55 and the nighttime minima no longer go below freezing often, does vegetation awaken. A single frost may later, however, kill the new growth and require a second, belated start. Thus the growing season for crops is commonly counted as the period between the last killing frost in spring and the first in autumn.

Along the Gulf and south Pacific coast it is never cold enough to produce a definite winter rest period: the vegetative season extends throughout the year, except when interrupted by the occasional killing frost. South of Tennessee, crops can grow generally for at least 9 months. For a large part of the central plains region the growing season lasts about 7 months. In a belt including Chicago, New York, and southern New England plants will grow during half the year, but farther north and in the Rockies generally not more than five months of growing weather is the rule.

Unlike the South, Mr. J. B. Kincer has shown that the frostless and vegetative seasons in the North nearly coincide. The fast rate of ascent of temperature in spring and descent in fall bring frost and vegetative dates close together. On clear days the range of temperature is about 20 to 25 degrees Fahrenheit, so a frosty minimum of just under 32 normally goes with a mean of 43.

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