

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Dr. Charles F. Brooks
of Clark University

DROUGHT

Drought is an insidious affair. It is negative, occurring because the air is not going through its usual up and down motions fast enough, far enough or long enough to provide rainfall in appreciable quantity. Of course, the more vapor is present relative to what there might be at the temperature of the lower air, the easier it will be for these up and down, convectional currents to provide rainfall.

Since the extreme wetness of February, March, and early April, in different parts, the Middle West and East generally have suffered from drought. The north Pacific region has also been dry. On the contrary, the middle and west Gulf region has been extremely wet. It seems as if the rain that should have been spread over the eastern half of the country was put down in bunches at a few doorsteps, much the way boys deliver advertisements.

Spring is commonly a time of drought, for the usual storm processes that give rain or snow every few days in the cold season weaken or become erratic for periods of some length. Under the bright spring sunshine and lengthening days the plains become hot, the air expands and some of it slides over the snowy and icy Northeast, there to build up a semipermanent high pressure area always ready with its drying winds of cold air with little moisture content. The tendency of the air is southward, while for rains the air should come from warmer, moister climes. The unusual accumulation of ice and snow this year appears greatly to have strengthened the northeastern high and to have been immediately responsible for the drought.

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21st and B Sts.,
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