

A Science Service Feature

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: WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed January 17, 1928

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology

FIGHTING WINTER FROSTS IN CALIFORNIA

While in most parts of the United States frost-fighting is a task of the spring and autumn, the extreme southern parts of the country, including the great fruit-growing districts of Florida and California, have their occasional destructive frosts in the winter. The frosts and freezes of the winter season are the great scourge of the citrus industry. The freeze of January, 1913, in California reduced the orange crop of that state from 36,000 carloads to 6,000 carloads. The same event caused the California citrus-growers to turn their attention seriously to orchard-heating as a means of protection.

At the present time orchard-heating is systematically practiced on 50,000 acres of citrus groves in California, where fully 2,500,000 heaters are in use. This is probably a greater number than the total used in the rest of the world combined. In order to keep these millions of heaters burning as much as 1,⁶000 carloads of oil ^{has} been used in a single night.

But for the intensive frost-warning service of the Weather Bureau and the vigilant attention of the growers to the thousands of thermometers installed in groves, the costly application of this process could not be so accurately timed as to avoid a vast waste of oil on the one hand or the destruction of the crop on the other.

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SCIENCE SERVICE,
21st and B Sts.,
Washington, D.C.