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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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WEATHER AND HAY FEVER

The numerous "pollen surveys" carried out in recent years have shown striking relations between atmospheric conditions and the prevalence in the atmosphere of the pollens that cause hay fever. The most important weather elements in this connection are wind and rainfall. High winds greatly increase the abundance of any particular hay-fever pollen during the season of pollination of the plant in question, and the amount is, of course, also increased if the winds blow from the direction of a neighboring area in which the plant is especially common.

Physicians note that a persistent rain brings marked relief to hay fever patients. "The action of the rain," said Dr. William Scheppegegrell, "is to precipitate the pollen floating in the air and to prevent more pollen from rising from the plant during its continuance. If the rain is sufficiently prolonged to allow the effects of inhaled pollen to pass off, the patient has relief until the rain is over and a wind of sufficient velocity again infests the air with the hay-fever pollens. It has been supposed that the pollens that are precipitated by rain may again be carried into the air and continue their irritating effect. This, however, is not the case. The principal varieties of pollen have been tested in our biological laboratory and it has been found that the submersion of the pollens in a large amount of water removes their irritating properties."

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