A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed January 17, 1931

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RAINFALL INTERCEPTION

Forests have several important effects on the water-supply of the regions where they grow. One of these depends upon the fact that, of the rain or snow that falls on the trees, a considerable part is caught by the leaves and branches and subsequently evaporated, so that it never reaches the ground. In light showers the "interception," as this effect is called, may amount to 100 per cent; a fact familiar to everybody who has taken shelter under trees during such showers.

The average for all rains, in the case of a dense forest, has been found to range from less than one-tenth to more than one-fourth of the rainfall. For deciduous trees the interception is, of course, much less in winter than in summer; roughly one-half. Interception loss from full-grown field crops approaches in amount that from trees, but owing to the short time during which the crops stand on the ground in a fully developed stage of growth, the total annual interception from cropped areas is very much smaller than that from wooded areas.

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