

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
February 24, 1931

? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed February 17, 1931

By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

ICE FRINGES

On a frosty morning, after a night free from wind, curious fringes, ribbons or masses of ice are sometimes found along the dead stems of certain plants. The most striking and common of these formations are seen on the stems of the dittany (*Cunila origanoides*), which has a perennial root but dies down to the ground in autumn. On this plant the fringes consist of thin curving ribbons of ice, about as thick as a knife blade, from half an inch to two inches broad and sometimes six or seven inches long. One or more may form on a stem. Ice fringes of various shapes and sizes have also been found on species of *Pluchea*, *Conyza*, *Verbesina*, *Salvia*, etc. Plants on which they appear are sometimes called "frost-plants" or "frost-woods."

The water that forms these fringes is brought up from the soil by capillary action and comes to the surface mainly or wholly through a row of minute openings. The fringe begins as a row of separate hair-like crystals, which merge into a continuous ribbon as they grow outward. Why they should form in a narrow line along the stem rather than in broad patches is a mystery, and there are still others connected with their formation.

(All rights reserved by Science Service, Inc.)

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