

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
July 1, 1931

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

Mailed June 24, 1931

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THE BRIGHT SIDE OF A DROUGHT

The effects of drought on crops are not always harmful. Thus we read in a Yearbook of the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

"A short period of drought in the eastern part of the country during the early spring months will frequently greatly curtail the hay crop, but it may not seriously injure wheat; in fact, it may be beneficial in preventing excessive straw growth. As to corn in its early growth, a period of drought may be beneficial, forcing the roots to greater depths; a result which may prove advantageous later in the season if the surface soil becomes depleted of moisture.

"Moderate drought is not always associated with scanty production. It may even prove beneficial to cotton by hindering the activity of insect pests, which do not multiply in dry weather. Further, the cotton plant remains somewhat dormant during drought, only to resume growth promptly when moisture is finally supplied; thereby at times enabling the development of a crop after the season of worst insect infestation."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Entomology, the corn borer, the Mexican bean beetle and several other insect pests were much reduced by last year's drought in the United States.

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