

Apr 79

Temperatures rise to herald spring season

For the first time since last October the mean monthly temperature has almost reached the average, near enough to herald spring. We have the Easter weekend to thank for this, Saturday, April 14, being the warmest April day recorded at the Halesowen Climatological Station since at least 1956.

During the afternoon the air temperature climbed to 21.4C (70.5F). In fact the week April 11 to April 18 was a very pleasant spring-like one, and animal and plant life began to stir.

In contrast, the first week of the month was quite chilly with frosts every night from April 3 to April 7 in the air, and from April 2 to April 7 on the ground.

The coldest nights were April 3 and 4 with a night time low of - 2.5C (27.5F) in the air and - 5.3C (22.5F) on the ground, both temperatures being the lowest recorded since February 25.

Neither did the days provide much in the way of

comfort, rather cool south-easterly winds holding day time maxima down to around 6.8C (44.2F).

A series of depressions from the Atlantic moved across the Midlands during the first two weeks bringing quite heavy rain. From April 7 to April 13 rain was recorded every day, with April 7 and 8 providing 8.8mm (0.35in) and 8.5mm (0.33in) respectively. Much of this week was overcast and visibilities were well down with local high ground swathed in hill fog.

Pressure began to rise on Thursday, April 12 as a ridge of high pressure developed over the country.

As it did so, temperatures also began to pick up and the period April 14 to April 18, which included the Easter break, was rain-free with pleasant, sunny and warm days.

This five-day period had an average daily air temperature of 10.5C (50.9F), peaking at 13.8C (56.8F) on Easter Saturday.

Solar radiation tem-

peratures over the same days averaged 41C (105.8F) with the high spot of 43.5C (110.3F) on the afternoon of April 14.

Soil temperatures have also risen appreciably and the 10 cm (8in) now averages at 8.0C (46.4F), quite high enough to support reasonable plant growth. The 5cm (2in) soil temperature is currently 9.0C (48.2F), a little low for good germination. Both are still below the level which gardeners would like to see at this time of the year.

From April 19 a series of frontal troughs again progressed across the area with predominantly north-westerly winds. Originating in the North Atlantic, these were quite cold and produced heavy showers of rain and hail. Tuesday, April 24, was particularly wet with 13 mm (0.51in) of rain falling in four hours.

Thunder was heard on four occasions during the month on April 8, 11, 12 and 23, with hail on two days, April 12 and 23.

Snow and sleet fell on three days during the first week and again on the last of the month as strong winds blew across the Midlands coming directly from the Arctic. Air frost was recorded on five nights with ground frosts of 9, the latest of these being April 29. Rainfall was registered on 16 days, though only four days were noted as being very wet, April 7, 8, 23 and 24.

The month was fairly average for April. Mean day time maximum temperatures were 11.4C (52.5F) and mean night time minimum temperatures 3.5C (38.3F), both within 0.5C (0.9F) of normal. Rainfall at 67.2 mm (2.65in) was up on average by 13 mm (0.51in). Winds were predominantly south-easterly and light, averaging six knots.

Visibilities were, on the whole, excellent with only one occurrence of fog, April 6, though the dull spell during the second week produced heavy local mists and hill fog on all high ground in the area.

HAYLEY GREEN

52°26'N 02°04'W 155m AMSL

CCRoberts