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This 'so wet' March is best forgotten

The fact that March was a wet month will come as no surprise. That it was the wettest since 1947 with a fall almost two and a half times the normal, however, makes it a very noteworthy month.

In all 132mm (5.19in) fell in a total of 153 hours, itself almost three times the customary figure for March rainfall duration and the longest spell of rainfall for any month since records began at Halesowen in 1956 for this element.

Records have tumbled in several areas in a month quite untypical of March.

Apart from rainfall, temperatures have also been exceptional. Firstly, March 1981 was the first time in over a quarter of a century in which no air frost was recorded.

The record for the warmest March night was also equalled at 10.4C (51F) on the eleventh.

Mean night minimum temperatures were well above expectation at 4.7C (40F) instead of the usual 1.9C (35F) thus creating new records in

this area too.

Air pressures, closely allied to rainfall, have been exceptionally low, new records being set for March mean pressure at 1002.4 mb (29.60 in hg), and the highest daily pressure at 1019.3 (30.10 in hg), both being the lowest values for over 26 years.

Humidity, or the 'wetness' of the air has been 7 per cent above the March mean at 93 per cent, whilst cloud cover has been 24 per cent above usual, with 20 completely overcast days.

Not unexpectedly, sunshine has been very sparse, at 56.7 hours for a month which usually provides 104.8 hours, only 54 per cent of the expected total.

The highest daily sunshine of 7.5 hours on the twenty sixth was itself a mere 78 per cent of

normal sunshine for a good March day, and 11 days were completely without sun.

WET DAYS

Rain fell on 23 days, nine more than usual, with 17 'wet' days and 10 'very wet' days, the wettest being the twenty first when 20mm (0.79in) fell in an uninterrupted spell of almost 24 hours duration.

The only redeeming feature of the month has been that temperatures have been well up.

In fact, all soil temperatures are up on average, by as much as 3C (5F). This is, however, of little value to gardeners in view of the sodden nature of many local gardens whose basis is unfortunately clay.

MONOTONOUS

The month was ushered in with fairly brisk winds, low pressure and moderate rainfall, conditions which were to prevail until the end of the month.

Despite warm days, slight ground frost was widespread during the first week and even snow was recorded on March 5, though it was short-lived.

Low pressure systems tracked across the country with monotonous regularity, the associated rain belts continuing to add to the rapidly mounting rainfall totals. Only two days were rain-free in the first three weeks, six days producing falls in excess of a fifth of an inch each.

DEPRESSING

Ground frost did not recur until the seventeenth and eighteenth, whilst air frost was totally absent for the month. In fact, the coldest night on the ground occurred on the twenty third when grass temperatures fell to -3.8C (25F).

Towards the end of the month winds fell lighter and pressure began to build, the highest pressure being recorded on the final morning.

However, this change was accompanied by widespread fog with visibilities in the region of 300 yards.

On the whole a depressing, dull and exceptionally wet month, and one best forgotten.