

Apr 80

Do you remember the drought?

Although the April weather figures could not be published, it is still worth recording a few of the more important features of that month. Long-standing records were broken in three fields at the Halesowen Climatological station

April rain duration at 8.5 hours was the lowest since 1957, the maximum air temperature of 21.6C (71F) recorded on April 14 was also the highest since 1957, and the mean air pressure was again the highest since 1957.

Total rainfall for April was 21mm (0.81in), the lowest air temperature of -4.7C (23F) was recorded on April 21. In all there were 15 nights with a ground frost and one with air frost.

May was an exceptionally dry month, the bulk of the 31mm (1.24in) of rain falling in the final two days. In fact, no rain at all was recorded between May 1 and May 18, thus creating a period of absolute drought.

These conditions were brought about by anticyclonic conditions and mainly easterly winds only on eight days were winds blowing from other than an easterly quarter.

Temperatures were well above the May normal, peaking at 25.6C (78F) on May 12, giving us our second warmest May day in 30 years.

Despite this, some nights were cold, particularly during the early part of the month. An air frost of -0.6C (31F) was recorded on May 9, and in all, four ground frosts occurred on May 6, 9, 10 and 11.

The lowest grass temperature of -3C (27F) was also noted on May 9. The mean maximum of 18.5C (64F) was above 3.7C (7F) above expectation. Again, as with April, the rather cold nights resulted in the mean minimum being marginally below expectation at 5.7C (42F).

As mentioned, rainfall was mainly confined to the latter part of the month, and fell over a period of 27 hours — the lowest figure since 1961.

For a short period of 30 minutes on May 31 rain was falling at the rate of 17mm/hr (0.70in/hr) though this was not thundery in nature.

Some parts of the area had very heavy rain on May 28 associated with a thunderstorm and whilst Stourbridge and the surrounding area were deluged, at Halesowen only 2.2mm (0.09in) was recorded.

All soil temperatures are now well above normal, by as much as 5C (9F) at a depth of 5cm (2in). Though the soil is particularly warm, it has been very dry, so gardeners have had to contend with the frustration of poor germination conditions.

Winds blew from an easterly quarter on 23 days, the prevailing direction being NE, and were mainly light. The highest gust of 30 knots (35mph) was recorded on May 11, though no gales were noted.

Cloud cover at 62 per cent has been a little below usual, and morning skies were overcast on 11 occasions. In general a very pleasant, warm, but dry month.