Figure 12

Killing Frost

Closely connected with the temperatures discussed above are the first killing frost in the autumn and the last one in the spring, as they determine the harvesting and planting of many plants. Naturally, there will be difference of opinion as to the exact dates owing to the fact that some plants are killed by temperatures that scarcely affect others and that vegetation in the lowlands may be killed on a cold night without material injury to equally susceptible plants growing on uplands.

It should also be recognized that killing frosts may occur without the official thermometers registering 32° F., for they always are placed in shelters some feet above the ground or on the tops of buildings. The ground temperature may be and usually is several degrees lower than that recorded in the instrument shelters.

Generalizing for the Lehigh Valley it may be said that the average date of the first killing frost in the autumn is about October 16 or 17, although it may occur in the latter part of September or as late as the first week in November. The average date of the last killing frost in the spring is about April 18, although it may be March 18 or as late as the middle of May. Light frost has been reported in favorable places during June and also in August. The average growing season for the section is therefore almost exactly six months or half of the year.

Precipitation

Ranking with temperature in importance is precipitation, including both rain and snow. Frost, dew and fog are of some effect, but they are not measurable.