

Cool summer: 90 degrees was a rarity this year

By Andrea Behling

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JANESVILLE

Hello autumnal equinox. Goodbye ... summer? In Janesville, only one day had a high temperature of 90 degrees or higher between June 21 and Sept. 23, according to Gazette weather records. While the cool season left hot summer days to be desired, the weather has been a welcome relief for plants, growers and the average residential electric bill.

Happy plants

"It's exactly what we needed," said Phyllis Williams, regarding the cool summer's effect on plants.

Williams and her husband own K&W Greenery, 1328 E. Highway 14, Janesville.

Plants have been under little stress, and growers have enjoyed tending to gardens in comfortable temperatures, Williams said.

Grass stayed green all summer, and some plants have shown an extra pop of color with a late bloom, she said.

"There's been no heat stress. It's good for the trees," Williams said.

The evergreens that survived the polar vortex last winter have recovered in one season, thanks to the cooler temperatures and regular rainfall, Williams said.

"Mother Nature decided we had about as much as we could take after last winter," she said.

The cool weather confused other plants and some growers, Williams said.

Some gardeners had a frustrating season waiting for fruits and vegetables to ripen, Williams said.

For the plants that bloomed again in August, it might mean they won't be ready for the spring season, she said.

Flower buds form in the fall, so the late blooming plants might run out of time to form buds, Williams said.

Bugs also have not gotten the hint that it's time to leave, especially the Japanese beetle that chews through plants, she said. The bugs arrived late, and it wasn't a terribly buggy year, but they're usually gone by now, Williams said.

Electric bill

Running the air conditioner less this summer made a difference on many Wisconsin consumers' electric bills, said Scott Reigstad, corporate communications manager for Alliant Energy.

In July and August, the average residential customer's electric bill in Wisconsin was about \$16 less this year than last year, wrote Reigstad.

An average residential electric bill was about \$15 less in July 2014 than July 2013, Reigstad wrote. The average bill was about just \$1 less in August 2014 than August 2013, he wrote.

Use of the air conditioner is what primarily drives energy usage by Alliant customers in the summer, Reigstad said.

"We had a really cold winter, so it's a welcome thing for our customers to have a less-than-normal bill. The winter bill was really expensive," Reigstad said.

Grower's delight

Janesville farmer Harvey Greinert was pleasantly surprised by the growing season.

"Most of the farmers I've talked to thought things would be behind," he said.

Greinert plants 100 acres of corn east of Janesville at 717 N. Milton-Shopiere Road.

Greinert expects yields of about 260 bushels per acre—40 to 50 bushels more than what he had last year, he said.

Another worry was that the corn wouldn't dry fast enough.

"It was down to 24 to 25 percent moisture, which is good. We were surprised it was that dry given the weather," Greinert said.

The season in southern Wisconsin wasn't as unusual as it might have seemed, said Dan Collins, meteorologist and forecaster for the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center.

"It turned out to be a year that was somewhat average relative to the last 120 years," Collins said.

The summer temperatures came in below average from the recent 30-year period, but landed in the middle for the 120-year period, Collins said.

The Climate Prediction Center's autumn outlook for October, November and December shows an increased chance of above-normal temperatures in Wisconsin for the season, Collin said.

There's no clear signal showing how much precipitation Wisconsin might get in the next three months, he said.

What is

the Autumnal Equinox?

The autumnal equinox is the exact time when the sun crosses the celestial equator going southward, rising exactly due east and setting exactly due west, according to The Old Farmer's Almanac.

This causes the day and night to be about 12 hours long each, according to the almanac. The first actual time of equal day and night occurs a few days after the equinox.

This fall's equinox in the northern hemisphere happened at 9:29 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 22, according to the almanac.

The equinox marks what some call the first day of fall, as it is the astronomical start to the fall season, according to The Weather Channel. Meteorologically speaking, autumn began Sept. 1, according to The Weather Channel.

JANESVILLE			
 Seasonal weather review			
	Summer average	Summer 2014	Difference
Inches of precipitation	11.6	10.3	-1.3
Average high temperature	82.2	78.5	-3.7
Average low temperature	59.0	57.0	-2.0
Days 90 or above	15	1	-14
Days 80 or above	63	51	-12

Janesville had one day with a high temperature of 90 or above between June 21 and Sept. 22. It hit 90 on July 22.

SOURCE: Gazette weather records

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