

May Weather Wrap

By Bill Kappel

May was a tale of two seasons around the Tri-Lakes region as we transitioned from winter during the first week of the month into summer with about a week of spring. The trend of record cold that we had experienced in March and April continued into the first week of the month, culminating with a monthly record low of 8° on the 2nd, but by the time we hit the middle and end of the month, summer-like 80s were common.

For the month as a whole, temperatures were cooler than normal and precipitation was higher than normal, a good combination as we head into summer. Also interesting to note was the delayed start to the growing season. The extended cold period, starting in late February, meant most plants were around three weeks behind schedule, with many trees not reaching full leaf until the end of the month.

Winter decided to make another appearance during the first few days of May. The high temperature of 33°F was reached at midnight on the 1st, with snow filling in quickly by 5:30 a.m. that morning. Snow continued to fall, heavy at times in the morning and middle of the afternoon. The few days of warmth at the end of April helped to melt a good amount of the snow during the day, as the ground was still quite warm. This limited overall accumulations to generally 4 to 8 inches.

The high of 33°F was a record low high for the date, as was the morning low on the 2nd of 8°F. This was the third month in a row with record monthly low temperatures (-9°F in March, -3°F in April) at this weather station (12 years of records). Temperatures slowly moderated over the next few days and the snow melted by the 5th.

The first full week of May started quiet and cool, with highs reaching the low 50s on the 5th, then mid-60s on the 6th and 7th. A slow-moving area of low pressure began to move into the region later on the 7th and continued to bring cool, unsettled conditions over the next several days. A nice, soaking rain fell on the 8th and 9th, with temperatures holding in the upper 30s to low 40s during the day.

It turned cold enough for some wet snow to fall

overnight on the 8th, but the snow line remain just a little above us for most of this event. This allowed some of the higher elevations around Teller County to pick up over a foot of snow. Unsettled conditions stuck around through the first half of the weekend, as moisture left behind from this storm combined with stronger May sunshine to produce a few showers and thunderstorms on Friday and Saturday. Mother's Day turned out to be beautiful, with sunshine and low to mid-70s.

The week of the 13th was a mild one overall, breaking the trend of below-normal temperatures that had been so persistent since February. Temperatures reached the upper 70s on the afternoon of the 13th and continued to warm into the 14th, reaching 80°F that afternoon. This was the first 80° reading since last September. Highs continued to hit the mid-70s to low 80s from the 15th through the 17th. Our first spring-like rounds of afternoon and early evening thunderstorms developed each day, dropping some beneficial rain showers. Slightly cooler air moved in for the weekend, dropping highs back to normal and slightly below levels, with low 70s on Saturday and low 60s on Sunday. Unsettled conditions also accompanied this cooler air, with showers Sunday afternoon producing rain and graupel.

The week of May 20 started cooler than normal and a little unsettled. Thunderstorms produced brief heavy rain and some hail during the afternoon of the 20th, bringing much appreciated moisture. Cool, moist air stuck around the next two days, bringing a brief shower late on the 22nd, then lots of low clouds, fog, and some drizzle on the 23rd. Temperatures were held in the 60s on the 20th and 21st before rebounding closer to average with low 70s on the 22nd.

The low clouds and fog on the 23rd held temperatures back to below normal levels, with upper 50s the best we could do as some sunshine appeared late in the afternoon. Dry, windy, and warm air quickly moved in for the rest of the week, just in time for Memorial Day weekend. The dry air mass also meant lots of sunshine, with just a few areas of afternoon clouds interspersed with high clouds at times.

A slow-moving Pacific storm system affected the region through the remainder of the month. This led to unsettled conditions, with cooler than normal temperatures and scattered showers. However, most of its energy and moisture stayed to our north and east. Therefore, accumulations of rainfall weren't great, but we were happy to get whatever we could squeeze out.

A look ahead

By June we can usually say goodbye to our chance of snowfall but hello to frequent afternoon and evening thunderstorms. There are times when see a little snowfall in June in the region, but most of the time we can expect warm, sunny days with afternoon and evening thunderstorms.

May 2013 Weather Statistics

Average High	65.8° (-0.8°)
100-year return frequency value max	75.7° min 57.9°
Average Low	34.1° (-1.5°)
100-year return frequency value max	43.2° min 32.5°
Highest Temperature	82°F on the 25th
Lowest Temperature	8°F on the 2nd
Monthly Precipitation	2.05"
	(+0.35" 20% above normal)
100-year return frequency value max	6.94" min 0.15"
Monthly Snowfall	7.1"
	(+2.0" 29% above normal)
Season to Date Snow	101.8"
	(-25.3" 20% below normal)
	(the snow season is from July 1 to June 30)
Season to Date Precip	14.22"
	(-4.90" 26% below normal)
	(the precip season is from July 1 to June 30)
Heating Degree Days	468 (+40)
Cooling Degree Days	0

For more detailed weather information and Climatology of the Palmer Divide and Tri-Lakes region, please visit Bill Kappel's Weather Web page at <http://www.thekappels.com/Weather.htm>.

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Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters to the editor are on page 35.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community should not be interpreted as the view of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer.

A new idea for treating ponderosa pine needles

Every homeowner with ponderosa pines lives with the ever-increasing and annually replenishing supply of pine needles. We love them for their everlasting green foliage, wind protection, beauty, and grandeur, but hate them for the mess! The most popular option is to rake the pine needles up, bag them, drag them to the curb and walk away.

I propose a new way of thinking about our pine needles. The ponderosas have been building soil in our harsh alkaline environment for thousands of years. The pine needle mulch resists wind and water erosion, holds moisture and provides a matrix for microbial activity.

Given all this, I call for a rethinking of the way we look at and treat pine needles. It would seem better, wiser, and more prudent if we were to compost the needles in place.

I propose that instead of removing the needles, we begin to advance their in-place decomposition by placing thin layers of compost or compost-enhanced soil products on top of the needles. This removes their threat as a fire-spreading medium by holding them down closer to the ground. The compost-laced soils carry beneficial bacteria and microbes, and free nitrogen. It is the intent of this theory that advancing the decomposition of pine needles in-place will build our soils, prevent wind erosion, retain water, reduce fire danger and have an over-all beneficial effect.

This novel idea may not apply to all cases, but I think it could bring some relief to the wind scrubbed, hard-raked look of so many properties where the pine needles are regularly removed, where the copper color of pine needles has given way to bare dirt and dust.

Jim Adams

Greenbranch Garden Services

Triview watering restrictions

Page 13 of the May 4 issue of OCN said that I noted that

Monument only allows watering twice per week. That was not what I communicated to the board. At the joint board meeting between the Town of Monument and Triview, water restrictions were discussed. There were no changes for Monument or Triview this year. Both allow watering three times a week.

Valerie Remington

District Manager, Triview Metropolitan District

Editor's note: In Monument and Triview, odd addresses can water on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; even numbers can water on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Watering is between the hours of 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. No watering is allowed on Sundays.

The water conservation conversation

I am very concerned about water conservation and have seen news reports about the drought. One news story I saw was about golf courses in El Paso County possibly being put on water restrictions; that got me to thinking that places like Monument Hill Country Club, the Y, and all community-based organizations would be the perfect places to show leadership in doing water conservation things. I understand that the Country Club is upset about their water bill, but if they would make an effort, they could be part of the solution.

I would like to see things like gray water (the collection of shower/bath and sink water to be reused for toilet flushing and lawn watering, not human consumption), rain water collection (to be reused for toilet flushing and lawn and plant watering), and waterless urinals. Now I do understand that in Colorado, rain water collection is against the law because farmers are afraid that would be water taken from their farms, but in a conversation with Jessie Shaffer of Woodmoor Water, he told me that there is legislation proposing that rain water collection should be allowed.

Water is our planet's most precious resource and the one thing that mankind cannot live without, and we have to start doing these water conservative things that I mentioned. The problem with us humans is that when we get some rain like we had last week, we tend to forget that we have a serious water problem. My hope is that maybe I can get people to realize that the only way to get things

done on water conservation is to keep the conversation going.

John D. Wedgewood

Editor's note: Gov. Hickenlooper signed HB13-1044 on May 15 allowing in-house graywater to be reused in toilets, but there are public health, water rights, and cost issues for an entirely separate plumbing system.

Kiwanis Club says thank you

The Monument Hill Kiwanis Club (MHKC) paid tribute to the fine merchants, professionals, and organizations that are Partners in Service and Corporate Sponsors to the club. Our community is enriched greatly by the business and services they provide, and as MHKC Partners in Service and Corporate Sponsors, they "give back" by funding club projects that make a difference in the Tri-Lakes community.

Partners in Service are businesses, individuals, and organizations that work together to such an extent as to merit special recognition from the club and supporters in the area. The Partners in Service include Integrity Bank and Trust, Lewis-Palmer School District 38, and the Tri-Lakes Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center.

The collaboration between MHKC and these organizations is extensive and includes events such as the Fourth of July Parade and Street Fair and Empty Bowls. Each year over the past nine years, Integrity Bank and Trust has given MHKC \$5,000 for the Fourth of July Parade in Monument.

Bill Stoner, program manager of Corporate Sponsors, and Barrie Town, vice president of Fundraising, recognized the Corporate Sponsors who give back to the community through their generous financial support to MHKC.

These Corporate Sponsors align with the mission of MHKC, which is helping youths and building community in the Tri-Lakes area, and it is through their contributions that MHKC can carry out programs for kids and community. Kids programs include Service Leadership Programs in all D-38 schools, dictionaries for all third-graders in D-38, support to Pikes Peak Soap Box Derby, therapeutic horseback riding for children with disabilities, and Rocky Mountain Youth Leadership Camp.