

THE GROWING SEASON IN ALBUQUERQUE

National Weather Service

The terrain of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area (AMA) produces a diverse growing season across the Rio Grande Valley, from the Sandia Foothills to the West Mesa.

Generally, the growing season is shortest in the valley, where cold air drainage leads to earlier freezes in the autumn, and later freezes in the spring. Lack of data prevents real precise average dates of first and last freezes in the foothills, but long-term records at the Albuquerque International Airport (elevation 5300 feet) can be used for an accurate assessment of the growing season for a large portion of the city.

Due to the cold air drainage into the valley, early morning temperatures tend to be about five degrees higher over the heights and west mesa. However, as you climb higher into the eastern foothills, this trend eventually reverses. Consequently, it appears that the growing season in the Foothills, above 6000 feet, is not much different from the valley.

The most extensive temperature records in the city are those from the National Weather Service. However, from 1893 until 1931, the instruments were moved from place to place, ranging from elevations of 4950 feet to 5100 feet. Since 1931, complete records have been kept at the site now known as Albuquerque International Airport.

Perhaps the complete records can be seen as the extreme scenario, while records since 1931 can be viewed as accurate for most purposes.

Since 1893, the earliest freeze on record was on September 18, 1912. The latest freezes on record were May 27, 1917 and May 27, 1918. The latest date for the first freeze of the autumn was November 20, 2001. The earliest date for the last freeze of the spring was March 15, 2001 (though technically, this is still considered winter). The following tables give dates that should be more meaningful for different sections of the Middle Rio Grande Valley.

As you can see from the data, the average growing season in Albuquerque has increased by approximately two weeks in recent years.

Average Dates of the last freeze in Spring

LOCATION	1931-1990	1991-2001
ABQ Airport	April 18	April 10
ABQ Foothills	May 4	April 26
ABQ South Valley	May 3	April 25
Corrales	May 13	May 5
Los Lunas	May 8	April 30
Bernalillo	May 3	April 25
Sandia Park	May 13	May 5

Average Dates of the first freeze in Autumn

LOCATION	1931-1990	1991-2001
ABQ Airport	October 26	November 3
ABQ Foothills	October 8	October 16
ABQ South Valley	October 9	October 17
Corrales	October 1	October 9
Los Lunas	October 16	October 24
Bernalillo	October 13	October 21
Sandia Park	October 1	October 9

Average Length of the Growing Season

LOCATION	1931-1990	1991-2001
ABQ Airport	188 days	204 days
ABQ Foothills	154 days	170 days
ABQ South Valley	156 days	172 days
Corrales	138 days	156 days
Los Lunas	158 days	174 days
Bernalillo	160 days	176 days
Sandia Park	138 days	156 days