

GOLF COURSE IRRIGATION SALES CO.

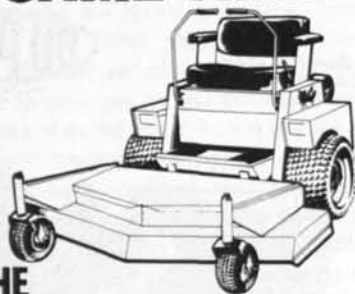
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HOARFROST

In anticipation of the change of seasons, John Muir once wrote: "I had long lived in bright flowery summer, and I wished to see the snow and ice, the divine jewelry of winter once more ..."

For Wisconsin, winter provides a special variety of this Muir jewelry known as hoarfrost.

During long, clear, calm nights when chilly temperatures move southward the air cools to the dewpoint and is saturated with moisture. Subsequent cooling results in condensation which produces dew when the dewpoint is above freezing. But when the dewpoint is below freezing, the water vapor sublimates, or skips the liquid stage and is deposited as ice crystals on some cooling surface, be it a blade of grass, a leaf or an entire tree.

Frost tends to form initially and most copiously at edges and points because this is where the cooling rate is greatest.

Generally, there are two types of this kind of frost: columnar and tabular. The columnar (branch-like) occurs when water vapor is deposited rapidly at temperatures not much below freezing. The tabular (flower-like) on the other hand, is favored when temperatures are much below freezing and the deposition occurs relatively slowly.

The lacy, plume-like growth on window panes is another form of hoarfrost which grows indoors. With extremely cold outdoor temperatures, windows may become so cold that the indoor water vapor exposed to them is deposited on the pane. These intricate and delicate patterns usually follow scratches and abrasions on the glass. Try scratching your initials on a pane and see the unique patterns that form around them.

Credit: Wisconsin Natural Resources Jan./Feb. 1984



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