

Seasons

Spring

The wettest time of the year at Arthur's Pass is usually during October and November (see Climate), when the nor'-west winds bring lots of storms and rain to the mountains. This rain thaws the winter's snow and washes it off the mountains into the rivers. With heavy rain in the mountains the rivers become dirty and swollen with mud and debris. The swollen rivers sometimes cause flooding and slips. Trampers must be very careful and should avoid crossing rivers in a high or flooded condition. Wind, rain and snow are a major cause **of erosion**. Imagine being in a mountain hut with the wind, rain and snow thrashing about outside. Christchurch's lowest rainfall is during November. This is due to the nor'-west conditions. While bringing rain in the mountains it is hot and dry in Christchurch. Why not take a trip out to the Waimakariri River mouth one nor'-west day, and see how dirty and swollen the river is. Spring in Arthur's Pass occurs later than it does in the low-lands. In November the first leaves emerge on the **Ribbonwood** trees. By December the warmth has brought out the alpine and sub-alpine flowers. Birds start nesting in the trees and on river beds.

Summer

Summer can have variable weather with many hot, sunny days, interspersed with nor'-westerly rain storms. Many trampers and climbers enjoy the mountains at this time of the year. It is possible to have snowfalls in summer, and on clear nights there may be a frost with temperatures below freezing.

Autumn

As summer turns to autumn during March/April, the first frosts will chill your toes. Although most of the vegetation is **evergreen**, the **deciduous** plants such as **Hoheria** will lose their leaves. Many of the alpine plants have berries in autumn and snow falls begin to dust the mountain tops.

Winter

The winter is very cold with heavy frosts at night often followed by crisp, clear, sunny days. The weather is often stable in early winter, with big snowfalls occurring in August. Arthur's Pass has its lowest monthly rainfall during July. How does this compare with that of Christchurch? Snow may lie around the village for several weeks from July to September, and people build snowmen and women.

Many of the alpine plants are snow covered for several months during winter, and have **adapted** accordingly. Clusters of icicles hang on the edges of streams and waterfalls.