

And Then There Was Warmth
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The news just keeps getting better doesn't it. Without trying to put a hex on the season, it appears that a winter of excellent chilling accumulation is being followed by a Spring with good warmth which should set the crops up very nicely. Figure 1 below compares the accumulation of heat from 1 September to 18 November over the past five years. (For the technically minded, the Growing Degree Accumulations were calculated using the HortPlus MetWatch software with base temperature set to 10°C.) Spring heat accumulations have been good in all areas of the country. A definite improvement on last season, and streets ahead of 1997.

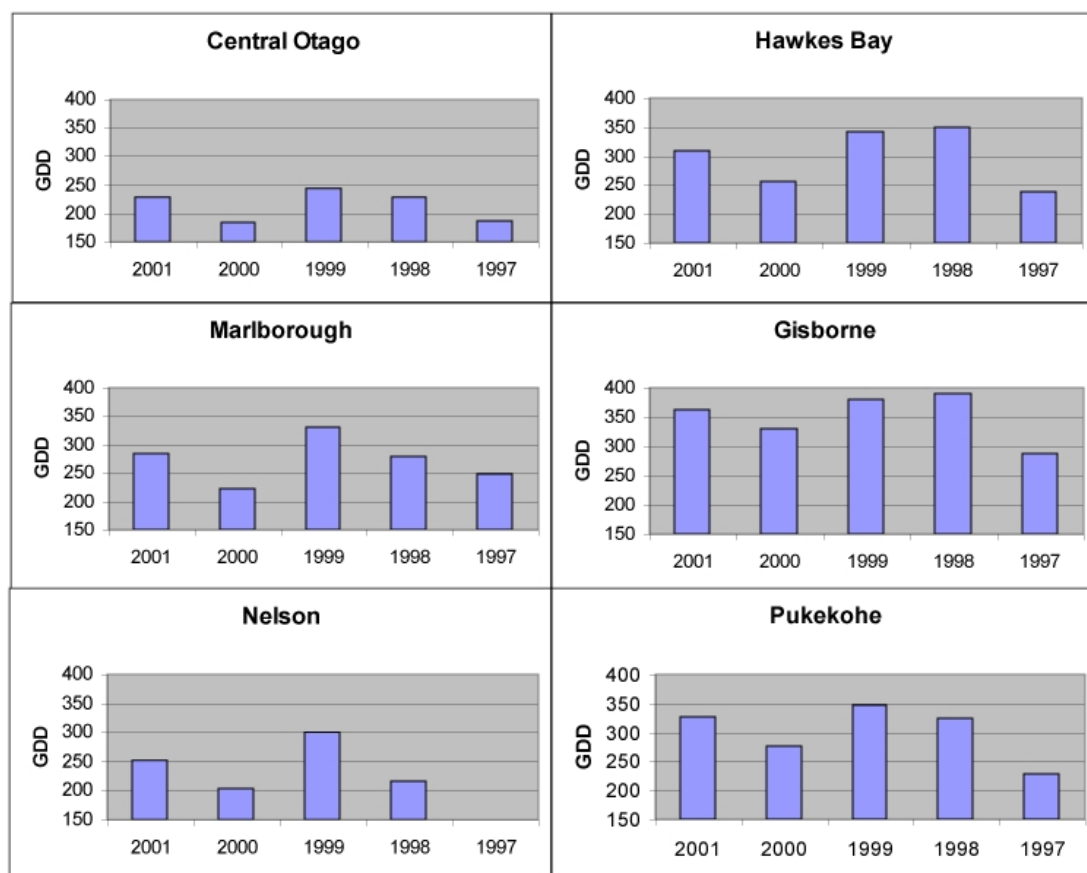


Figure 1. Accumulated heat over the beginning of the last five growing seasons.

The importance of warmth in the spring goes well beyond the immediate effects that you may see. Many of the developmental steps in fruit development which provide the foundation for later growth occur early in the season, and so are driven by early season temperatures. By the time you read this, the proof will already be evident on the trees and vines, but you should be seeing a good even crop with good fruit size. These good spring conditions after an excellent winter should also have translated into even flowering with strong flowers, and at the end of the season should give even maturation and good quality. Howzat for a prediction!