

May 2002 Summary

Summer Arrives Early

The above normal temperatures which concluded April continued through the first half of May, setting numerous daily records and threatening to become the all time hottest May since records began in West Central Florida. A refreshing mid-month cool down, followed by average temperatures and the gradual onset of thunderstorms to finish the month, brought the final values down. However, the drop was not enough to keep May 2002 from being another top ten warmest finish. For the month, temperatures were the 6th warmest on record at Tampa (Table 1) and 11th warmest at Fort Myers (Table 2).

RANK	AVG. TEMP.	YEAR
1	81.8	1995
2	81.5	1975
3	81.2	1991
4	80.5	1990
5	80.3	2000
6	79.9	2002
7	79.8	1985
8	79.6	1933
9	79.4	1935
9	79.4	1905

RANK	AVG. TEMP.	YEAR
1	82.5	1995
2	80.9	1991
3	80.7	1975
4	80.5	1994
5	80.4	1990
5	80.4	1989
7	80.1	1997
8	80.0	1996
8	80.0	1985
10	79.9	1953
11	69.8	2002

May 1 - 13: Hot...For All Time?

The unusually strong high pressure ridge, combined with increasing sun angle, produced mid summer heat just about every afternoon. Rising dew point temperatures, combined with the urban heat island and the effect of the rapidly warming Tampa Bay waters, held nighttime temperatures up to similar departures from normal. Several daily records were set at both Tampa and Fort Myers during the first half of the month. At Tampa, the +7.2 degree departure from normal, observed through the 12th, had this month on track to be the 11 time warmest May on record.

May 14 - 31: Refreshing Reality (and Even Some Rain)

The persistent pattern began to break down on the 14th, as a weak cool front brought daytime temperatures down into the 80s, and overnight lows into the upper 50s and 60s across West Central and Southwest Florida. On the 18th and 19th, a decelerating frontal zone brought clouds and the first widespread rain event since early April. Much of May's rain (Figure 1) fell on these days. Canadian high pressure followed the front, providing *below* normal temperatures which continued into the Memorial Day weekend. Normal late May weather returned by Memorial Day, with isolated to scattered afternoon and evening thunderstorms, some severe, and average temperatures to close out the month.

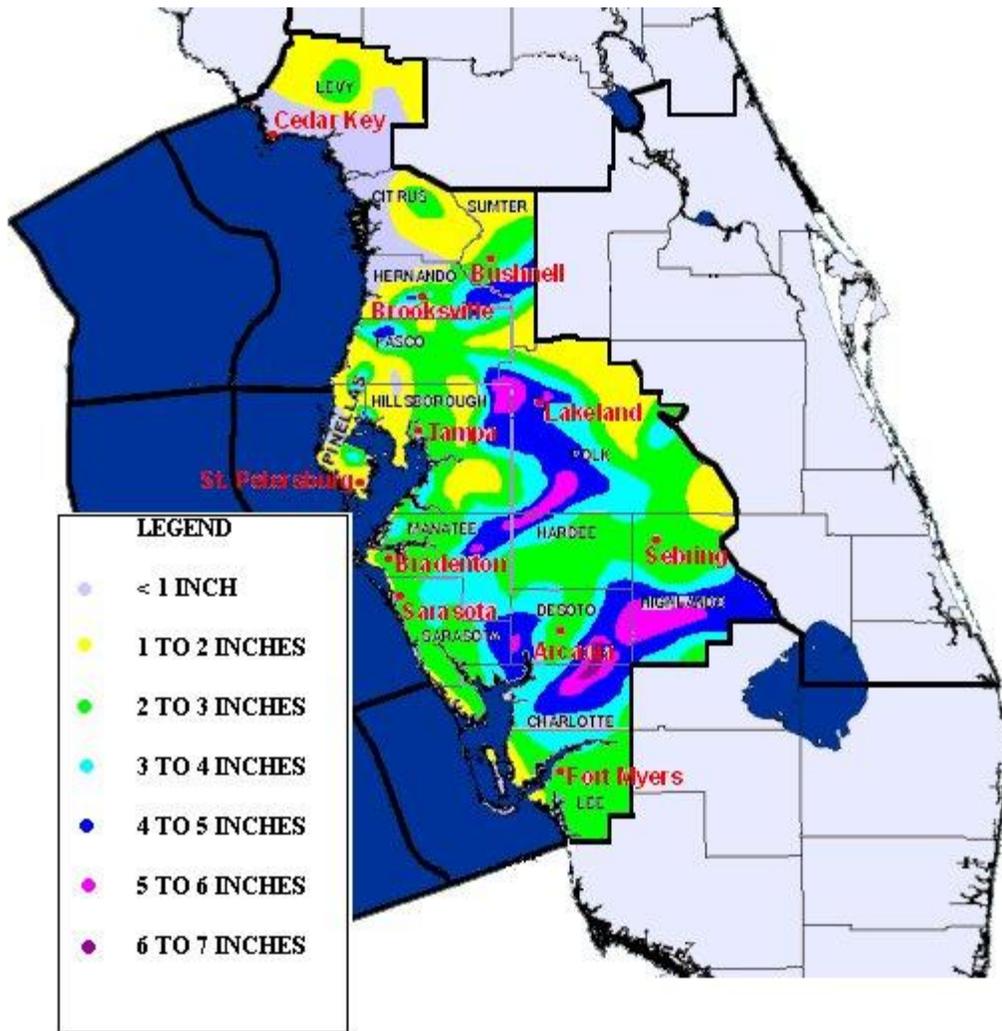


Figure 1. May 2002 Rainfall in West Central and Southwest Florida.

Maximum/Minimum Temperatures May 2002, Tampa



Figure 2. Preliminary May 2002 Maximum and Minimum Temperatures, Tampa.