

Why Does Rain Smell So Good? | Curious English

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

53 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Julia, why are you smiling at a puddle?

I am enjoying the smell after the rain.

Wet shoes have never made me this happy.

Not your shoes, Martin, the earth!

Welcome to Curious English, from Your English Toolbox.

I am Martin, and I am here with Julia.

Today, a small mystery: why can rain smell so good?

You will also learn three expressions for describing what happens around you.

Before we explain, make a prediction.

Does that familiar smell come only from the water, or from what the rain touches?

What the rain touches is important.

Think of a garden after several warm days without rain.

The first shower arrives, and suddenly there is a rich, earthy smell.

Earthy means like earth or soil, not like the whole planet.

So an earthy smell is the sort of smell I notice beside a damp garden path.

Exactly, and the distinctive smell after rain is often called petrichor.

You do not need that scientific word for everyday conversation.

An earthy smell is already a useful description.

Here is one part of the explanation.

Researchers at MIT filmed raindrops hitting porous surfaces, which have tiny spaces in them.

The drops could trap little air bubbles against the surface.

Those bubbles rose and burst, sending much smaller droplets into the air.



A little like bubbles popping in a fizzy drink?

That is a helpful picture of the movement.

The researchers suggested this could help explain how materials that produce the smell travel from the ground into the air.

It is one mechanism, not a complete explanation of every smell after rain.

And our second expression is a dry spell.

A dry spell is a period with little or no rain.

The garden needed water after a long dry spell.

Here, spell means a period of time, not magical words.

So the garden did not need a wizard, just some water.

Exactly.

Our third expression is release into the air.

It means let something out so it can enter the air around us.

Crushing a mint leaf can release its scent into the air.

Notice the useful pattern: release something into something.

Let us put the three together in a tiny scene.

After a dry spell, rain reaches the garden.

You notice an earthy smell as scented material is released into the air.

Now it is your turn.

The fields have had almost no rain for three weeks.

What kind of spell have they had?

A dry spell.

You smell damp soil beside the path.

What adjective describes that smell?

Earthy.

And if a flower lets its scent out around you, it releases its scent into the...

Air.

Finish one sentence of your own: after a dry spell, I notice...

Find the three expressions and their examples on our episode page.

The link is in the description, with seven listening speeds to choose from.



Keep your English curious.

And give your wet shoes a little space!

