



Mississippi Valley Conservation

*State of the Lake
Environment Report
December 2002*

Widow Lake



Widow Lake

Widow Lake is situated in the Township of Lanark Highlands, in Lanark County. It is one of the headwater lakes of the Clyde River system, in the Mississippi Valley watershed. Widow Lake is at an elevation of 190 metres above sea level. The lake perimeter is approximately 5.5 kilometres, with a maximum depth of 6.1 metres. Widow Lake supports a warm water fishery. Common species include Yellow Pickerel, Northern Pike, Smallmouth and Largemouth Bass. At last count in 1983, there were 14 cottages on the lake.



Residents of Widow Lake volunteered their time, to provide water quality testing, through the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) Self-Help Program in 1995. Continuing to collect this data is extremely important and will become valuable with each year that passes; the data will provide a general picture of water quality conditions. Comprehensive testing in 2002 through Mississippi Valley Conservation's (MVC) *Watershed Watch Program* provides for a comparison between water quality conditions as they exist now, to results obtained 19 years ago through the MOE Recreational Lakes Program.

In general, the water quality in Widow Lake is fair. There is one sampling station at the deepest point, in the north end of the lake. This station was sampled eight times for 2002. You will find graphs which follow, that water clarity, as measured by Secchi Disk readings, were observed as good. The average for 2002 is 3.3 metres, indicating that Widow Lake is a moderately enriched (some nutrients) or mesotrophic lake. Nineteen years ago, the average Secchi Disk depth was 3.2 metres, indicating a slight improvement in water clarity.

Directly related to water clarity is the amount of nutrients, in particular phosphorus, entering the lake. The Provincial Objective for phosphorus levels in shield lakes is a maximum of 20 micrograms per litre (ug/L). In 2002, the average total phosphorus level in the euphotic zone (depth at which sunlight can penetrate or two times the secchi disk depth), also known as TPA, was $20.4 ug/L$. The average for the sample taken one metre off the bottom or TPB, was $26.3 ug/L$. Both averages are fairly high, indicating an enriched (higher amount of nutrients) or euphotic lake environment.

Chlorophyll-a, is a measure of the algal density in the lake. The average chlorophyll-a density for the sampling station was $7.64 ug/L$, indicating a high algal density for Widow Lake in 2002. In 1983, chlorophyll-a levels were lower at $5.5 ug/L$.

Plants and animals are a direct reflection of their environment. The most critical time of year for conducting dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles is after August 31. Profiles are generally conducted at this time of year and at the deepest point in the lake. Aquatic vegetation and algae that has grown over the summer, has died off and settled on the bottom, using the available oxygen necessary to sustain aquatic life in the lower portion of the lake or the hypolimnion. Two other profiles were conducted in 2002, one in May and one in July, in order to generate a more concise picture of the oxygen content of the lake.

The dissolved oxygen and temperature data, measured at the deepest point in the main basin, indicate oxygen concentrations in the deep water portion are poor by mid-summer. Warm water fish species, such as pike and bass, are squeezed into the upper three metres of the lake by July. By late summer the oxygen levels do improve, adding an extra meter of habitat for the fishery. Therefore, residents and users of Widow Lake cannot afford to be complacent. Every effort should be made to reduce nutrient loading into the lake from land use activities.

Widow Lake was also tested for invasive species in 2002, in particular, for zebra mussels and spiny water flea, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Widow Lake did *not* have zebra mussel veligers (larvae) or spiny water flea present. Residents and property owners need to ensure that all access points to the lake have posted signs indicating the precautions they can take to avoid the spread of invasive species into Widow Lake. Another recommendation is for residents to begin participation in the invasive species monitoring program through MVC.



Residents and users of Widow Lake need to adopt a stewardship approach to limit the amount of nutrients entering the lake. A first step to achieve this is to form a Lake Association. It is recommended that a Lake Steward be appointed to undertake ongoing water quality testing and to join the Mississippi Valley Lake Stewardship Network. Monitoring over time is essential to determine long term trends and changes. Resources and information are readily available through the *Watershed Watch Program*. There are helpful tips throughout this report to help reduce your impact on Widow Lake. Additional water quality data, current and historic, is available for Widow Lake and many other lakes in the Mississippi Valley watershed. Contact MVC for more information on how you can become a good lake steward for your lake. We all have a responsibility to preserve this precious natural resource for future generations.

FIVE EASY STEPS TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY



1. Build at least 30 metres away from the shoreline.
2. Keep your lot well treed and preserve or replant native vegetation along the shoreline.
3. Pump out your septic tank every three to five years.
4. Reduce water use and use phosphate free soaps and detergents.
5. Keep the size of your lawn to a minimum; do not use fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides.

LOW PHOSPHORUS LIFESTYLE	Amount of Phosphorus (grams)	HIGH PHOSPHORUS LIFESTYLE	Amount of Phosphorus (grams)
Human waste	535	Human waste	535
No dishwasher	0	Dishwasher using powdered detergent once per day	650
No fertilizer	0	Lawn fertilized once/year	1960
Trees not cut down	20	Lot cleared of trees	30
Uses phosphate-free products	20	Uses products with phosphate	180
TOTAL	575 grams	TOTAL	3355 grams

How Does Widow Lake Measure Up?

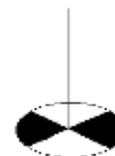
1983-2002 Water Quality Results

Sample Year Mean	Secchi Disk Depth [Metres]	Total Phosphorus Euphotic Zone [Micrograms/litre]	Total Phosphorus 1 Metre off Bottom [Micrograms/litre]	Chlorophyll a Composite [Micrograms/Litre]
**1983	3.2			4.08
1995	2.4			5.50
2002	3.3	20.4	26.3	7.64
n	3	2	2	3
Minimum	2.4	20.4	26.3	4.08
Maximum	3.3	20.4	26.3	7.64
Mean	3.0	20.4	26.3	5.74
Standard Deviation	0.49329	N/A	N/A	1.79209

*Mean based on less than 6 measurements **Includes Recreational Lakes Program Data
Chlorophyll-a data prior to 1985 has been adjusted to reflect new lab procedures
in filtering resulting in an increase in chla concentrations by 35%

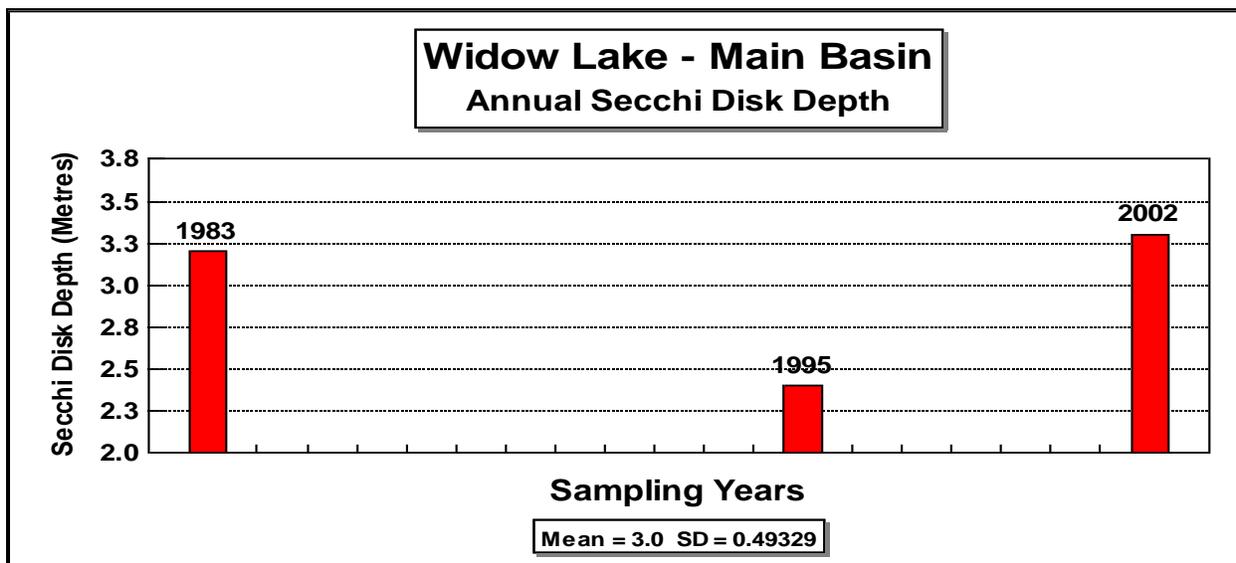
Interpreting Secchi Disc Readings:

A Secchi disk is a black and white coloured disk used to determine water clarity. The disk is lowered into the water. The point, at which you can no longer distinguish the black and white, is called the Secchi depth.



The higher the Secchi Disk measurement the clearer your lake is.

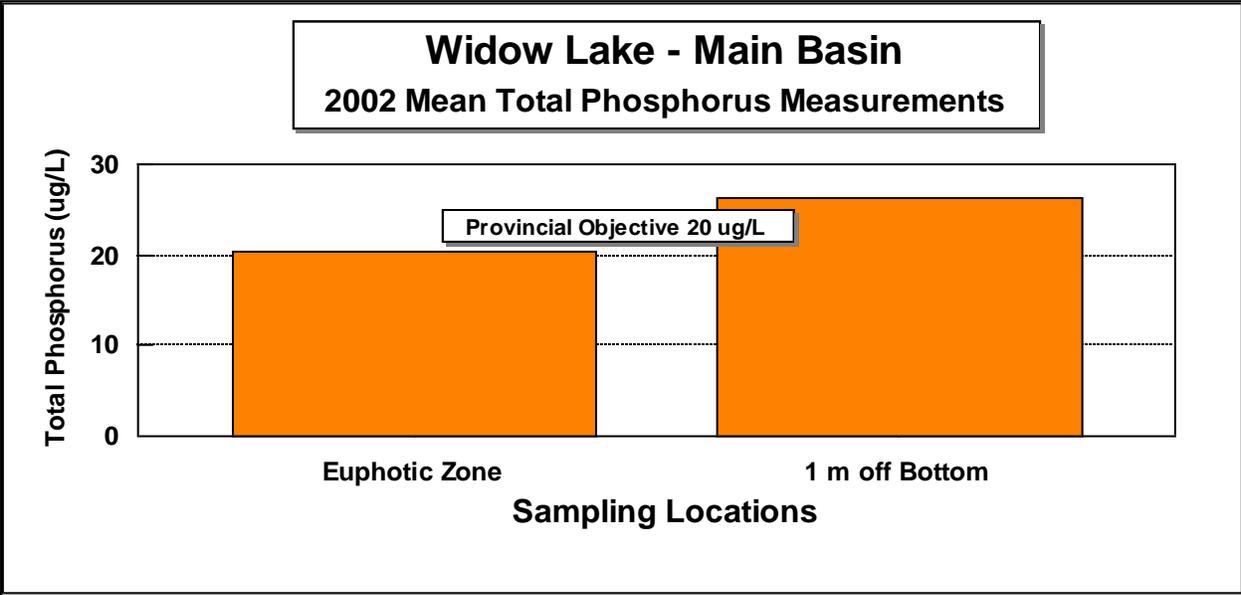
INTERPRETING YOUR SECCHI DISC RESULTS	
Secchi Reading	Lake Nutrient Status
Over 5 metres	Oligotrophic - unenriched, few nutrients
3.0 to 4.9 metres	Mesotrophic – moderately enriched, some nutrients
Less than 2.9 metres	Eutrophic – enriched, higher levels of nutrients



Interpreting Total Phosphorus Results:

Phosphorus is the nutrient that controls the growth of algae in most Ontario lakes. For this reason any increase in phosphorus in the lake will increase the quantity of algae that can grow. High levels of phosphorus can lead to algal blooms and in some cases affect the habitat of cold water fish such as lake trout. A general guideline exists to characterize your lake based on the total phosphorus that is measured.

INTERPRETING YOUR TOTAL PHOSPHORUS RESULTS	
Total Phosphorus	Lake Nutrient Status
10ug/L or less	Oligotrophic - unenriched, few nutrients
11 to 20ug/L	Mesotrophic – moderately enriched, some nutrients
21ug/L or more	Eutrophic – enriched, higher levels of nutrients



How to protect or restore a shoreline depends on the conditions of the site and the energy and resources of the owner.

There are four main strategies to choose from:

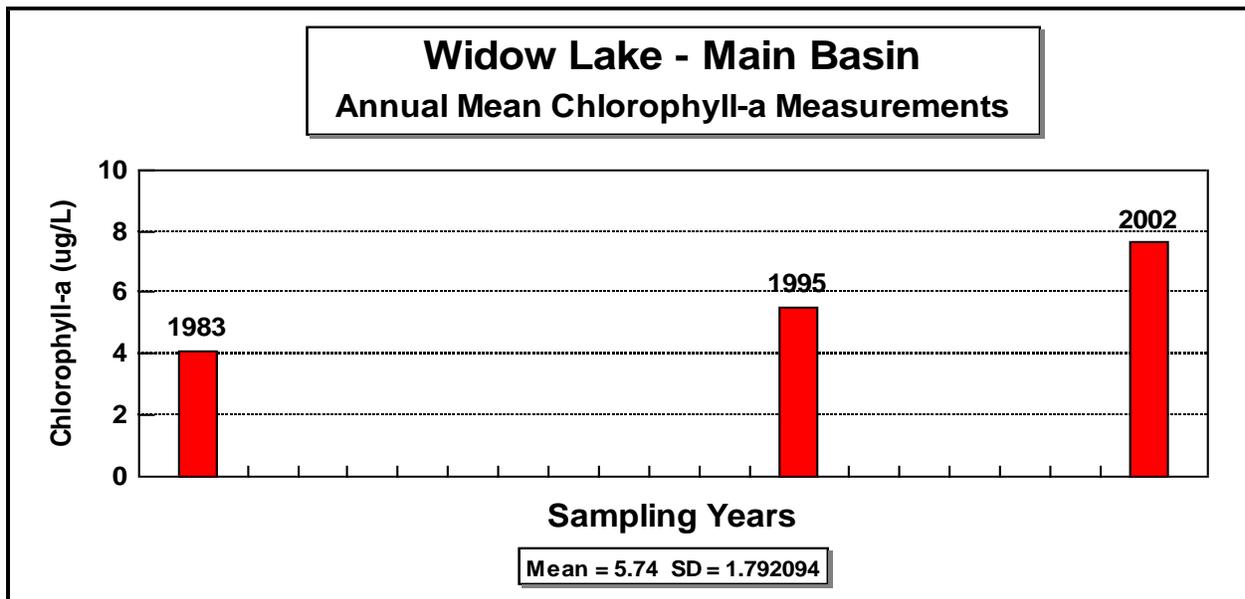
<p><input type="checkbox"/> PRESERVATION When purchasing a lakefront property, a natural shoreline is retained and access to the lake is designed to avoid shoreline damage.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> ENHANCEMENT Native species are planted and non-native species are removed.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> NATURALIZATION Degraded shorelines are left alone to return to their natural state.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> RESTORATION Cleared areas are planted with native species.</p>

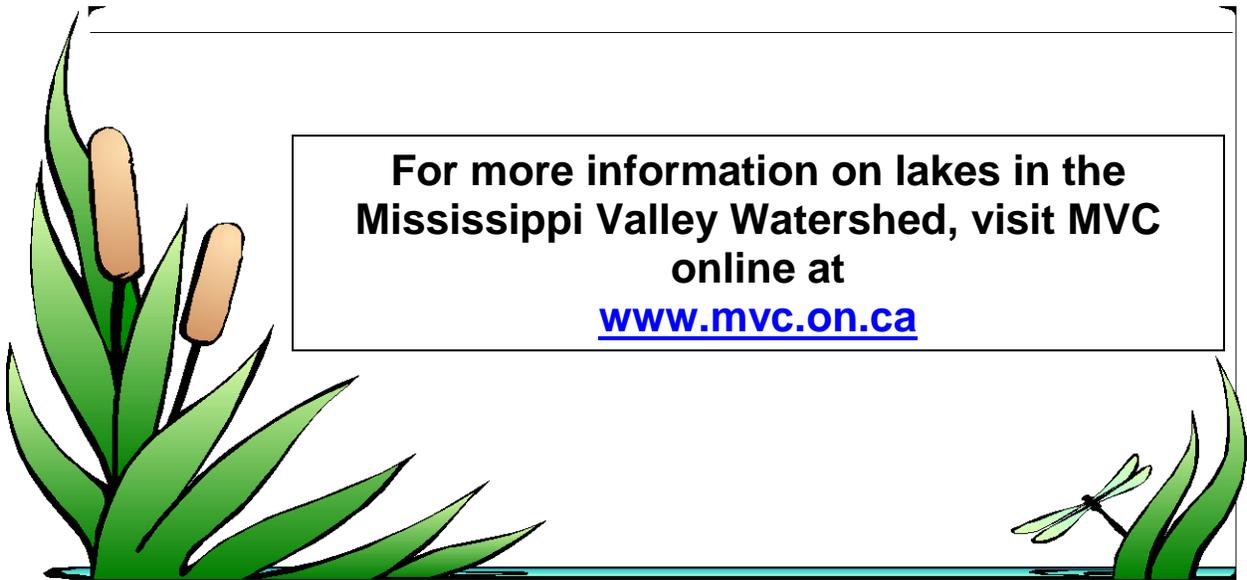


Interpreting Chlorophyll-a Results:

Chlorophyll-a, is a measure of the algal density in the lake. The lower the chlorophyll-a density in your lake, the clearer your lake is. Chlorophyll-a, is directly affected by the amount of total phosphorus in your lake. The more phosphorus there is in the water, the more algal growth will occur.

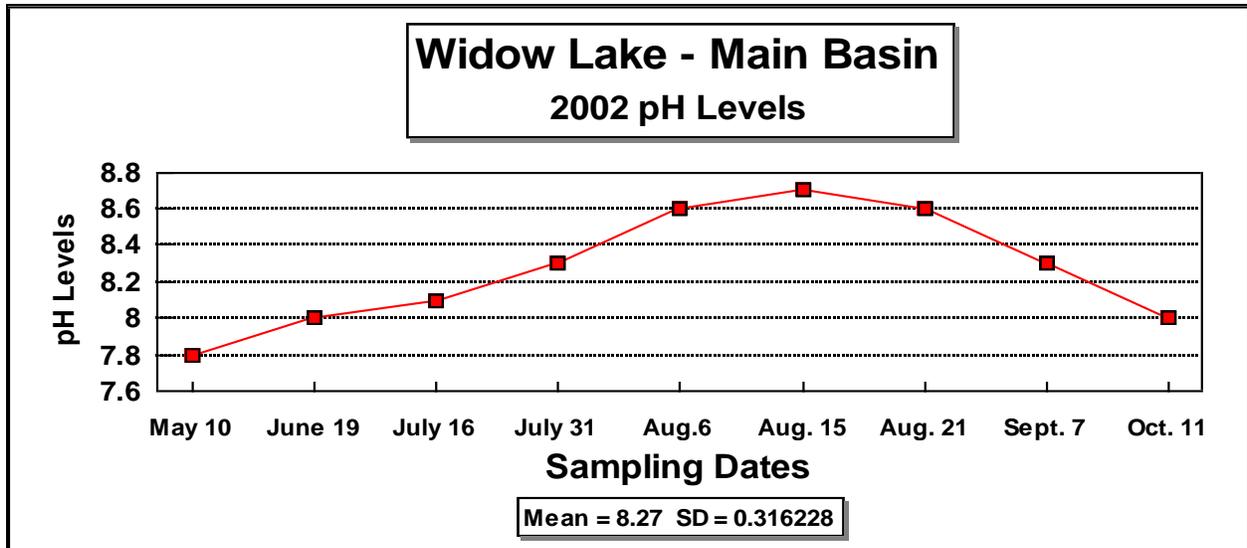
INTERPRETING YOUR CHLOROPHYLL-A RESULTS	
Chlorophyll-a Reading	Lake Nutrient Status
Up to 2 ug/L - low algal density	Oligotrophic - unenriched, few nutrients
2-4 ug/L - moderate algal density	Mesotrophic - moderately enriched, some nutrients
More than 4 ug/L - high algal density	Eutrophic - enriched, higher levels of nutrients





Interpreting pH Results:

The pH value is a measure of the concentration of hydrogen ions of a substance, which ranges from very acidic (pH = 1) to very alkaline (pH = 14). At a normal to neutral acidity level, a lake supports a diversity of life. A pH of 7 is neutral and most lake waters range between 6 and 9. pH values less than 6 are considered acidic, and most life forms cannot survive at a pH of 4.0 or lower. This parameter directly influences the types of plants and animals that live in the lake. Lakes with pH levels at 7.3 or higher are vulnerable to zebra mussels invasive.



MVC and O.F.A.H. need your help to Stop the Invasion!

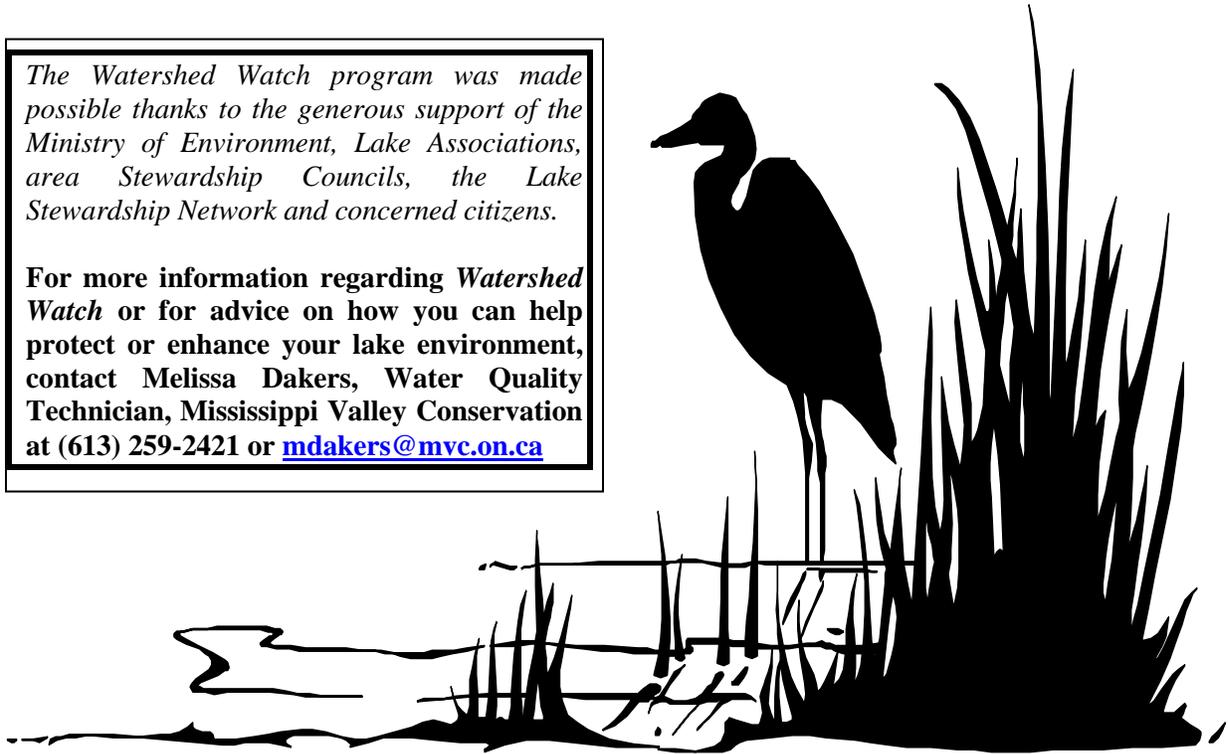
Check & clean your boat every time you change water bodies



Mississippi Valley Conservation

The Watershed Watch program was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Ministry of Environment, Lake Associations, area Stewardship Councils, the Lake Stewardship Network and concerned citizens.

For more information regarding Watershed Watch or for advice on how you can help protect or enhance your lake environment, contact Melissa Dakers, Water Quality Technician, Mississippi Valley Conservation at (613) 259-2421 or mdakers@mvc.on.ca



Depth [Metres]	Temperature [Degrees Celsius]	Dissolved Oxygen [Milligrams/Litre]	Percent % Saturation	Thermal Stratification
0.1	21.7	7.5	81	Epilimnion
1.0	20.8	7.9	85	
2.0	20.6	7.8	84	
3.0	20.2	7.1	75	
4.0	19.7	4.8	51	
5.0	17.7	0.2	3	Hypolimnion Bottom



Warm Water Fisheries Habitat (Bass, Walleye, Pike and Perch) defined as Dissolved Oxygen Concentrations greater than 4 mg/L at Temp. less than 25°C

