

Alfalfa Water Use in the Scott Valley: **Resolving the Discrepancy Between Theory and Practice**

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Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems And the GW – SW Interface





Accurate crop water use and applied irrigation water data critical for an accurate model.



What is ET?



Evapotranspiration: sum of evaporation and plant transpiration



Crop Water Use

$$ET_c = K_c \times ET_o$$

Crop Evapotranspiration (ET_c) is calculated by multiplying the reference crop evapotranspiration, ET_o , by a crop coefficient, K_c :



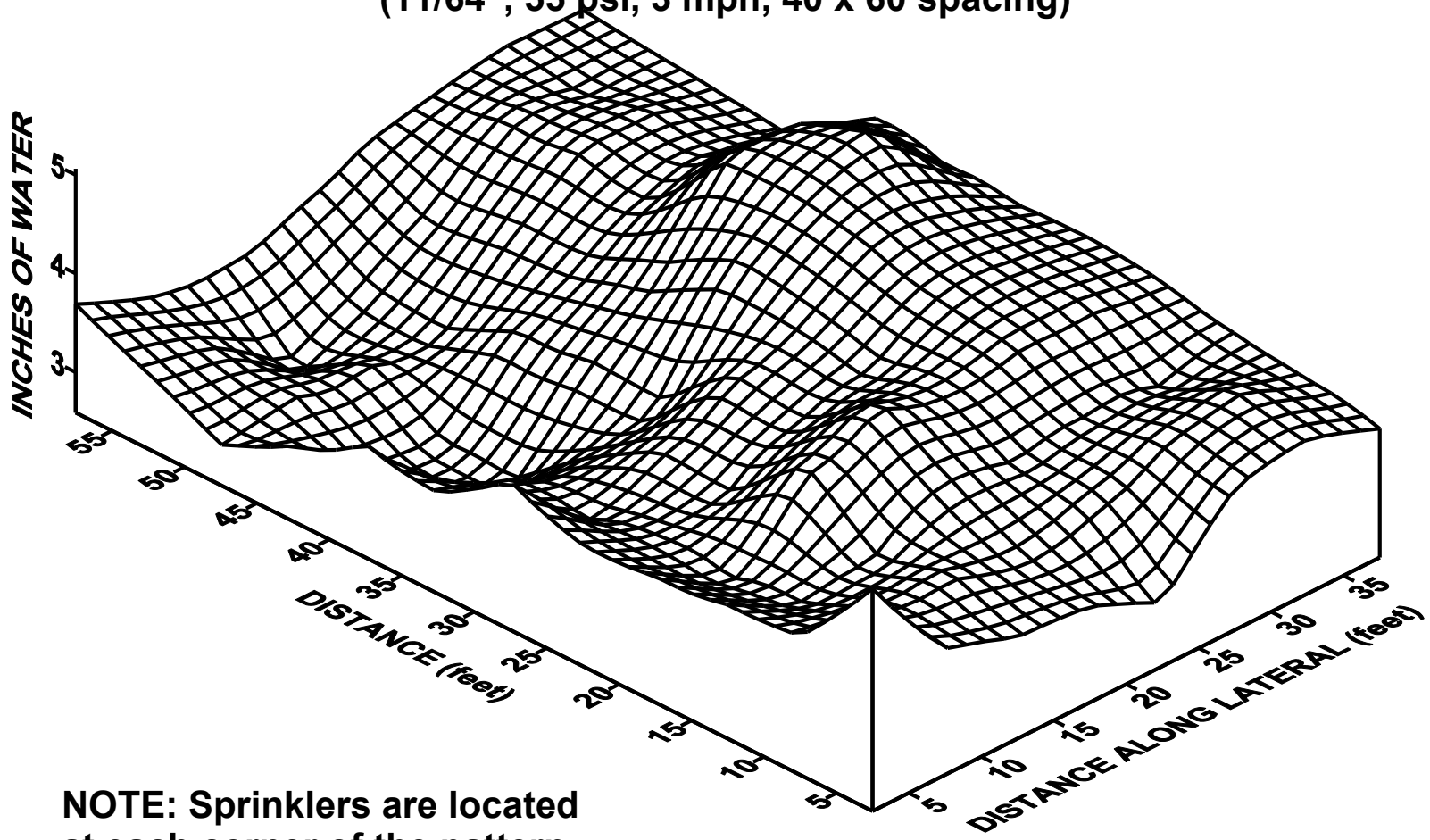
ET Estimation in the Field

- Field-wide alfalfa ET was determined in commercial fields using the surface renewal method (Paw U and Brunet, 1991; Paw U et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 1996; Spano et al., 1997).
- This is a micrometeorological technique that measures net radiation, air temperature, soil temperature, and soil heat flux (the amount of energy stored in the soil as a function of time) which are used in complex equations to calculate ET.

Region	Site	Year	Age Of alfalfa	Seasonal ET (inches)	Reference ET (inches)
Imperial Valley	LM1	2007	3	55.8	73.2
	LM2	2008	2	66.0	73.3
	LM2	2009	3	55.6	67.9
	GR	2010	2	63.5	73.2
	EL	2010	2	59.8	70.0
	WA	2010	2	65.8	70.0
San Joaquin Valley	KC	2007	2	56.6	57.0
	KC	2008	3	59.4	59.3
Sacramento Valley	CH1	2005	3	49.4	63.6
	CH2	2006	2	54.8	55.9
	CH2	2007	3	55.0	58.0
	CH2	2008	4	50.4	59.4
	EE	2010	3	46.3	48.8
	EW	2010	4	42.5	48.8
Scott Valley/Shasta Valley	EN	2007	2	39.6	44.0
	EN	2008	3	32.8	42.6
	EN	2009	4	33.8	40.4
	FI	2009	5	36.1	37.4
	SH	2009	4	38.8	40.4
	AP	2010	5	37.3	37.4
	FI	2010	2	34.7	37.4
	FA	2010	6	38.8	41.1
Tulelake	TU	2007	4	39.0	40.5
	TU	2008	5	34.3	36.5

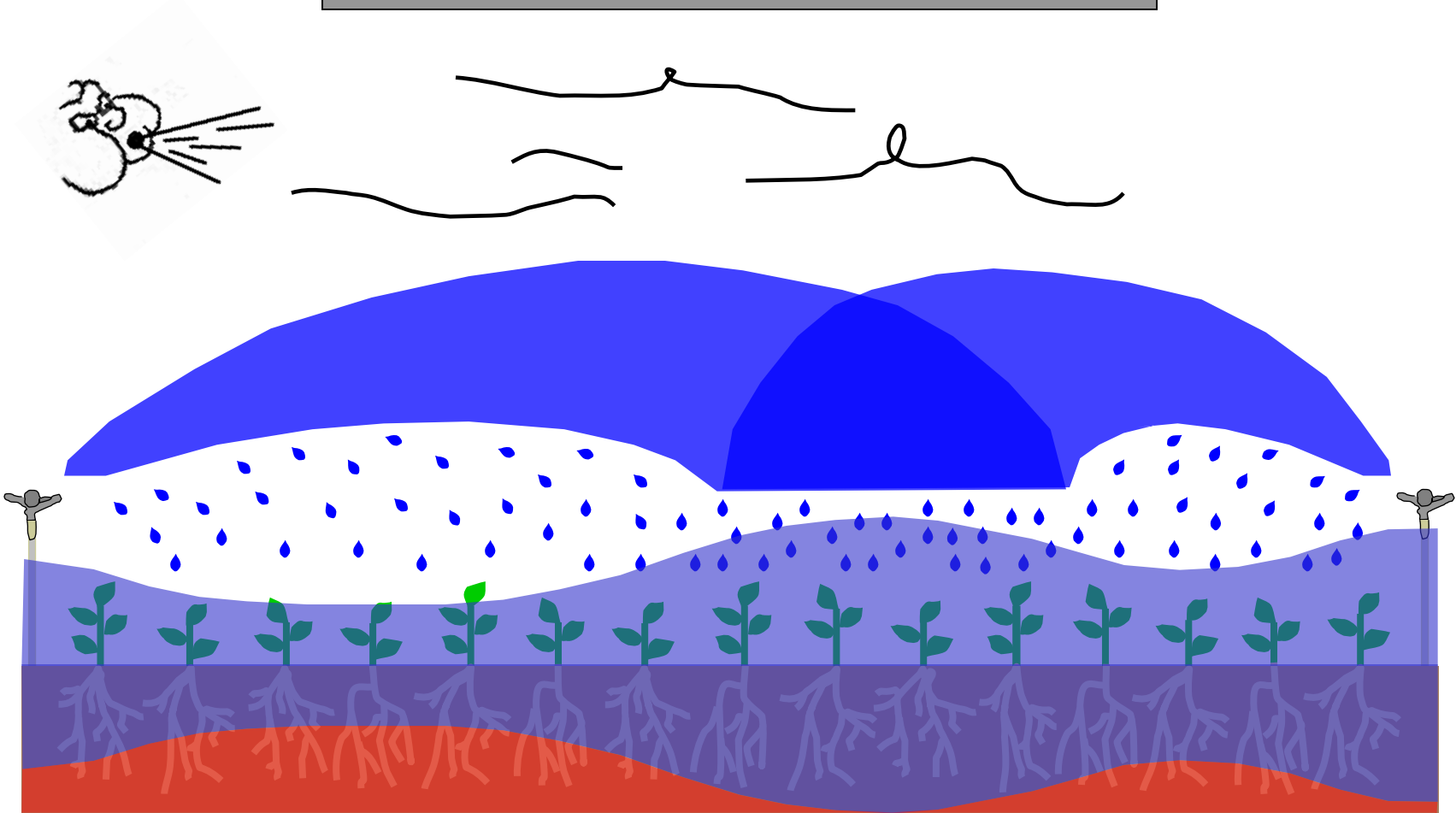
**Ave.
37 in.**

DISTRIBUTION UNIFORMITY = 82%
(11/64", 55 psi, 3 mph, 40 x 60 spacing)

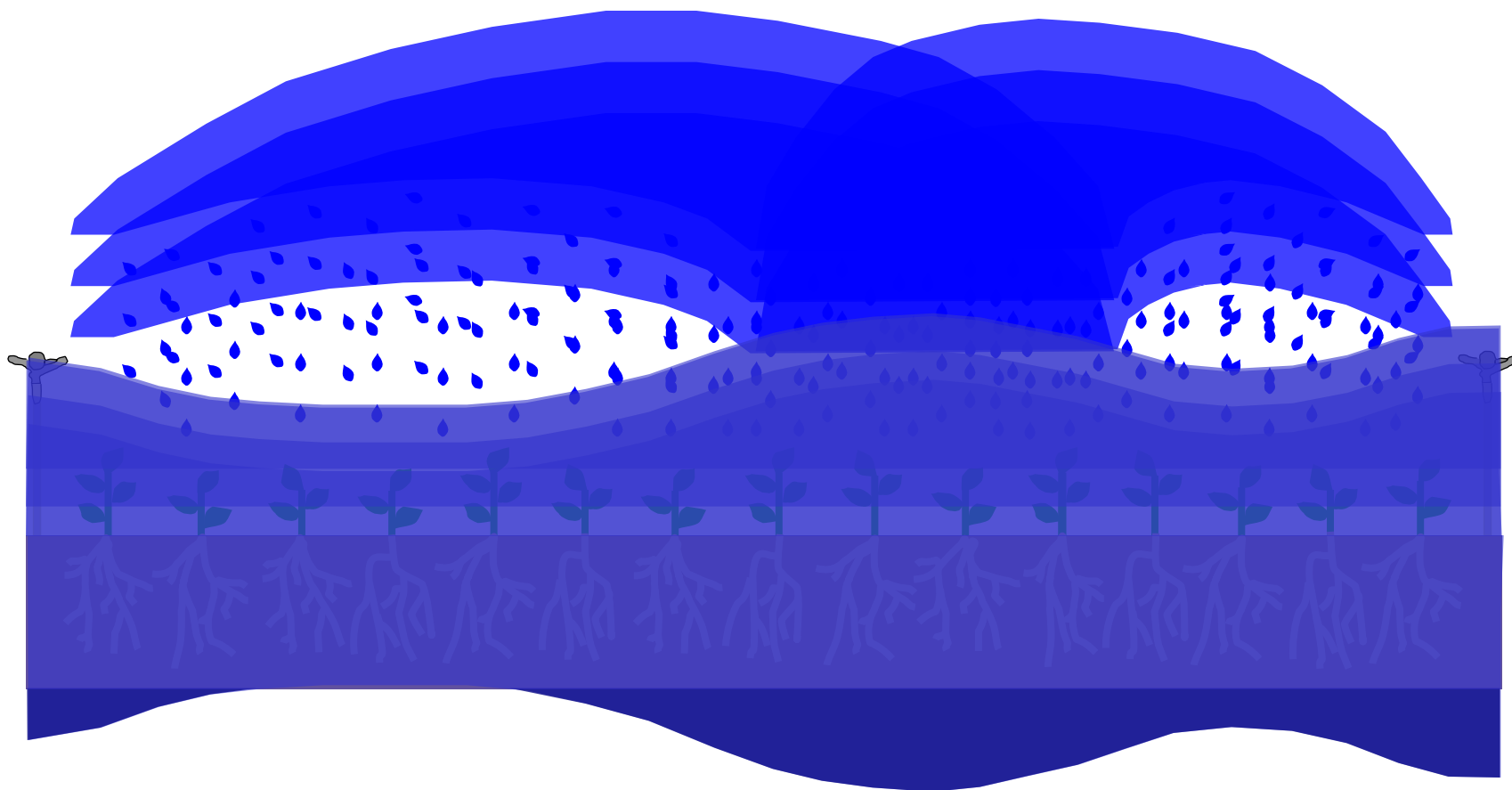


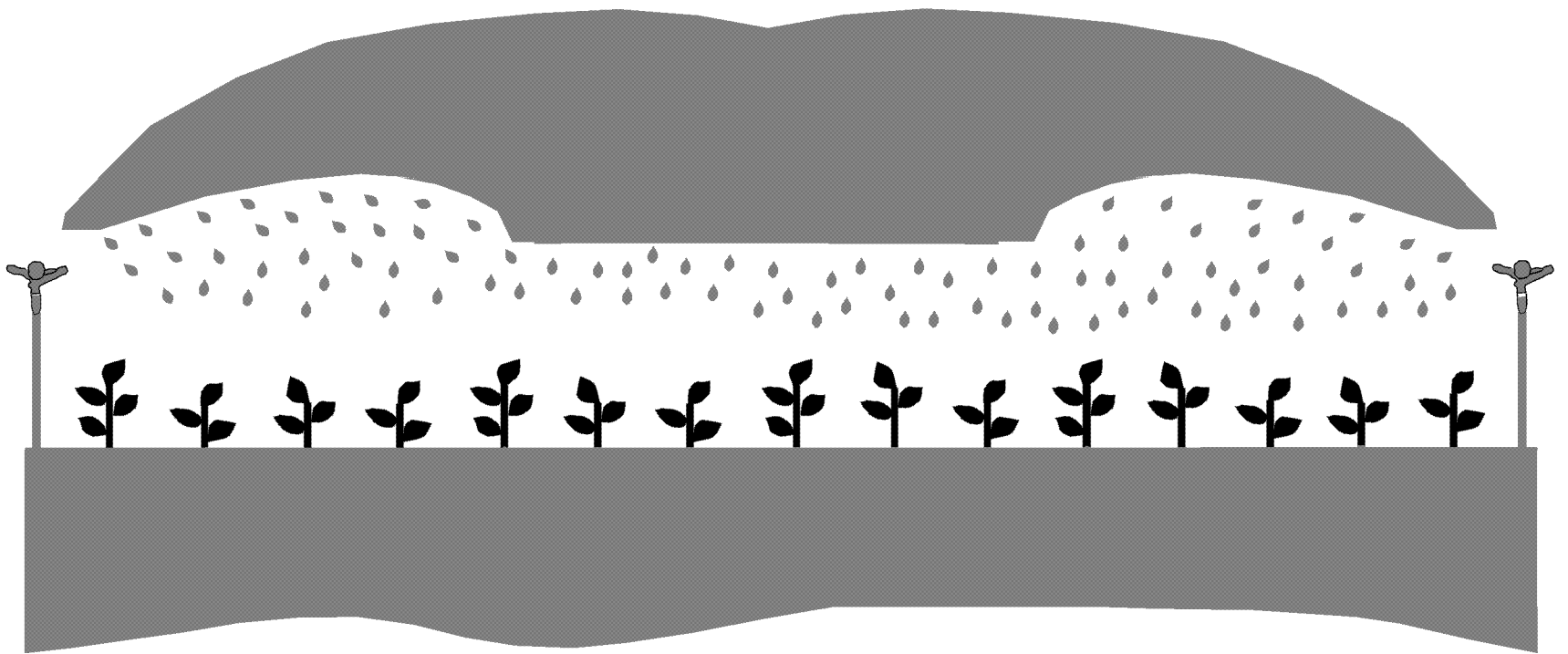
**NOTE: Sprinklers are located
at each corner of the pattern**

Under Irrigation



Over Irrigation





So...How much water should growers apply to alfalfa (and what to assume in model) ?

Alfalfa ET		37 in.
Soil moisture storage	4 ft. rooting depth x 2 in. avail/ft.	8 in.
In-season rainfall	5.67 in. x 60% (effective rainfall)	3 in.
Net irrigation		26 in.
Gross irrigation	26 in. ÷ 0.75 (irrig. effic.)	35 in



How much are growers applying?

Flow meter data and sprinkler
output calculation: 18 – 21 inches

So...What's happening?

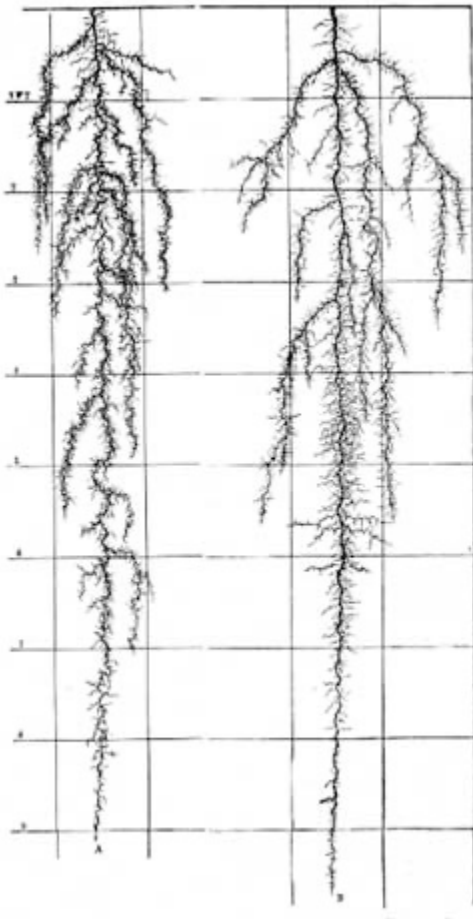
35 vs. 20 inches applied water

1. Alfalfa ET figures are in error and overestimate the amount of water used
2. Soil moisture reserves are much greater than 8 inches
3. Growers underestimate the amount of water they are actually applying

Eight commercial alfalfa fields (4 center pivot & 4 wheel-line)

- Surface renewal instruments in 3 of the 8 fields
- Temporary CIMIS station in irrigated pasture
- Gravimetric soil moisture content determined April, August and late September down to 8 feet
- Watermark sensors at 1-foot increments down to 8 feet (2 locations per field)
- Permanently installed flow meters
- Doppler portable flow meter
- Nozzle output on wheel-line sprinklers
- Tipping rain gauge at each site
- Yield measurements at each cutting

Alfalfa Root System



- Alfalfa roots can go deeper than 4 feet
- However, more roots near surface
- 40, 30, 20, 10 rule of thumb









Flow per nozzle and nozzle size and pressure



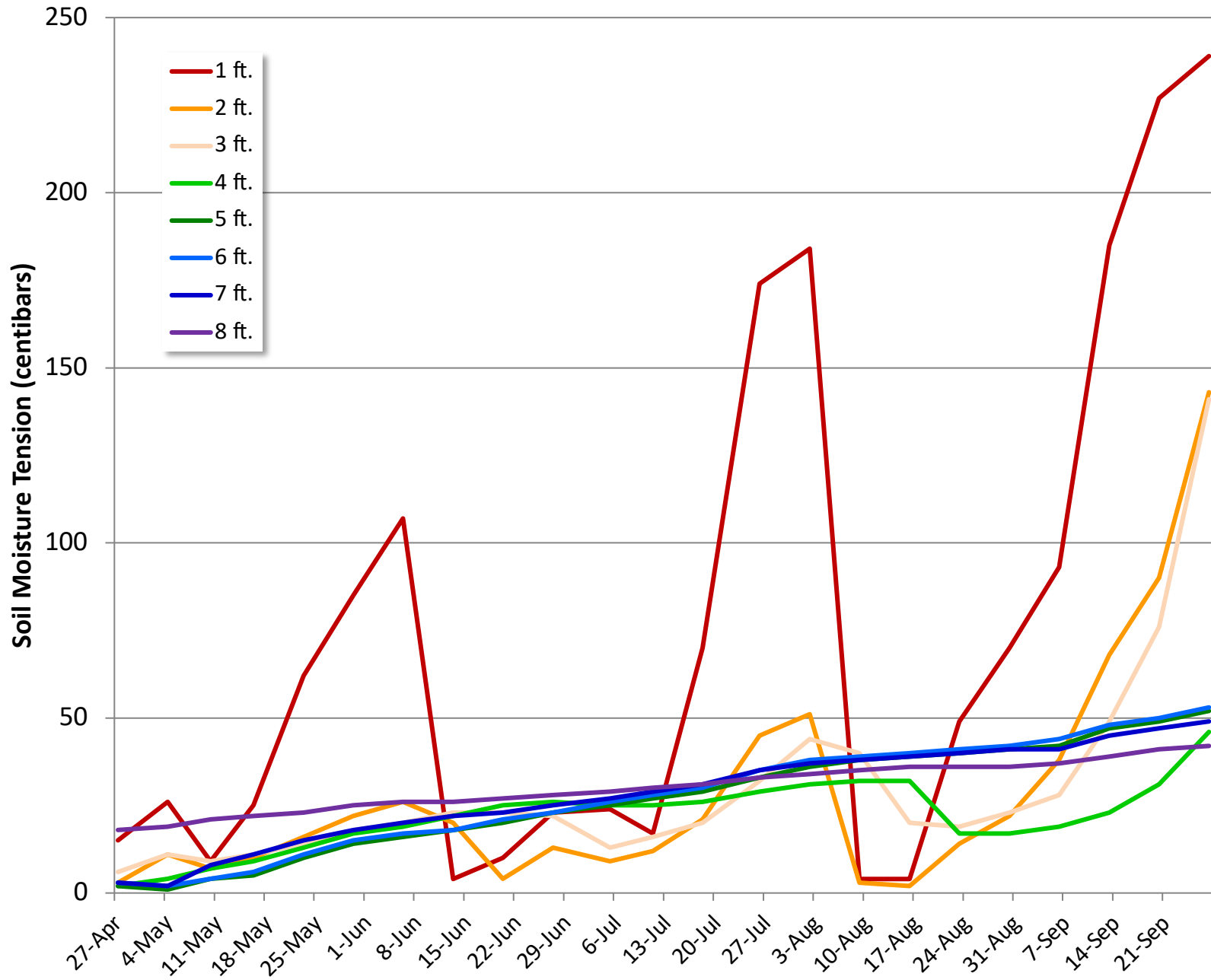
Ultrasonic Doppler Flow Meter

Requires
particulates or
bubbles in the
flow

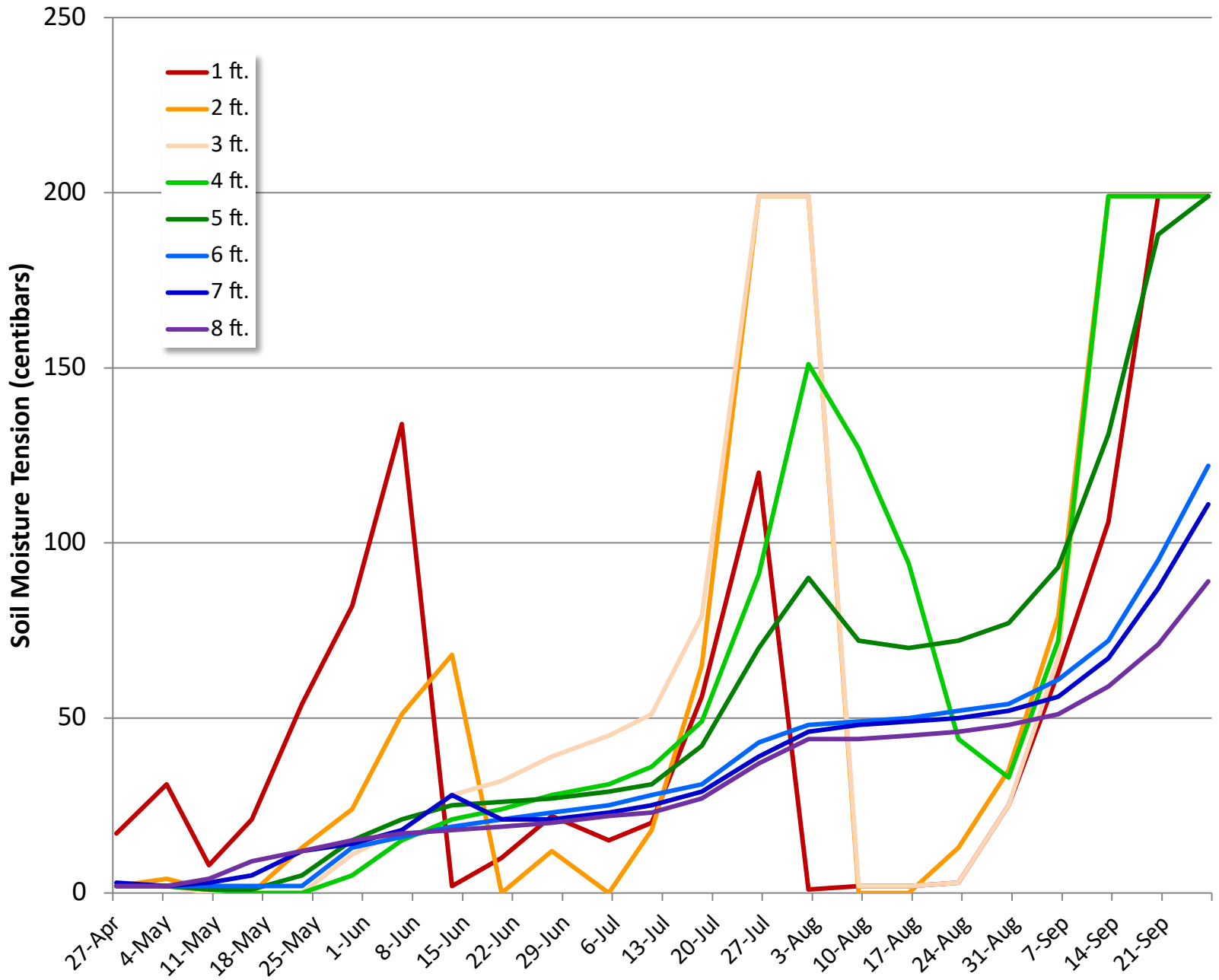
Electrical Resistance Blocks



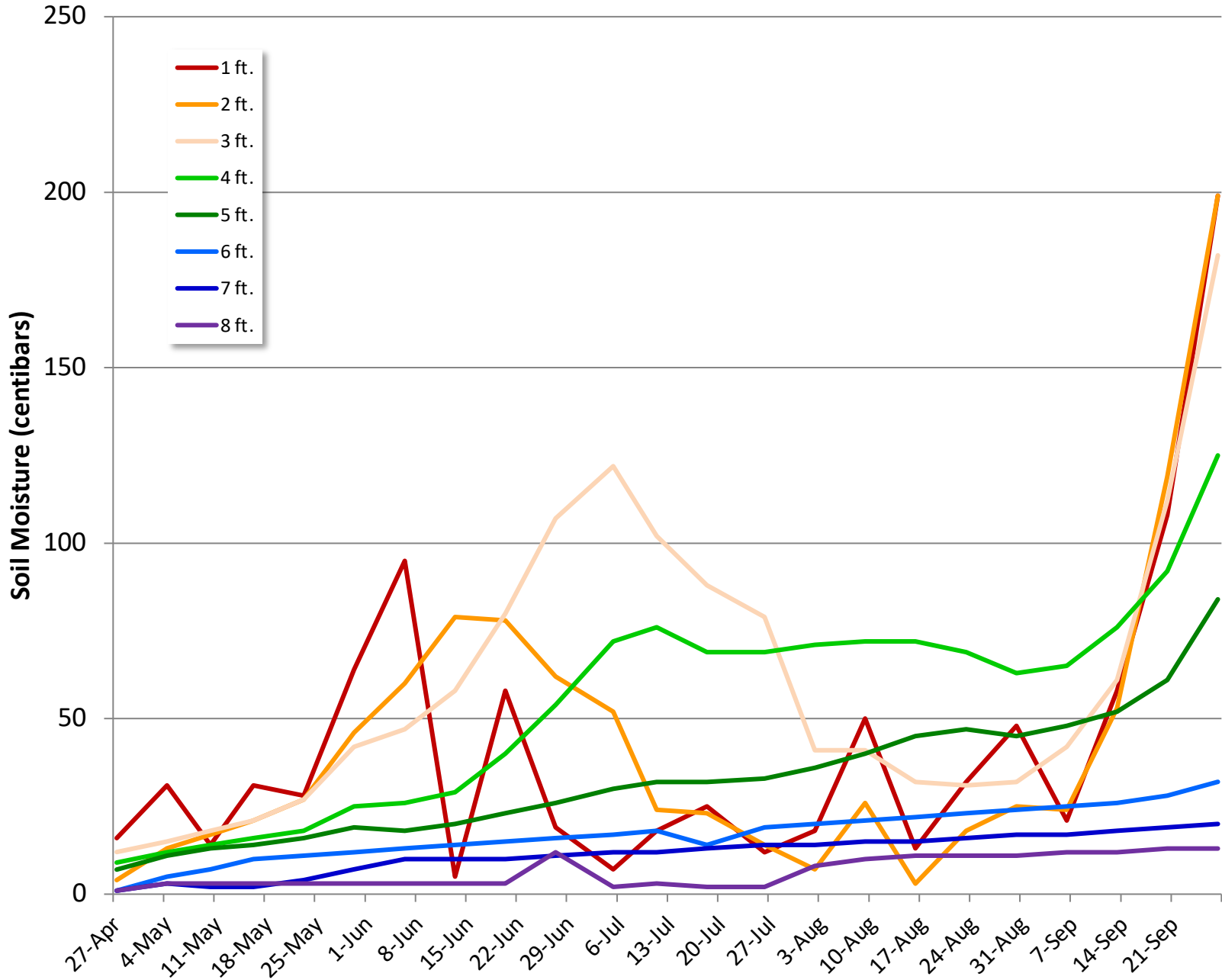
Grower 1 Location 1



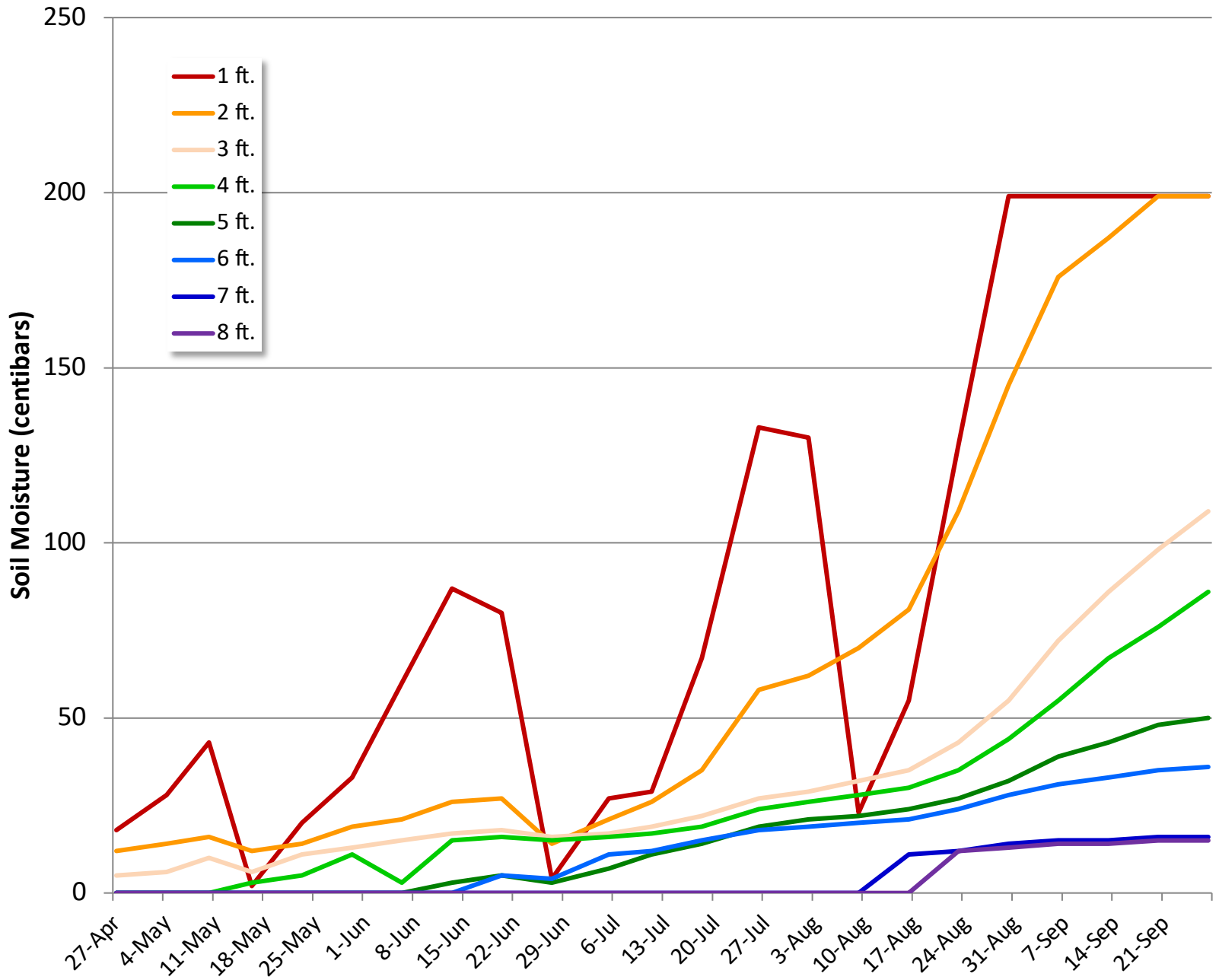
Grower 1 Location 2



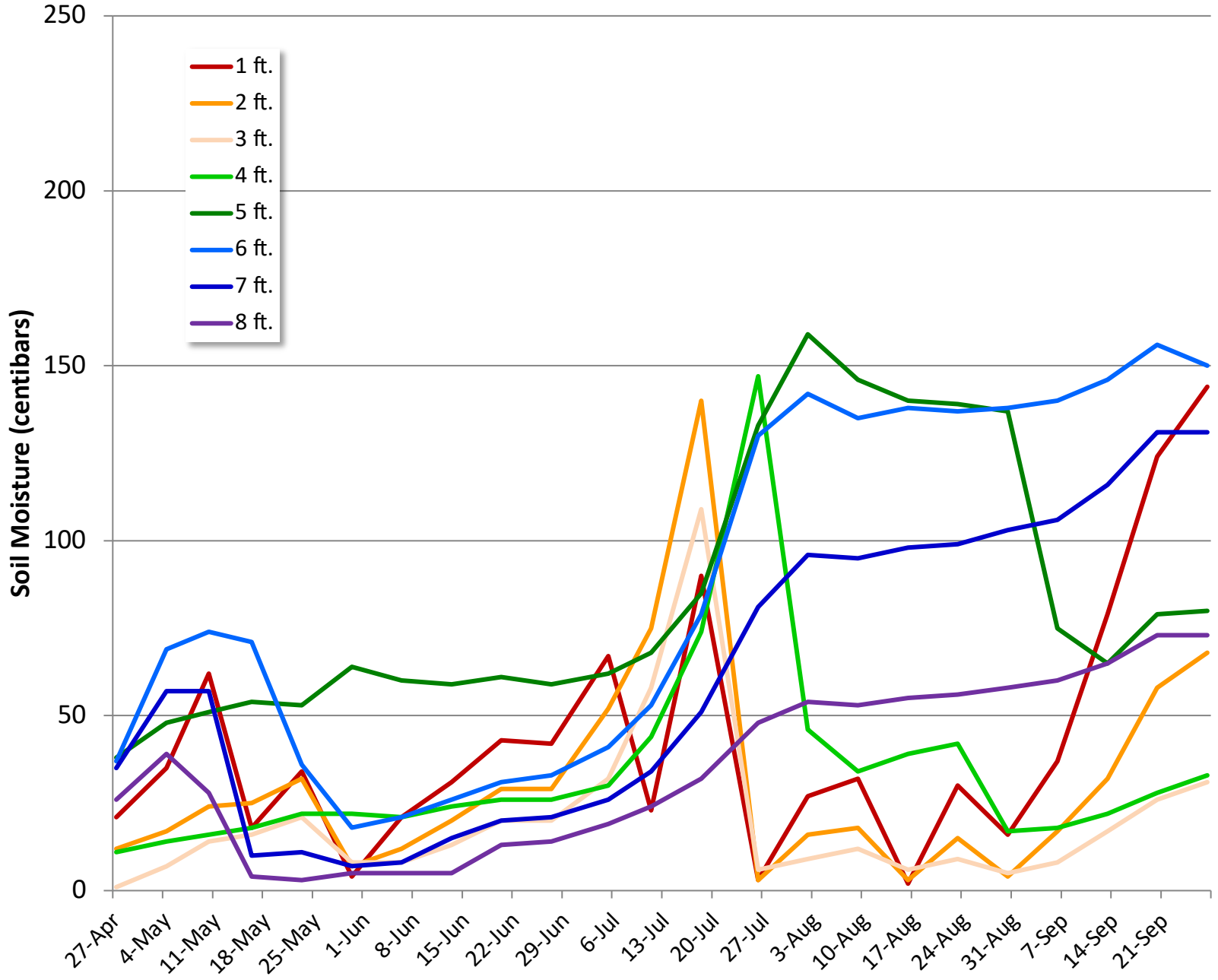
Grower 2 Location 1



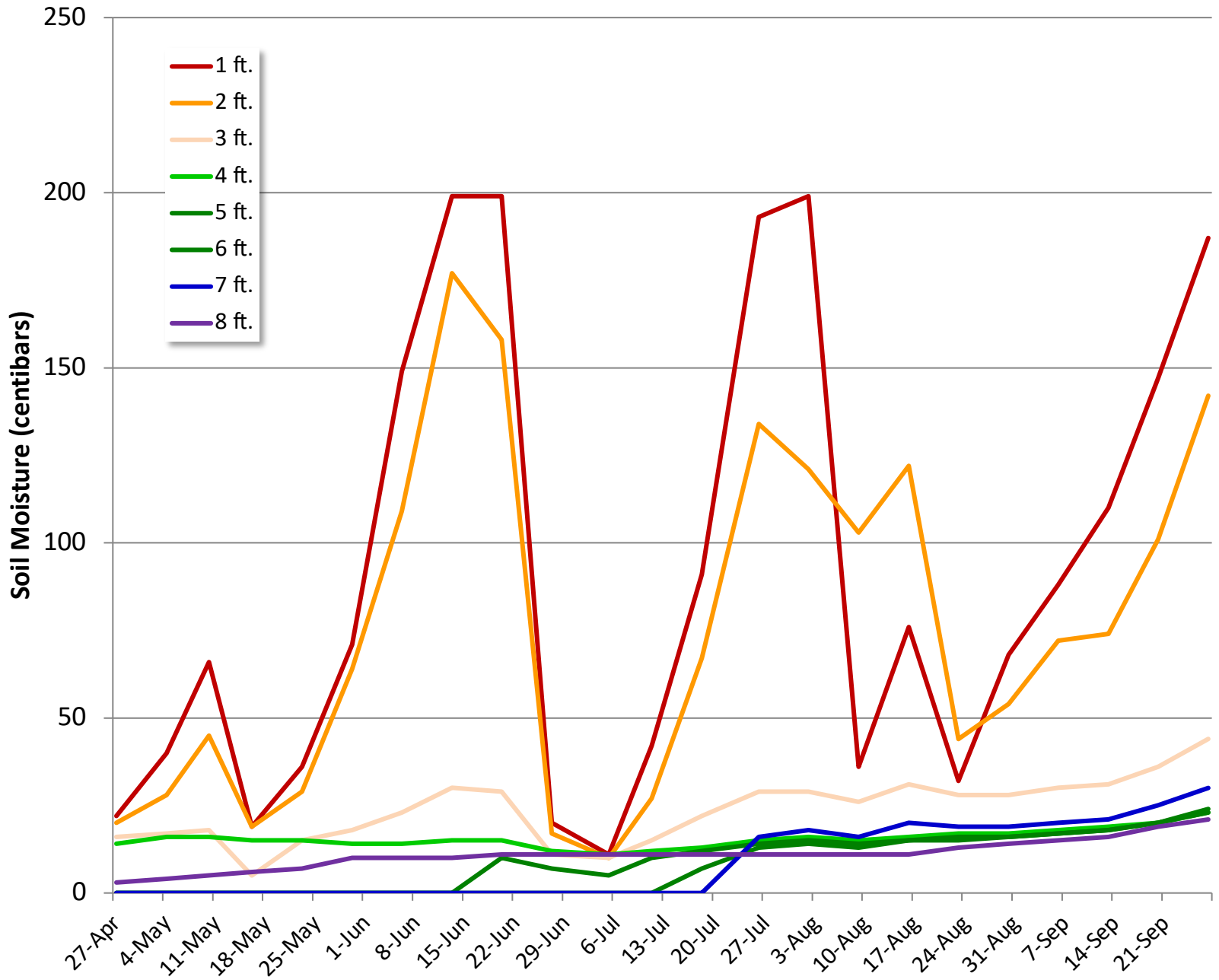
Grower 2 Location 2



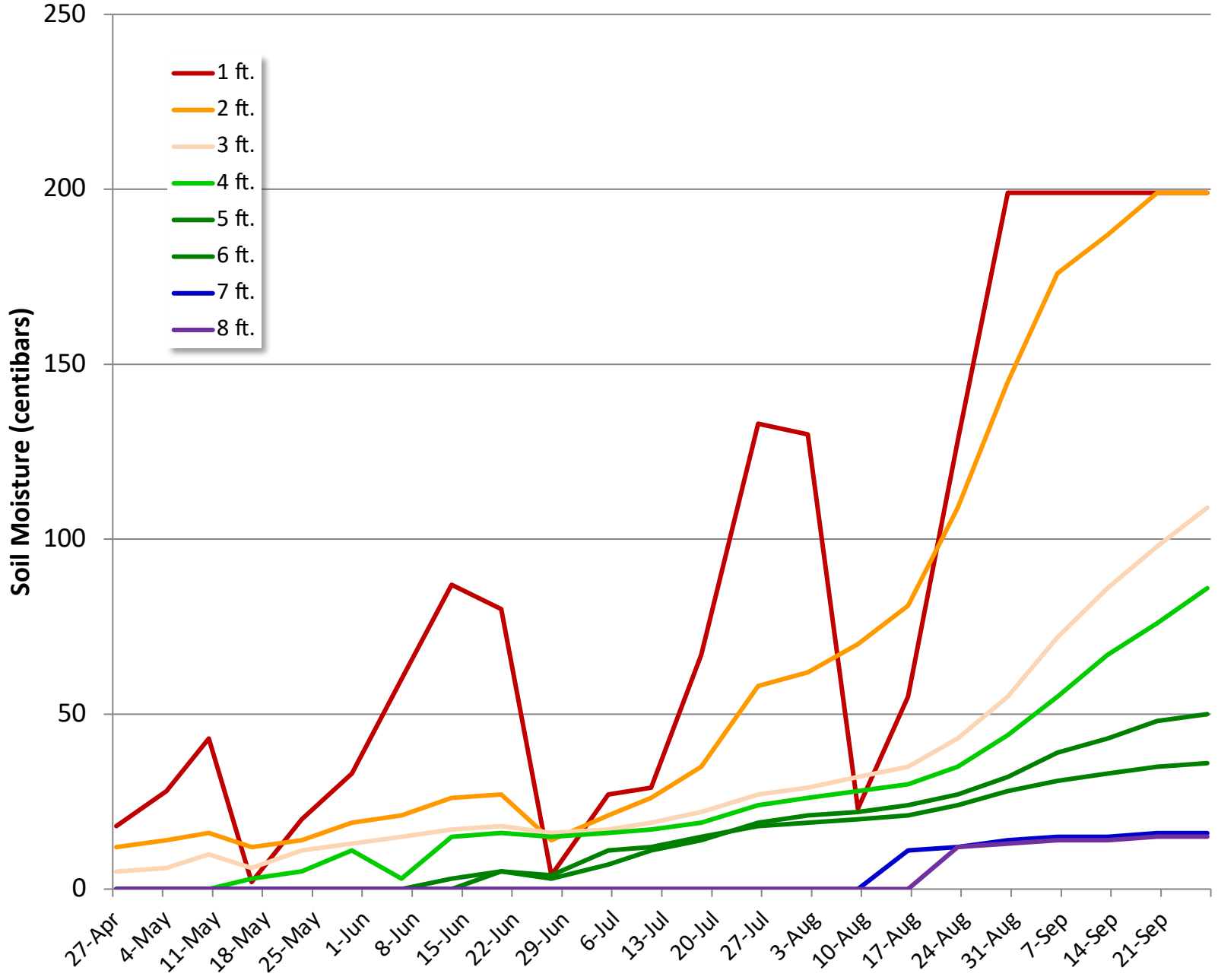
Grower 3 Location 1



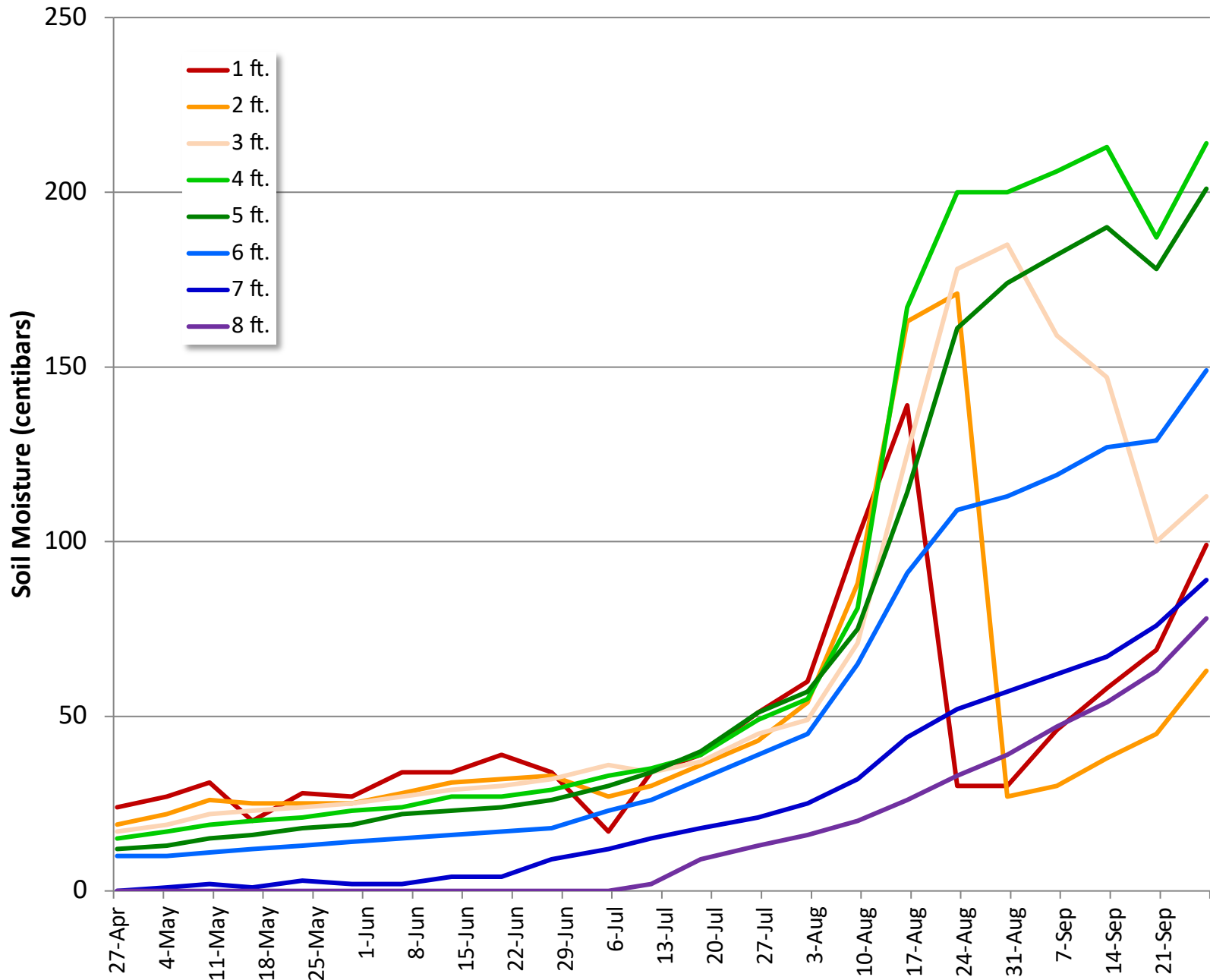
Grower 4 Location 1



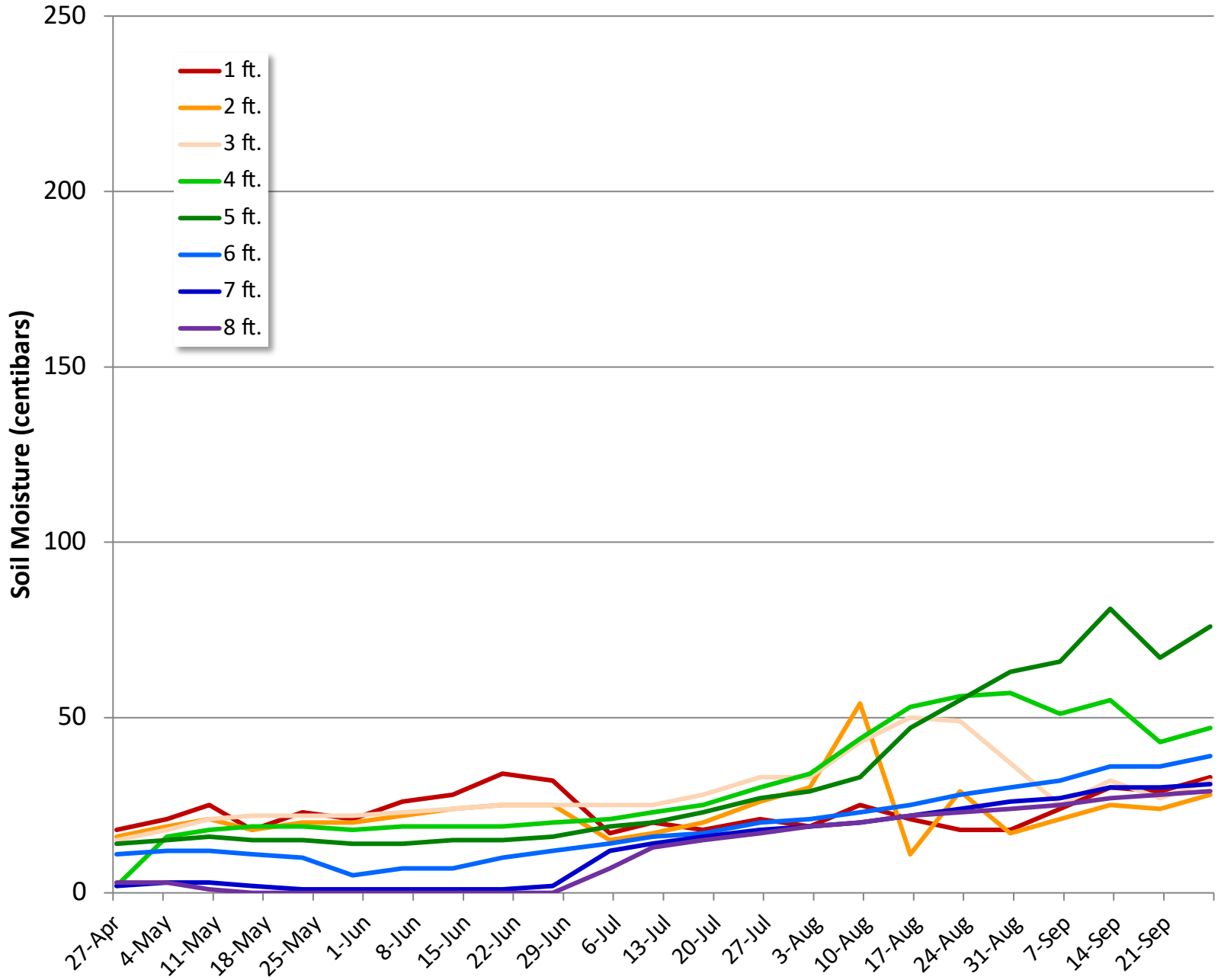
Grower 4 Location 2



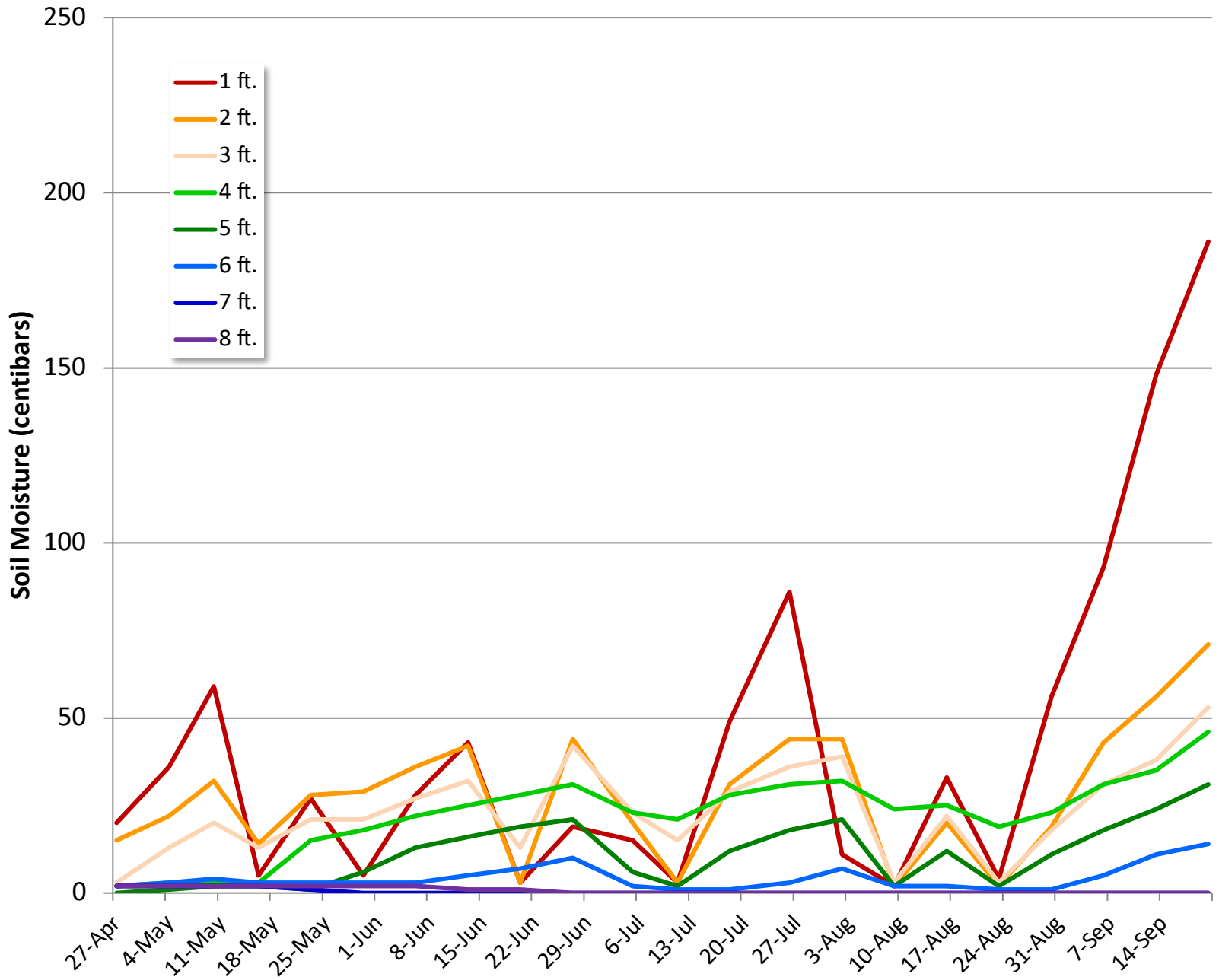
Grower 5 Location 1



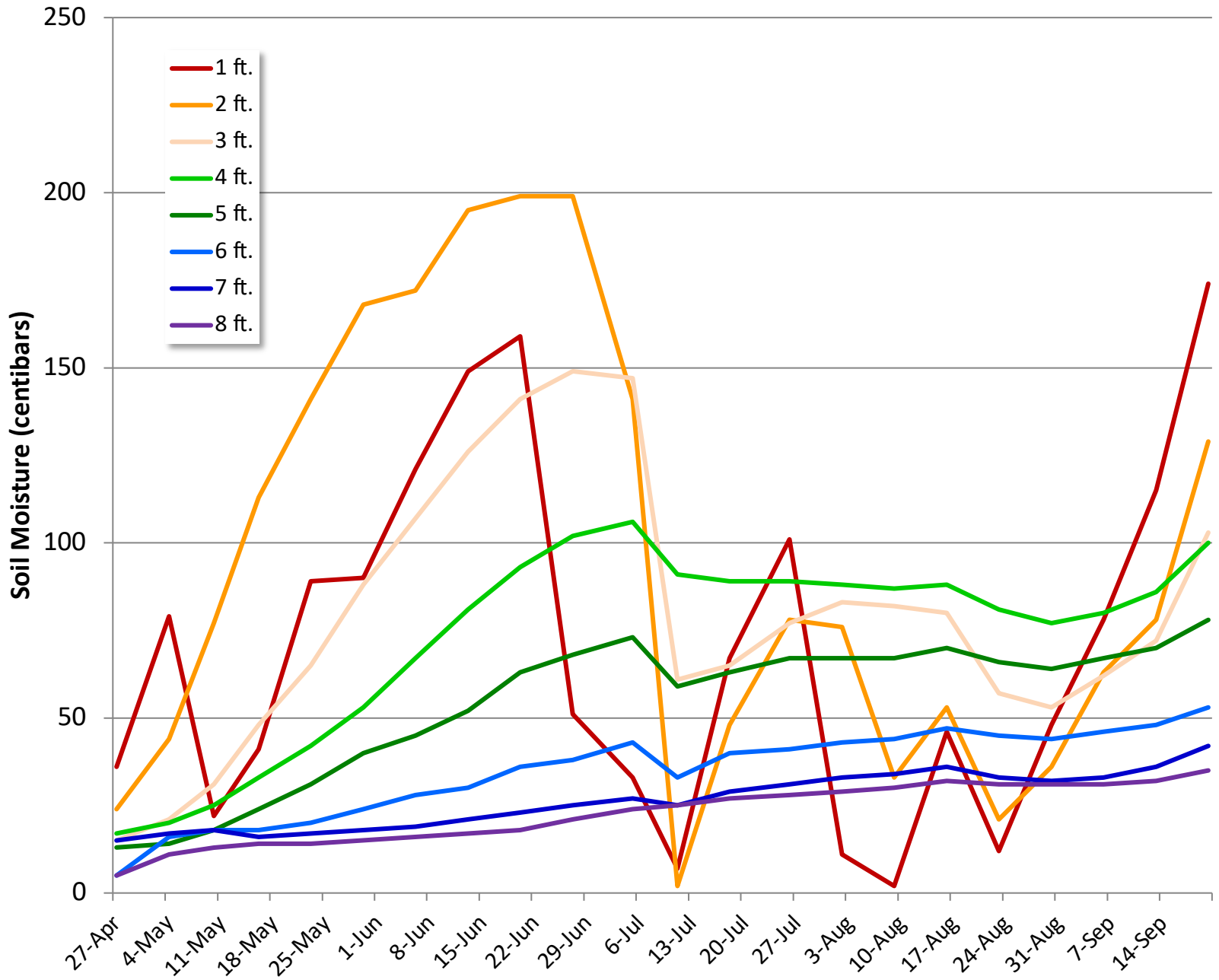
Grower 5 Location 2



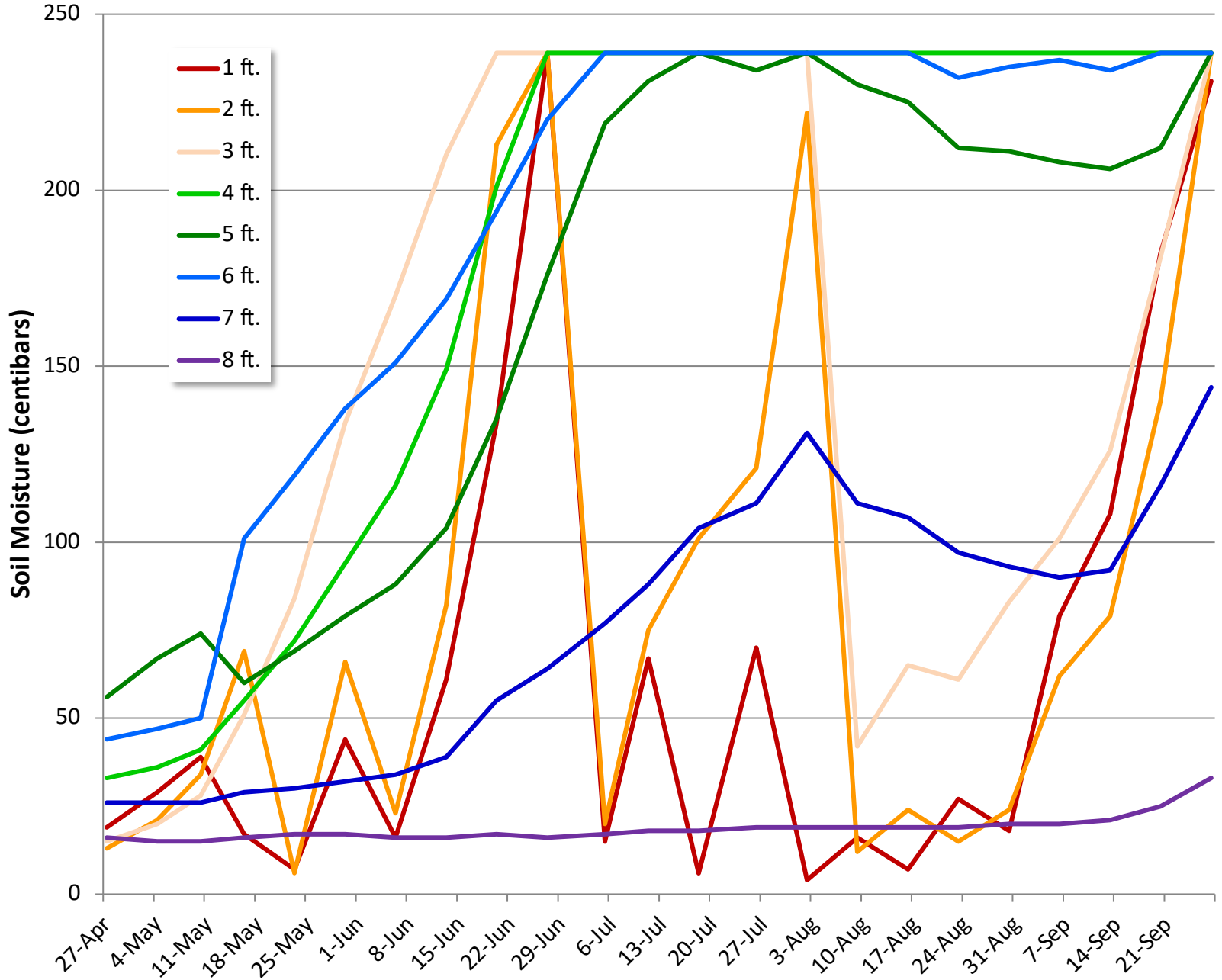
Grower 6 Location 1



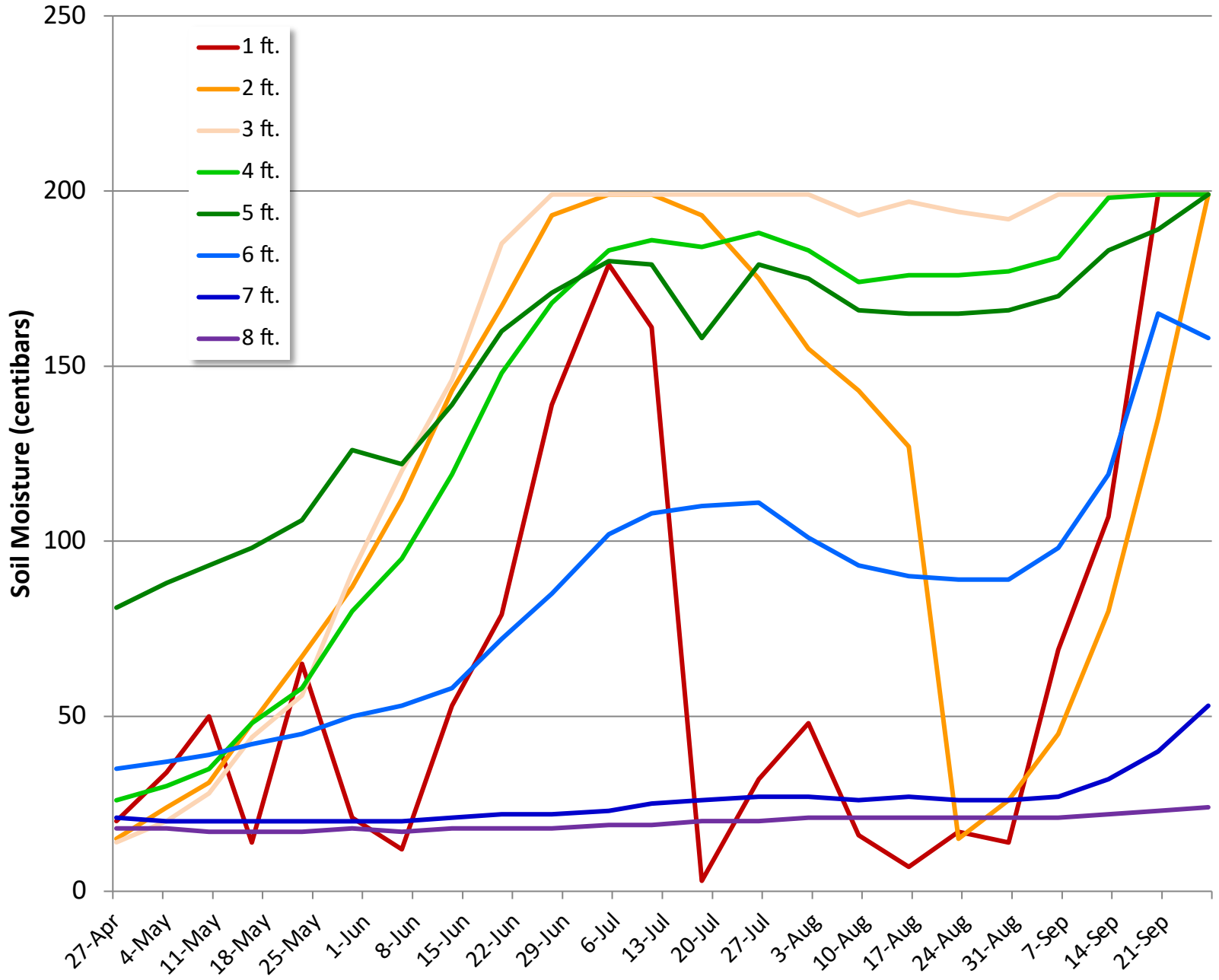
Grower 6 Location 2



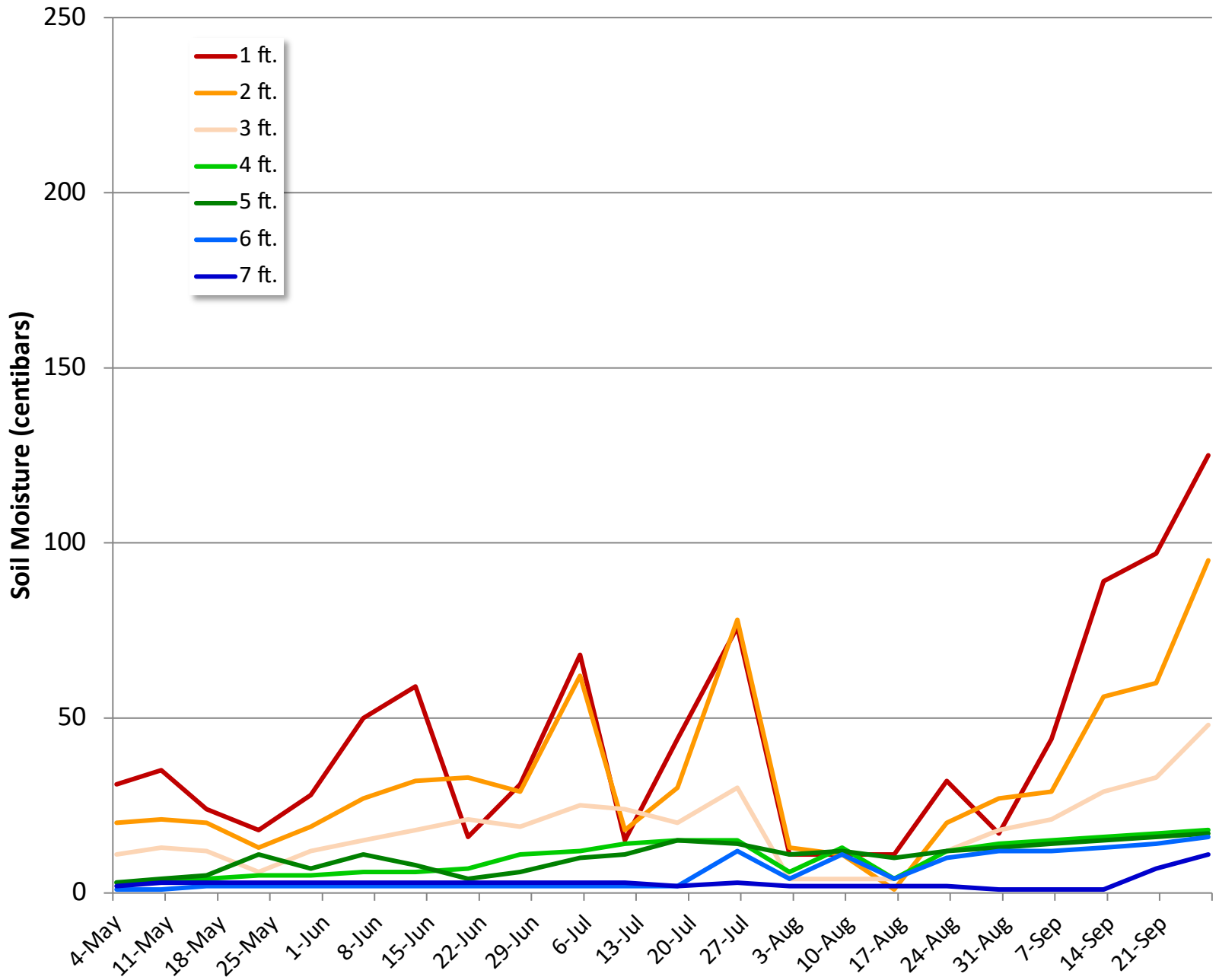
Grower 7 Location 1



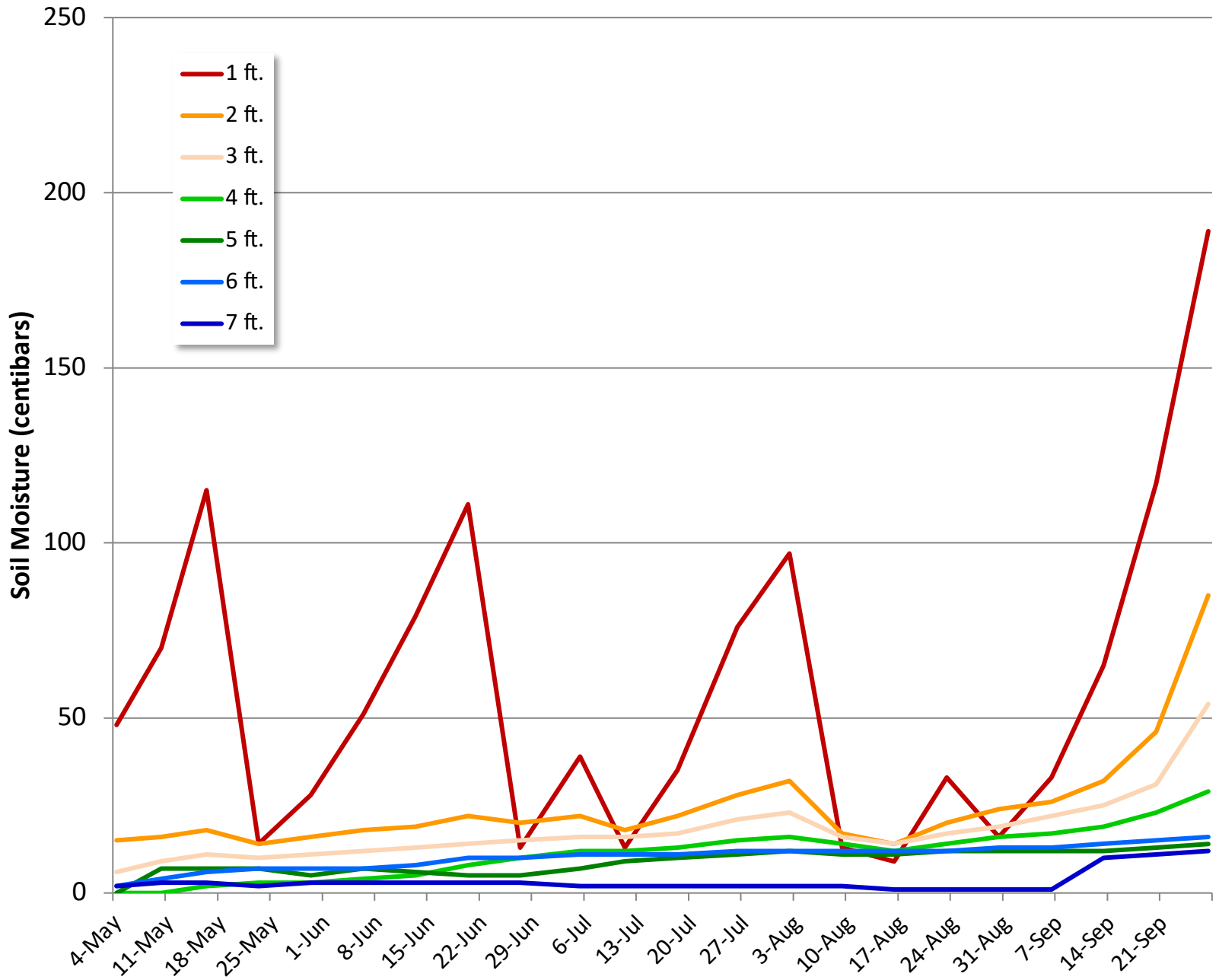
Grower 7 Location 2



Grower 8 Location 1

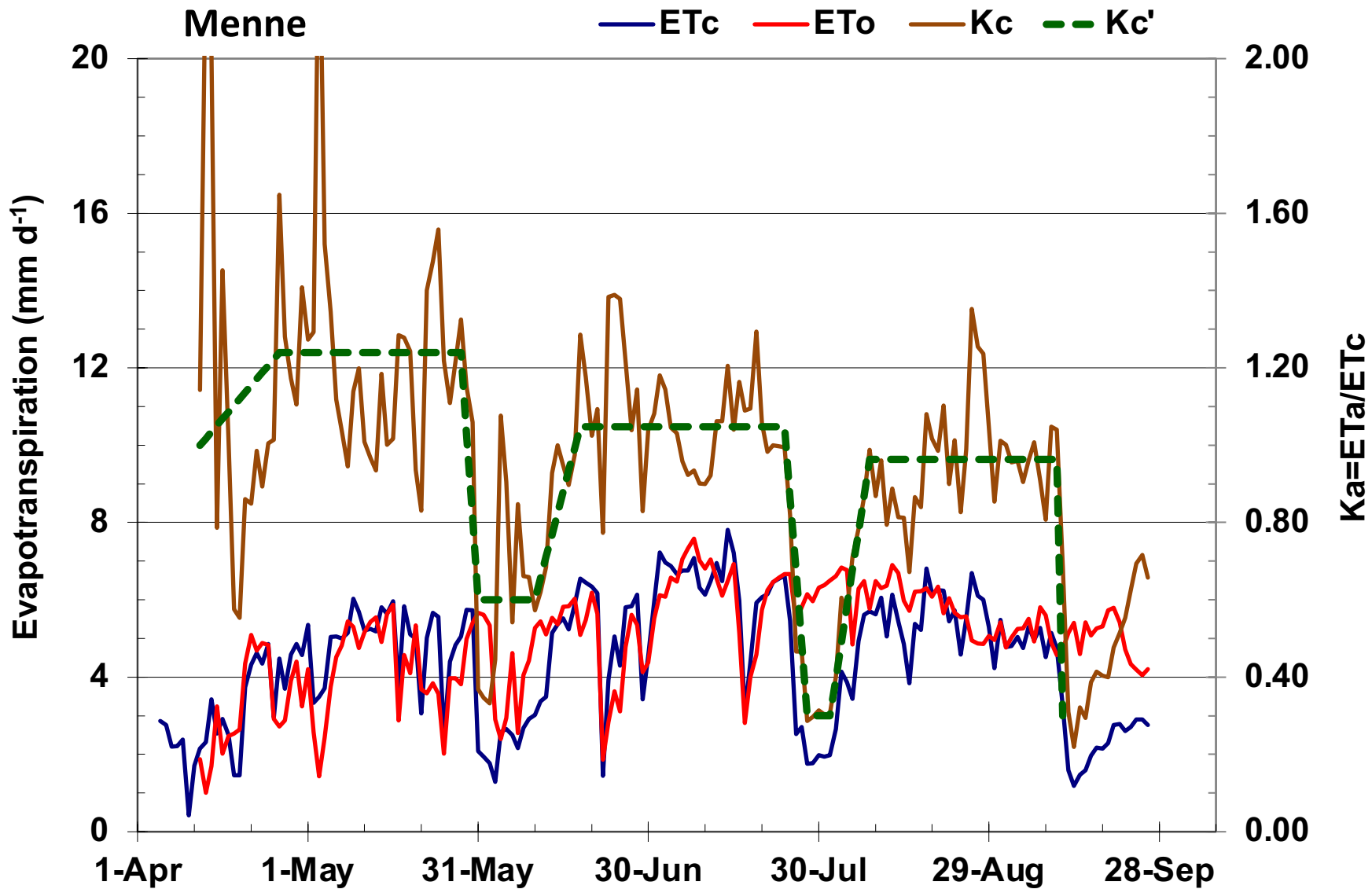


Grower 8 Location 2

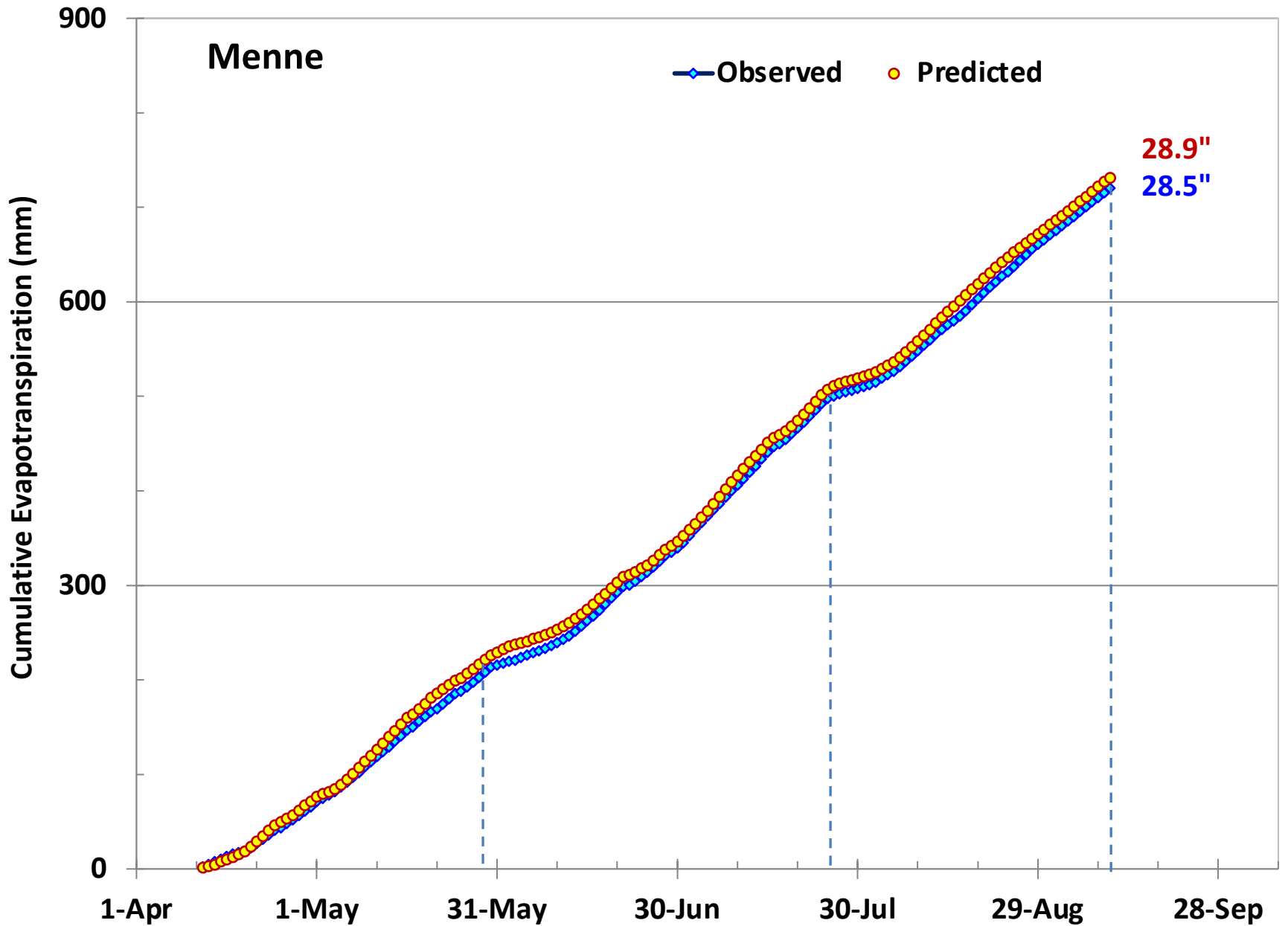


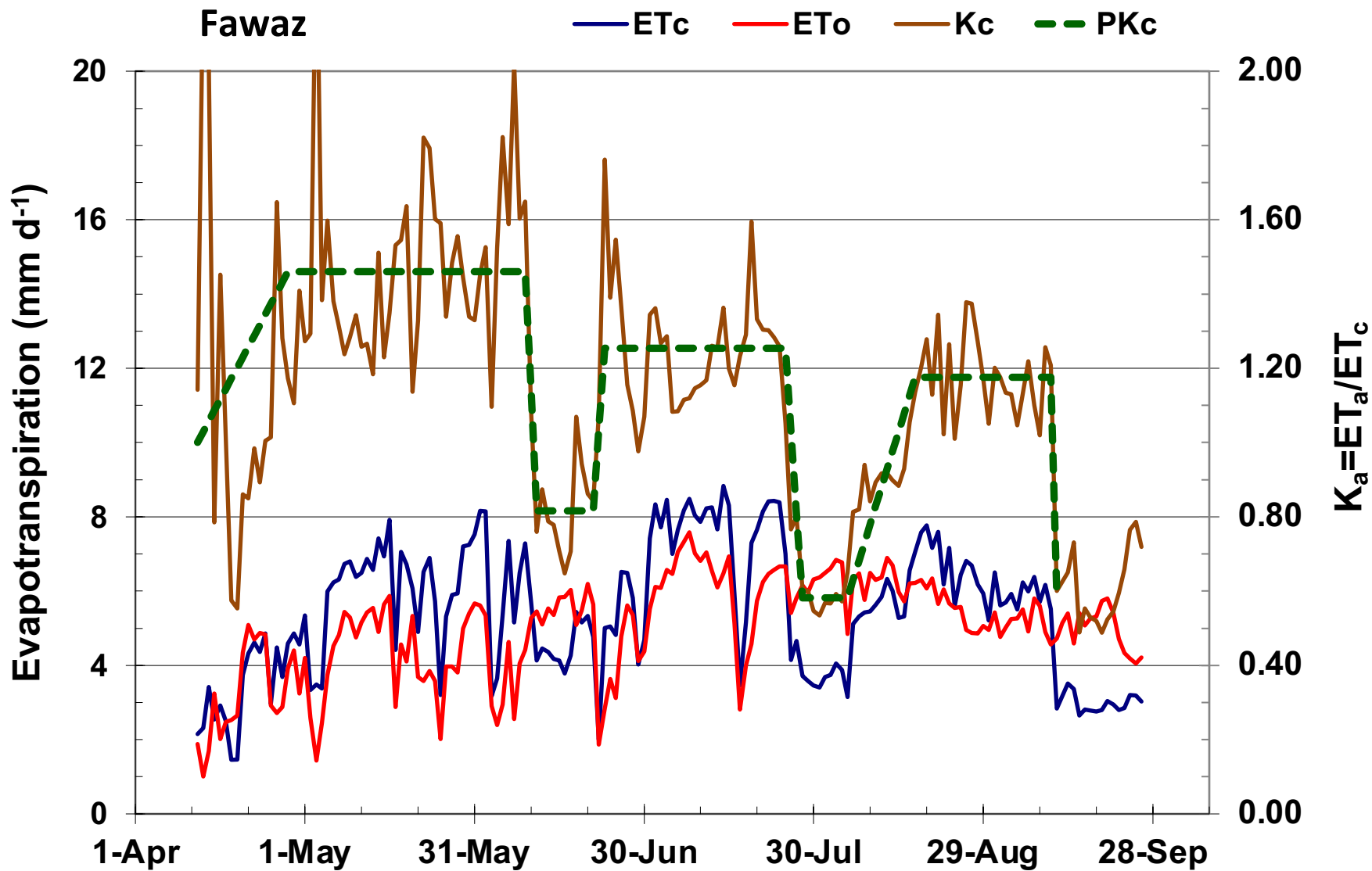




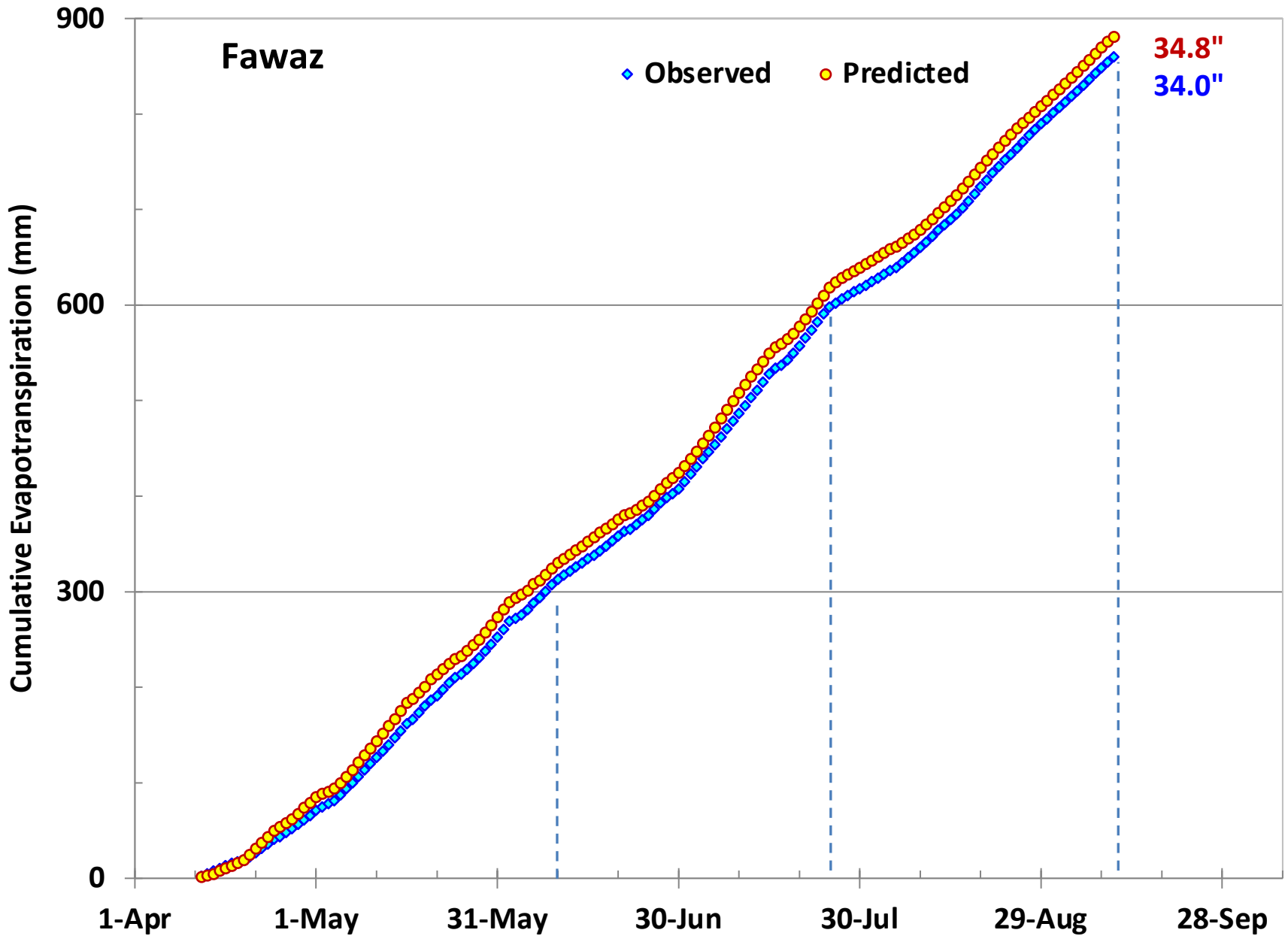


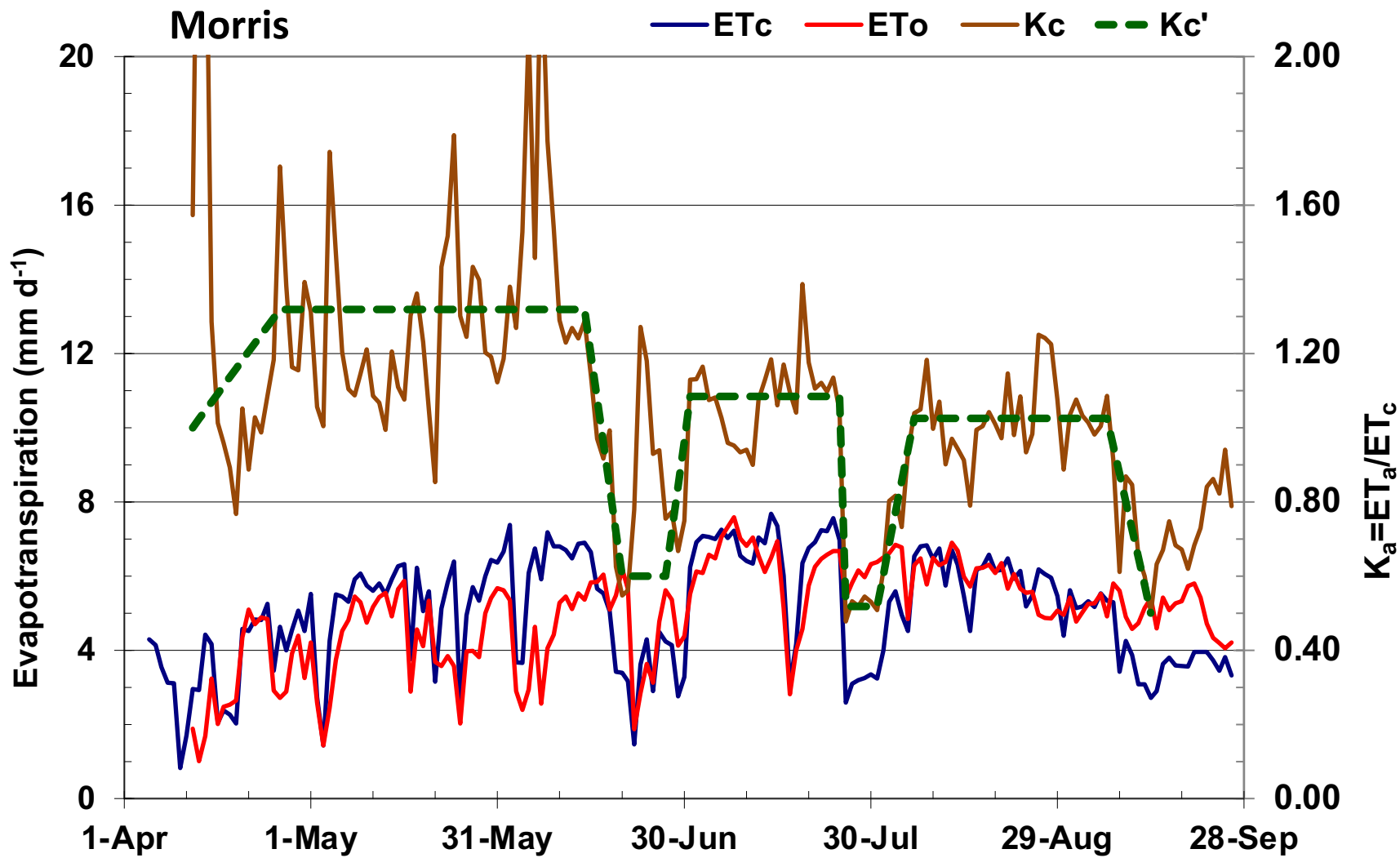
Cumulative Seasonal ET (Grower 1)



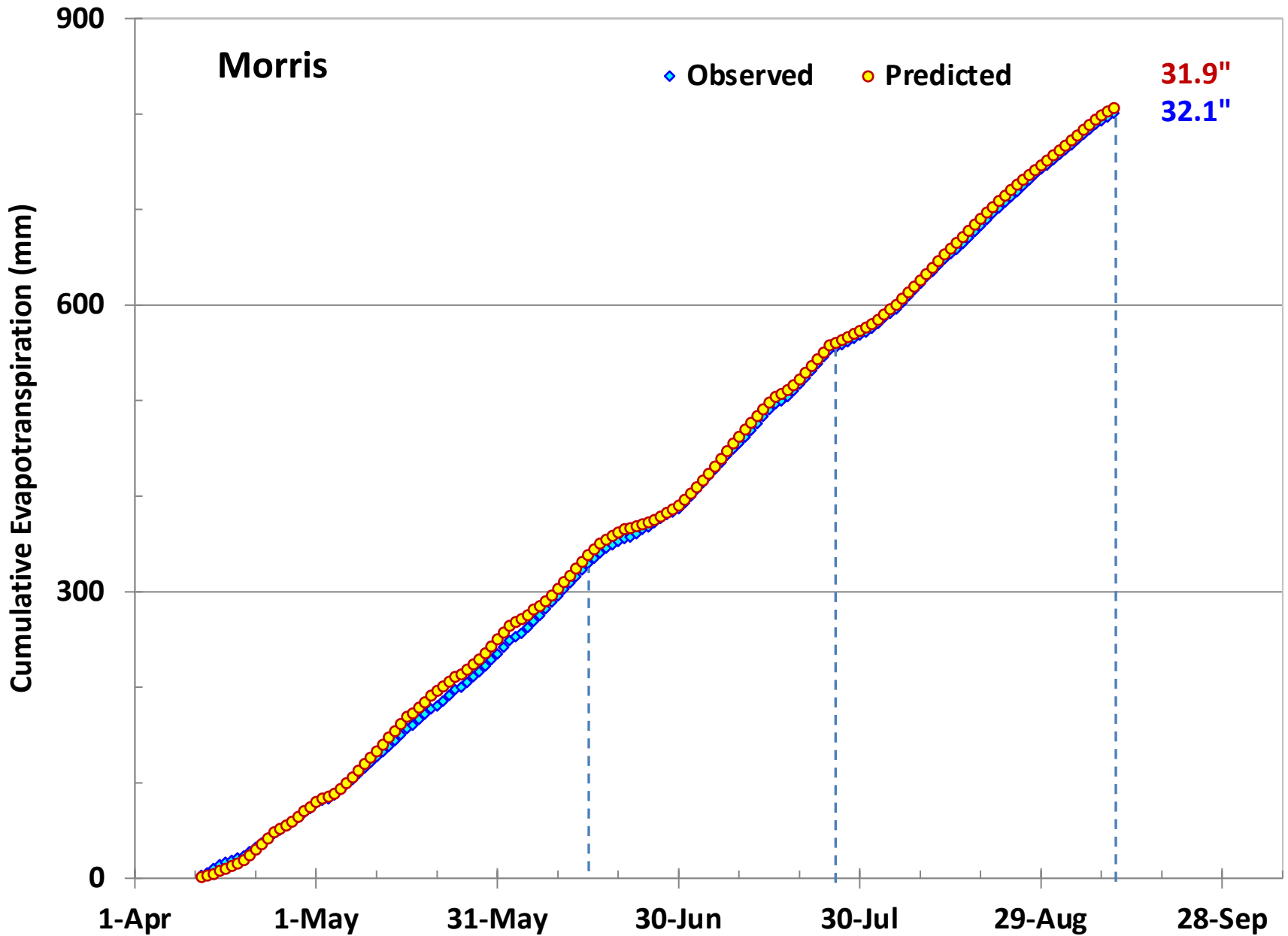


Cumulative Seasonal ET (Grower 5)

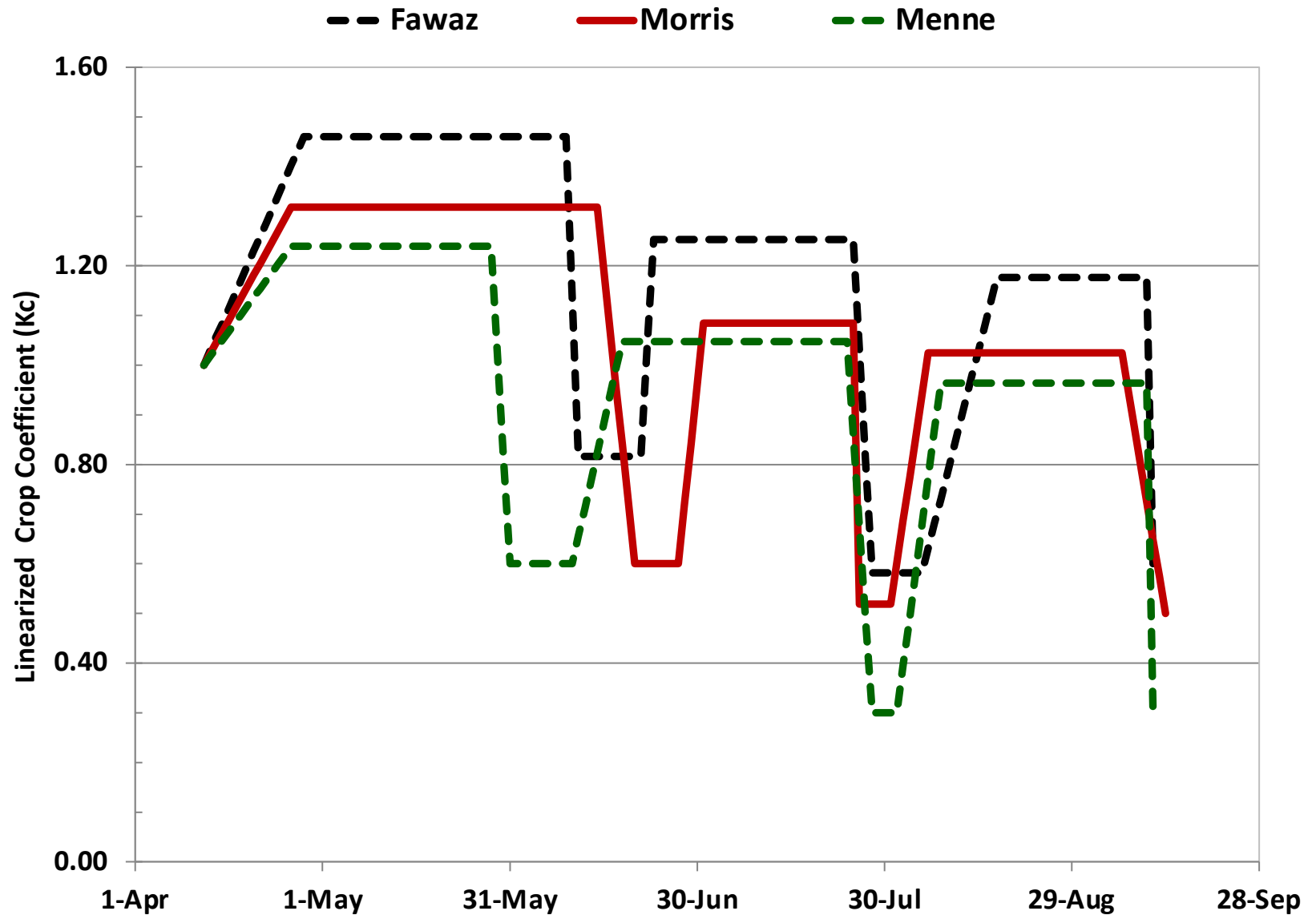




Cumulative Seasonal ET (Grower 7)



Crop Coefficients for the Different Study Sites



Seasonal ET Data

	Measured		Plus One Month (4")	
	Observed	Kc Predicted	Observed	Kc Predicted
	Season Total ET	Season Total ET	Season Total ET	Season Total ET
	(inches)	(inches)	(inches)	(inches)
Fawaz	34.0	34.8	38.0	38.8
Morris	31.9	32.1	35.9	36.1
Menne	28.5	28.9	32.5	32.9

Seasonal ET Data

	Plus One Month (4")		
	Observed	Irrigation	
	Season Total ET	Required	Applied Water
	(inches)	(inches)	(inches)
Fawaz	38.0	35.3	37.41*
Morris	35.9	29.3	20.36
Menne	32.5	28.8	18.45

Assumed 0.85% irrigation efficiency

Assumed 3 inches of effective rainfall (need to look at actual)