

As Canada burns, fires down dramatically in Calif.

By Lindzi Wessel, San Jose Mercury News

The ferocious wildfires incinerating parts of Western Canada this week feel eerily familiar for Californians whose wildfire season has become a yearlong affair in many parts of the parched state.

But after the rainiest winter in five years, the Golden State is greener than gold this May, and the number of early season fires is dramatically down from this time last year.

“The rain has been great,” Dan Berlant, a spokesman from CalFire, said Friday.

It’s been so great that CalFire crews have responded to hundreds of fewer wildfires in the first four months of this year – 609 – compared to last year – 917 – and most of this year’s blazes have been minor. What really shows how El Niño rains have dampened early-season fire danger in California is the number of acres burned: Last year, through the end of April, wildfires had already scorched more than 9,200 acres – 15 times the number of acres burned so far this year. Fires are also down by more than half in California’s national forests so far this year.

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