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Revisiting Diagrams of Ice Growth Environments

Daniel M. Hueholt,^a Sandra E. Yuter,^a Matthew A. Miller,^a

^a *North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC*

⁴ Daniel M. Hueholt's current affiliation: Department of Atmospheric Sciences, Colorado State
⁵ University, Fort Collins, CO

⁶ *Corresponding author:* Sandra E. Yuter, seyuter@ncsu.edu

7 ABSTRACT: Ice habit diagrams published prior to 2009—and many since—do not accurately
8 describe in situ observations of ice shapes as a function of temperature and moisture. Laboratory
9 studies and analysis of field observations by Bailey and Hallett in a series of papers in 2002,
10 2004, and 2009 corrected several errors from earlier studies, but their work has not been widely
11 disseminated. We present a new, simplified diagram based on Bailey and Hallett’s work that
12 focuses on several ice growth forms arising from the underlying surface processes by which mass is
13 added to a crystal: tabular, columnar, branched, side branched, two types of polycrystalline forms,
14 and a multiple growth regime at low ice supersaturations. To aid interpretation for a variety of
15 applications, versions of the ice growth diagram are presented in terms of relative humidity with
16 respect to water as well as the traditional formats of relative humidity with respect to ice and vapor
17 density excess. These diagrams are intended to be understandable and useful in classroom settings
18 at the sophomore undergraduate level and above. The myriad shapes of pristine snow crystals can
19 be described as the result of either a single growth form or a sequence of growth forms. Overlays of
20 data from upper air soundings on the ice growth diagrams aid interpretation of expected physical
21 properties and processes in conditions of ice growth.

22 CAPSULE: A simplified ice crystal growth form diagram plotted as a function of relative humidity
23 with respect to water and temperature based on previous field and laboratory research.

24 **1. Introduction**

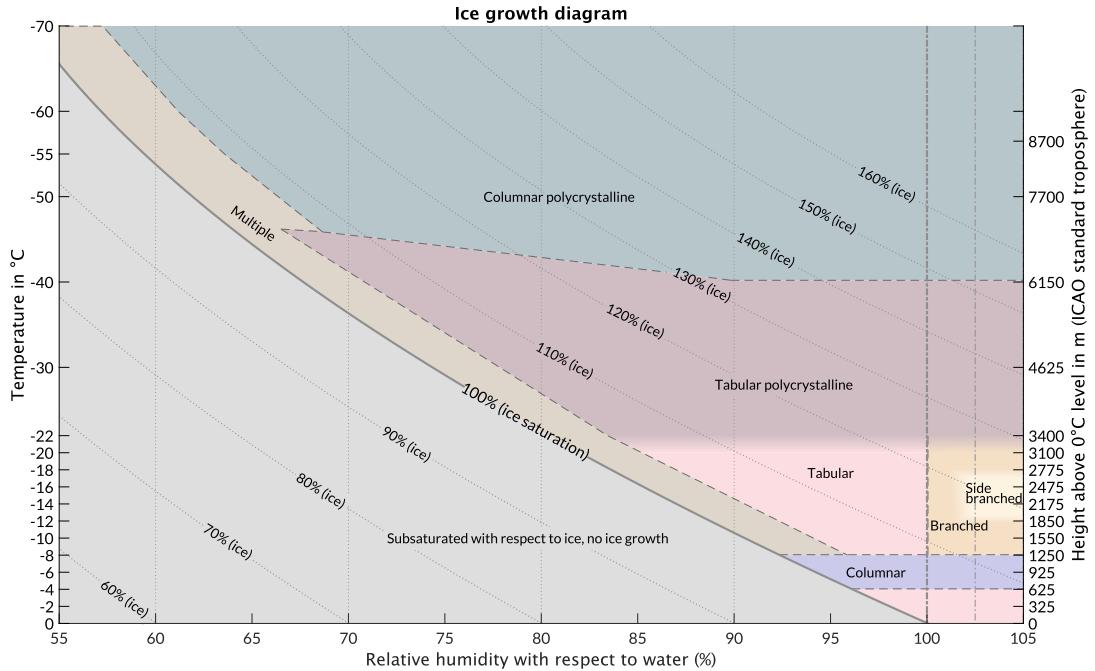
25 Accurate depictions of ice shape as a function of air temperature and moisture are vital throughout
26 meteorology. Globally, clouds containing ice occur with a frequency of approximately 50% (Hong
27 and Liu 2015). Cirrus clouds alone account for nearly 20% of global cloud fraction (Liou 1986;
28 Sassen et al. 2008). Ice crystal shapes, also known as habits, constrain cloud radiative properties
29 and precipitation formation (Wendisch and Yang 2012; Liou and Yang 2016). When snow reaches
30 the surface, ice crystal shapes within snowpacks influence metamorphism (Miller et al. 2017). The
31 expected characteristics of ice growth at given temperatures and relative humidities provide key
32 assumptions for retrieval of ice properties using remote sensing methods (e.g., Yang et al. 2018).
33 Ice crystal shapes are usually visualized using an ice habit diagram, where temperature is placed
34 on one axis, some measure of supersaturation is placed on the other axis, and the habits are denoted
35 on this phase space. However, an internet search for "ice habit diagram" reveals a problem—many
36 of the available figures disagree.

37 Unfortunately, ice habit diagrams published prior to 2009—and many since—do not accurately
38 describe in situ observations of atmospheric ice. Popular science and internet educational sources
39 intended for classroom use contain errors, such as omitting polycrystals at temperatures less than
40 -20°C , displaying dendrites at low supersaturations near 0°C , or describing ice shapes as periodic
41 with respect to temperature (e.g., Furukawa and Wettlaufer 2007; Libbrecht 2017, 2020; UCAR
42 2020). While some more recent editions of widely-used textbooks have accurate information
43 (e.g., Wang 2013; Rauber and Nesbitt 2018), others contain outdated materials (e.g., Houze 2014).
44 Errors in upper-level textbooks likely propagate to introductory meteorology texts (e.g., Hakim
45 and Patoux 2017; Ahrens and Henson 2018). This state of confusion makes it difficult to teach
46 accurate information about ice crystal shapes to all levels of students.

47 The shapes resulting from atmospheric ice growth by vapor deposition as a function of tempera-
48 ture and moisture between 0°C and -70°C are well established. Three papers by Bailey and Hallett
49 (2002, 2004, 2009) based on extensive field observations and laboratory experiments made major
50 changes to previous work and represent the current state of the art. First, at air temperatures below

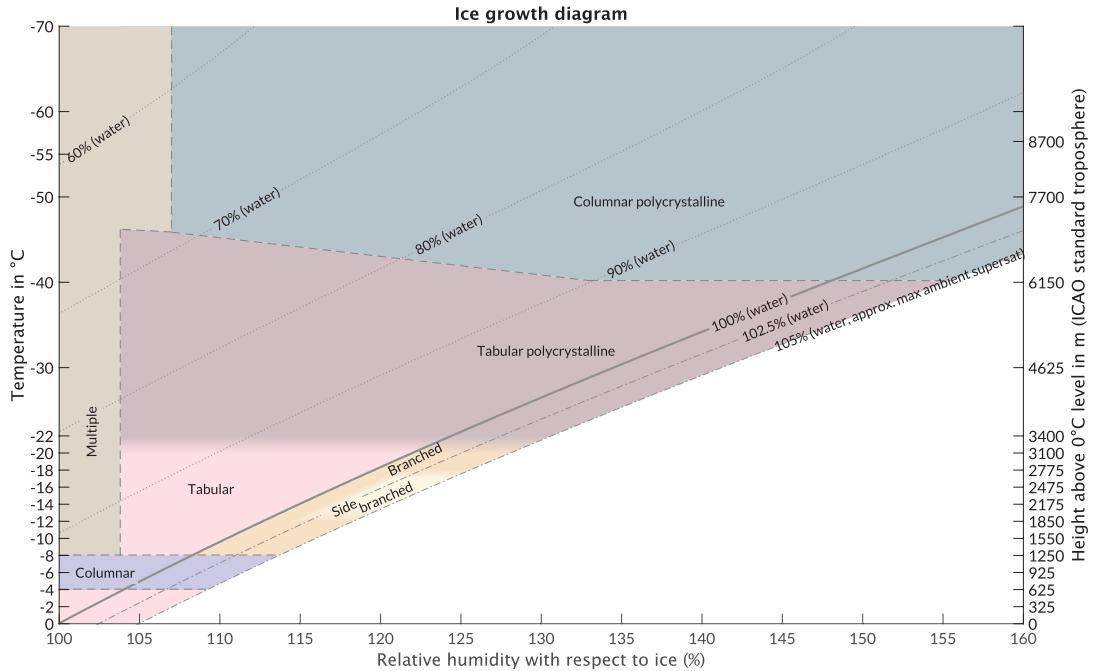
51 -20°C, they show ice crystals are predominantly polycrystalline (consisting of multiple elements
52 at different orientations separated by boundary structures). Platelike polycrystals grow between
53 air temperatures -20°C and about -45°C, and columnar polycrystals grow at temperatures less than
54 about -45°C, with a weak dependence on moisture near the interface of the two regions. Second,
55 at low ice supersaturations and most temperatures, vapor deposition yields multiple ice shapes
56 (polycrystals, plates, irregulars, compact crystals, short columns and equiaxed crystals). Bailey
57 and Hallett (2002) describes the platelike polycrystals and explains how prior research was biased
58 by nucleation and substrate effects. Bailey and Hallett (2004) uses a wider range of experimental
59 conditions, and showcases columnar polycrystals and shapes at low ice supersaturations. Bailey
60 and Hallett (2009) presents a new ice habit diagram to combine both their previous laboratory re-
61 sults and extensive field observations across a broad range of environments. The results of Bailey
62 and Hallett (2002, 2004, 2009) have since been supported by subsequent field observations and
63 independent analyses (Gallagher et al. 2005, 2012; Fridlind et al. 2012; Zhu et al. 2015; Fridlind
64 et al. 2016; Lawson et al. 2019; Midzak et al. 2020; Magee et al. 2021). Details of the mesoscopic
65 and crystallographic physics that produce individual ice crystals remain an ongoing area of research
66 (Harrison et al. 2016; Libbrecht 2017; Nelson and Swanson 2019).

67 The Bailey and Hallett (2009) habit diagrams have not been widely disseminated into textbooks
68 and other educational materials, likely because their figures are complex and intended for an expert
69 audience. We present ice growth diagrams to describe in situ observations of atmospheric ice
70 based on the science of Bailey and Hallett (2002, 2004, 2009) that are intended to be accessible
71 by students and popular science sources while facilitating meteorological data visualization. We
72 do not intend these simplified diagrams to replace specialized materials used for ice microphysics
73 and crystallography research (e.g., Otte and Crocker 1965). We make four key changes designed to
74 lower the cognitive load: swapping the axes, casting the diagram in terms of relative humidity with
75 respect to water (RH_w), focusing on the main direction or pattern of growth rather than ice habit,
76 and restricting the phase space to common tropospheric conditions. This revisualized ice growth
77 diagram is intended for use at sophomore undergraduate level and above. Example classroom
78 activities that utilize the ice growth diagrams were tested in undergraduate and graduate classes
79 and are provided in Appendix A.



91 FIG. 1. Ice growth forms diagram in terms of relative humidity with respect to water (RH_w) with contours of
 92 relative humidity with respect to ice (RH_{ice}) overlaid. The ICAO approximation on the right y-axis is offset by the
 93 height of the 0 °C level. $T_{ice} = T_{air}$ is assumed (St-Pierre and Thériault 2015). Dashed lines indicate uncertainty
 94 in the exact bounding conditions between different ice growth forms. Blurred regions indicate transition zones
 95 between ice growth forms.

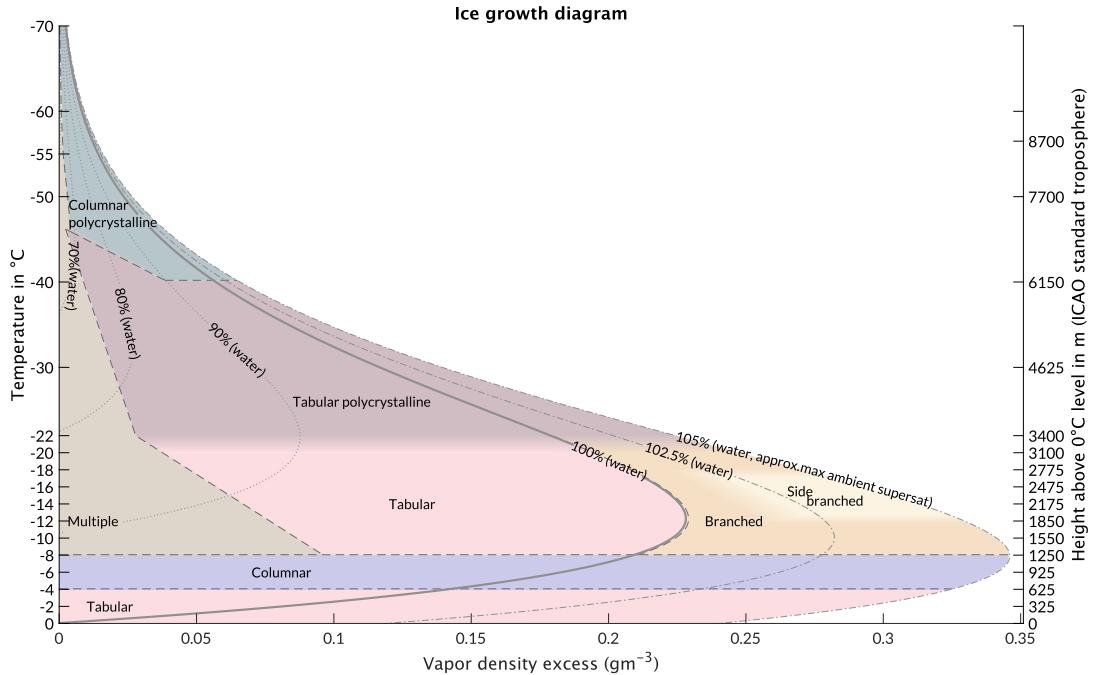
80 Our ice growth diagram describes ice growth forms resulting from vapor deposition only. Riming
 81 adds ice mass through freezing of supercooled cloud droplets on ice crystals and is not included
 82 on the diagram. Supercooled droplets can grow and persist when $RH_w \geq 100\%$. Sublimation
 83 can also modify ice shapes, in effect eroding them to yield more rounded shapes (Järvinen et al.
 84 2016). Secondary ice production occurs through the shattering of supercooled drops as they freeze
 85 which yields tiny ice fragments (Hallett and Mossop 1974; Lauber et al. 2018; Korolev et al.
 86 2020). After secondary ice fragments are produced, they may add mass through vapor deposition.
 87 The ice growth form will correspond to the conditions where the particle is located. The typical
 88 temperature range for secondary ice production is approximately -3 °C to -10 °C (Hallett and
 89 Mossop 1974; Korolev et al. 2020). This overlaps the temperature range of the columnar growth
 90 form (-4 °C to -8 °C).



96 FIG. 2. Ice growth forms diagram in terms of RH_{ice} with contours of RH_w overlaid. The ICAO approximation
 97 on the right y-axis is offset by the height of the 0 °C level. $T_{ice} = T_{air}$ is assumed (St-Pierre and Thériault 2015).
 98 Dashed lines indicate uncertainty in the exact bounding conditions between different ice growth forms. Blurred
 99 regions indicate transition zones between ice growth forms.

104 2. Revisualized ice growth diagram

105 We introduce a version of the ice growth diagram using relative humidity with respect to water
 106 (RH_w) (Fig. 1) in addition to the traditional displays of relative humidity with respect to ice (RH_{ice})
 107 (Fig. 2) and vapor density excess (Fig. 3). Appendix B has alternate versions of these diagrams with
 108 higher-contrast colors designed for use as base layers in data visualization as well as information
 109 on the publicly available software to plot and customize the diagrams. The exact temperature
 110 and moisture conditions separating different ice growth forms are not known precisely and we
 111 use dashed lines to indicate this uncertainty in the diagram. The well-documented transition
 112 zones between tabular monocrystal and tabular polycrystalline forms and between branched and
 113 side branched forms (Nakaya 1954; Bailey and Hallett 2009; Takahashi 2014) are blurred in the

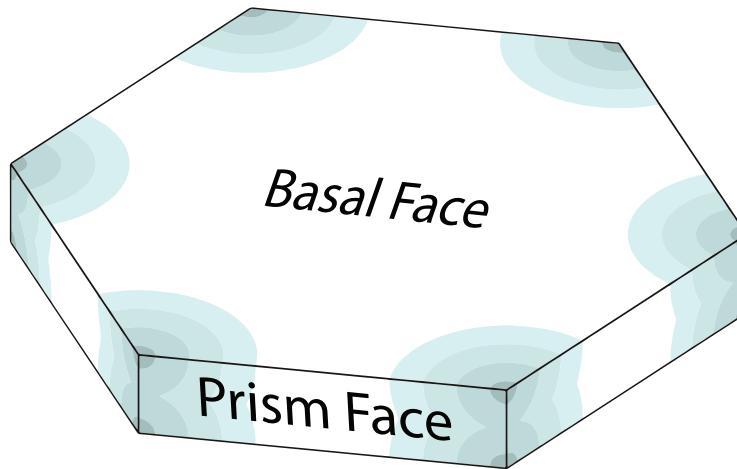


100 FIG. 3. Ice growth forms diagram in terms of vapor density excess over ice saturation with contours of RH_w
 101 overlaid. The ICAO approximation on the right y-axis is offset by the height of the 0 °C level. $T_{ice} = T_{air}$ is
 102 assumed (St-Pierre and Thériault 2015). Dashed lines indicate uncertainty in the exact bounding conditions
 103 between different ice growth forms. Blurred regions indicate transition zones between ice growth forms.
 114 diagram. In all diagrams, the temperature of the ice and the temperature of the air are assumed to
 115 be equal, i.e. $T_{ice} = T_{air}$ (St-Pierre and Thériault 2015).

116 *a. Simplify to ice growth form rather than ice habit*

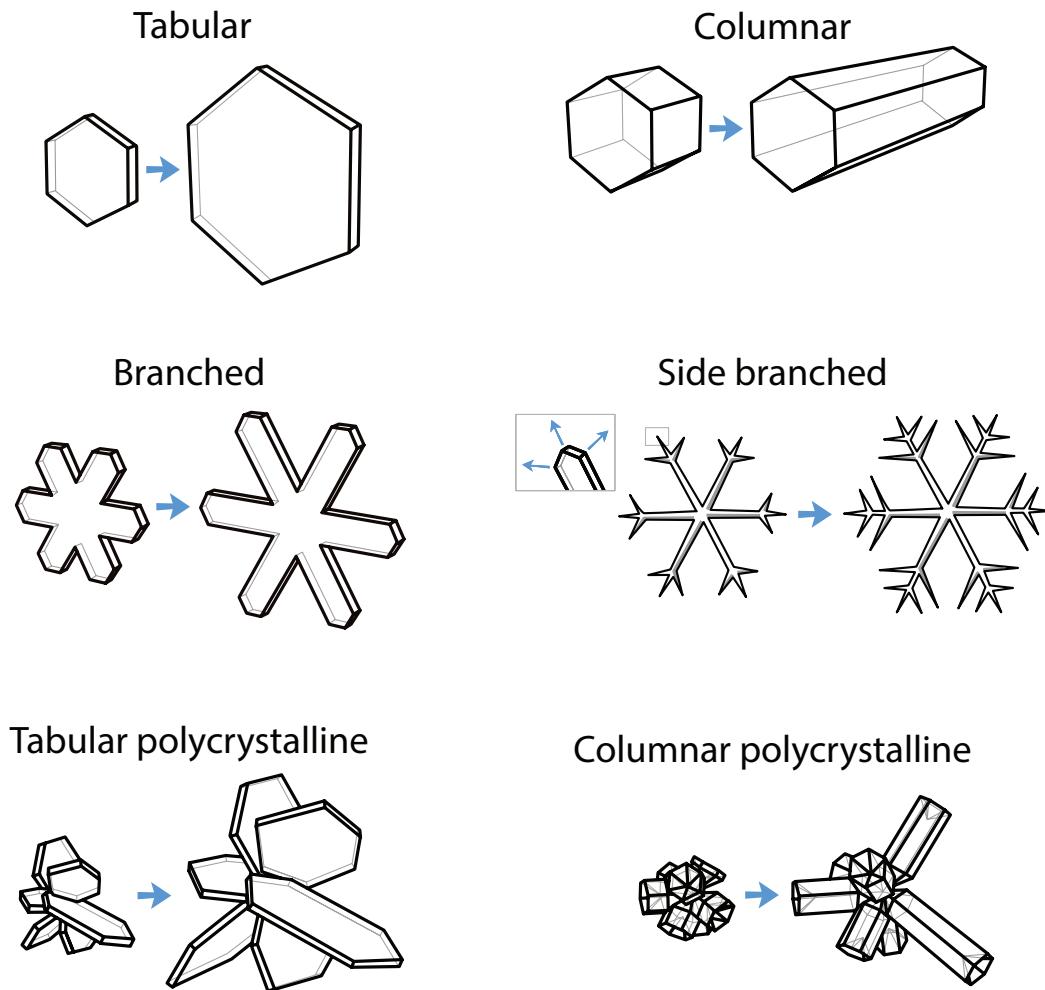
122 One reason for the complexity of Bailey and Hallett’s diagram is its focus on ice habit. Systematic
 123 habit classifications have grown unwieldy, as the number of identifiable habits increased from the
 124 42 in Nakaya (1954) to the 121 identified by the current standard (Kikuchi et al. 2013). Researchers
 125 continue to identify novel crystal habits (Vázquez-Martín et al. 2020). No mapping exists to relate
 126 all these unique ice shapes to the environmental conditions in which they form. Further obfuscating
 127 the situation, the names of ice shapes are used inconsistently (Bailey and Hallett 2002, 2004).

128 Our diagrams describe the main growth direction or growth pattern of a crystal, which we
 129 call the ice growth form. While there are a huge number of habits, there are only a few basic



117 FIG. 4. Basal and prism faces on an idealized hexagonal plate crystal resulting from the tabular growth form.
118 Shading indicates relative step growth rates with darker shading indicating faster growth. Adapted from Frank
119 (1982).

130 growth forms: tabular, columnar, branched, and side branched. Tabular or columnar growth forms
131 occur as polycrystals when discontinuities separate regions of a particle with distinct crystalline
132 orientations. The ice growth forms arise from the underlying crystal surface processes by which
133 ice mass is added to the crystal. When a crystal is located in an environment with RH_{ice} greater
134 than 100%, it can gain mass through vapor deposition. This mass attaches to the crystal in steps
135 centered on the corners, where the vapor density excess is highest (Frank 1952; Hobbs and Scott
136 1965; Frank 1982). New crystal growth will then spread as layers along the basal face, prism
137 face, or protrude outward from the corners (Fig. 4) depending on local thermodynamic conditions
138 (Burton et al. 1951; Hallett 1961; Mason et al. 1963; Nelson and Knight 1998; Sazaki et al. 2010).
139 Temperature determines the overall tabular or columnar form by controlling whether the prism or
140 basal face experiences the fastest growth rate (Mason et al. 1963; Nelson and Knight 1998). In
141 the presence of a large supersaturation, new steps will be added more quickly than the growth
142 layer can spread across a face, producing a main growth direction outward from the corner (Frank
143 1982; Libbrecht 2005). In a polycrystalline growth form, multiple regions of different crystalline
144 orientation separated by discontinuities such as grain boundaries grow simultaneously (Kobayashi
145 et al. 1976; Furukawa and Kobayashi 1978; Iwai 1986; Bailey and Hallett 2002, 2004). The
146 individual elements of the polycrystal grow on either their prism or basal face, producing distinct
147 tabular or columnar polycrystalline forms.



120 FIG. 5. Illustrations of the main ice growth forms in the troposphere. Each pair shows a sequence of a single
 121 growth form with a particular archetypal shape. See text in Section 2a for further details.

148 Figure 5 shows schematics of archetypal crystals undergoing the different growth forms. The
 149 nomenclature uses naming conventions that are more understandable to the non-specialist than
 150 either the Miller-Bravais index or crystallographic axis systems (e.g., Otte and Crocker 1965;
 151 Libbrecht 2005; Hoffmann 2020).

152 **Tabular:** Yields a plate-like monocrystal with much more width than depth. Main growth
 153 direction is out from the prism face. The layer growth rate along the prism faces and the step
 154 growth rate at the corners are in balance.

155 **Columnar:** Produces an elongated monocrystal with much more depth than width. Main growth
 156 direction is out from the basal face. The layer growth rate along the basal faces and the step growth

157 rate at the corners are in balance.

158 **Branched:** Produces a sectored plate-like monocrystal with much more width than depth. The
159 main growth direction is out from the corner. The initial branching occurs when step growth rates
160 at the corners greatly exceed the layer growth rate along the prism face such that the corner grows
161 out from the prism face.

162 **Side branched:** Results in a fernlike, dendritic monocrystal. This is a special case of branched
163 growth where the step growth rates are so high that there is repeated branching.

164 **Tabular polycrystalline:** Produces crystals consisting of multiple plate-like elements at different
165 orientations. Simultaneous tabular growth occurs along multiple axes with crystal discontinuities
166 separating regions of different crystalline orientation formed by a polycrystalline ice nucleation
167 event. Examples include crossed plates, spearheads, and assemblages.

168 **Columnar polycrystalline:** Produces crystals consisting of multiple columnar-like elements at
169 different orientations. Simultaneous columnar growth occurs along multiple axes, with crystal
170 discontinuities separating regions of different crystalline orientation formed by a polycrystalline
171 ice nucleation event. Examples include bullet rosettes, column rosettes, and basals with columns.

172 **Multiple:** At low supersaturations with respect to ice, multiple growth forms—tabular, columnar,
173 tabular polycrystalline, and columnar polycrystalline—can co-occur. Can yield compact crystals
174 including equiaxed crystals, short columns, and irregulars when growth rates after ice nucleation
175 are extremely low.

176

177 Our use of the term “tabular” and “columnar” is consistent with Nelson and Knight (1998), who
178 use these terms for crystals with aspect ratios less than 1 or greater than 1, respectively. “Branched”
179 is used in Libbrecht (2005) to describe growth producing sectored crystals. Nelson (2005) and
180 Libbrecht (2017) use “side branched” to specify fernlike crystals. “Tabular polycrystalline” is
181 intended to be synonymous to the “platelike polycrystals” discussed in Bailey and Hallett (2002,
182 2004, 2009). “Columnar polycrystalline” is used by Bailey and Hallett (2004, 2009). “Tabu-
183 lar polycrystalline” and “columnar polycrystalline” are used for consistency with “tabular” and
184 “columnar” monocrystal forms. We use the label "polycrystalline growth form" for ice crystals that
185 are nucleated as polycrystals while they remain in the environment where polycrystal nucleation
186 occurs. This terminology is consistent with Bailey and Hallett (2004, 2009, 2012)

187 The growth of polycrystalline forms is distinct from aggregation. Polycrystalline forms involve
188 tabular or columnar growth occurring simultaneously on elements separated by discontinuities,
189 such as grain boundaries. The elements' crystal lattices are intertwined and grow together from
190 the initial nucleation event. Aggregation involves multiple crystals that grow separately, then later
191 happen to collide and jumble together. Aggregation rearranges preexisting ice mass per unit volume
192 with no significant thermodynamic impact. An aggregate may experience further growth through
193 vapor deposition after formation.

194 These ice growth forms describe the typical ice crystals encountered in the clouds and pre-
195 cipitation of Earth's atmosphere, but are not intended to be fully comprehensive. Bundles are
196 characterized by multiple columnar crystals (e.g., needles, columns, sheaths) growing in parallel
197 from a common center (Nakaya 1954; Magono and Lee 1966; Frank 1982; Kikuchi et al. 2013;
198 Nelson and Swanson 2019). Bundles occur in the same temperature range as the columnar growth
199 form, but their required supersaturation has not been quantified (Takahashi et al. 1991; Nelson and
200 Swanson 2019). Thus, we are unable to place bundles on our diagrams. While our classification
201 system includes the typical ice known today, future observations may identify new ice growth
202 forms. Finally, unique ice growth processes can occur at extreme conditions, such as near 200%
203 RH_w or in strong electric fields (Hallett and Mason 1958; Crowther and Saunders 1973; Libbrecht
204 2003). Such conditions are not in the domain of our diagrams.

205 The same ice growth form can yield ice shapes with different properties. For example, while
206 both hollow and solid bullet rosettes are formed through columnar polycrystalline growth, each
207 has a distinct scattering phase function (Yang et al. 2008; Järvinen et al. 2018). This illustrates the
208 different affordances of systematic classifications, as compared to ice growth forms. Systematic
209 classifications give detail about individual ice shapes but little information about how they form.
210 Our growth forms efficiently describe how ice grows, but need to be supplemented when properties
211 of specific shapes are important.

212 When an ice crystal encounters multiple environments corresponding to different ice growth
213 forms, a sequence of different types of growth occurs (Nakaya 1954; Hallett and Mason 1958;
214 Bailey and Hallett 2004, 2009). Examples of sequential growth are discussed in Section 5.

215 Other authors have portrayed ice growth as a function of thermodynamics in terms of the primary
216 axis of growth (Wood et al. 2001). The presentation of those diagrams has been tailored towards

217 experts, and some are based on models with invalid assumptions derived from laboratory work
218 (Bailey and Hallett 2002, 2004, 2009).

219 *b. Display decreasing temperature on the y-axis*

220 Almost all published ice habit diagrams place temperature on the x-axis and the unit of moisture
221 (traditionally supersaturation with respect to ice or vapor density excess) on the y-axis. The earliest
222 research into ice habit considered only the effects of temperature (Heim 1914; Weickmann 1945;
223 aufm Kampe et al. 1951; Mason 1953). The first plots of ice shape simply displayed a temperature
224 axis and indicated shapes as appropriate. When moisture began to be considered, temperature
225 remained on the abscissa and supersaturation began to be used as the ordinate (Nakaya and Sekido
226 1936; aufm Kampe et al. 1951; Nakaya 1954).

227 Swapping the axes to place decreasing temperature on the y-axis and moisture on the x-axis yields
228 several interpretive advantages (e.g., Fig. 1). Having temperature decrease on the y-axis mirrors
229 the real atmosphere, where temperature generally decreases with height. This removes a layer
230 of abstraction, simplifying interpretation in terms of the physical atmosphere. The International
231 Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standard reference atmosphere maps temperature to height
232 (ICAO 1993). The scale is offset by the height of its 0°C level on the right side of the diagram.
233 This height scale is intended to encourage intuition for students about where these temperatures
234 qualitatively occur in the mid-latitude troposphere. Individual observed atmospheric profiles are
235 often very different from this reference atmosphere. Deviations can be large in convection, near
236 air mass boundaries, or in the tropics. Bailey and Hallett presented a version of their diagram with
237 temperature on the y-axis and an atmospheric height approximation in a 2010 conference paper
238 (Bailey and Hallett 2010).

239 *c. Use RH_w*

240 We favor the version of the diagram using RH_w on the x-axis with RH_{ice} contours overlaid (Fig. 1)
241 especially for undergraduate-level educational materials. RH_w is used throughout meteorology,
242 while ice supersaturation and vapor density excess are more specialized. RH_w is also widely
243 understood, at least intuitively, by the general public due to its use in weather forecasts. To the best
244 of our knowledge, our diagram in Figure 1 is the first to illustrate ice growth in terms of RH_w .

245 In the appendix, Figure B1 shows the RH_w version simplified to emphasize only the subsaturated
246 and supersaturated conditions that occur in different portions of the diagram. We provide this
247 figure as an educational tool to scaffold basic concepts of ice microphysics in introductory classes,
248 before introducing the diagram with ice growth forms. The presentation highlights the relationship
249 between RH_w and RH_{ice} as a function of temperature. As air temperature decreases, the RH_w needed
250 to sustain an ice cloud shrinks as well. This is in contrast to the requirement that $RH_w \geq 100\%$ for
251 liquid phase and mixed phase clouds.

252 Ice supersaturation directly relates to ice growth through deposition, which can only occur above
253 saturation with respect to ice, and ice loss through sublimation, which occurs when conditions
254 are subsaturated with respect to ice. Diagrams in terms of ice supersaturation include Nakaya
255 (1954), Kobayashi (1957), Hallett and Mason (1958), Bailey and Hallett (2009), and St-Pierre and
256 Thériault (2015). Vapor density excess describes the density of water vapor in excess of saturation
257 with respect to ice (units $g\ m^{-3}$). Diagrams in this format include Kobayashi (1961), Pruppacher
258 and Klett (1997), Furukawa and Wettlaufer (2007), St-Pierre and Thériault (2015), and Libbrecht
259 (2017). Vapor density excess is a concrete way to describe the physical quantity of water vapor,
260 rather than expressing some percentage of saturation.

261 *d. Restrict phase space to conditions common in the troposphere*

262 Our diagrams extend to $-70^\circ C$, as in Bailey and Hallett (2009). These temperatures are colder
263 than typical values in the mid-latitude troposphere to better encompass convective anvils and tem-
264 peratures near the tropical tropopause (Lawson et al. 2006; Midzak et al. 2020). Field observations
265 of atmospheric ice at temperatures less than $-70^\circ C$ are sparse, but indicate there are no further
266 changes to the ice growth form to at least $-90^\circ C$ (Woods et al. 2018). By convention, the top of
267 the mid-latitude troposphere is considered to be $-56.5^\circ C$ (ICAO 1993). For applications in the
268 mid-latitudes, this temperature constraint may be more appropriate. The code given in Appendix
269 B allows for the boundaries of any of our diagrams to be modified at the user's discretion.

270 We bound all of our diagrams at a maximum *ambient* RH_w of 105% based on theoretical and
271 observational arguments from Korolev and Mazin (2003). Ambient supersaturations with respect
272 to water ($RH_w > 100\%$) can occur within updrafts when the rate of change of the equilibrium
273 saturation vapor pressure with decreasing temperature (source) is faster than the condensation

274 rate on activated cloud condensation nuclei and existing drops (sink) (Rogers and Yau 1989).
275 Supersaturations with respect to water $> 1\%$ are rare and ephemeral (Mason 1971; Gerber 1991).
276 Aircraft and radiosonde in situ measurements of temperature and moisture characterize ambient
277 RH. There are no changes to the growth form for naturally occurring values of $RH_w > 105\%$ for
278 any temperature.

279 Ventilation is an important factor in ice crystal growth by vapor deposition and occurs for falling
280 ice particles when there is nonzero airflow around a crystal, as occurs when a crystal is falling
281 and/or advected by horizontal wind, updrafts or downdrafts (Hallett and Mason 1958; Keller and
282 Hallett 1982; Takahashi et al. 1991; Fukuta and Takahashi 1999). Ventilation acts to enhance
283 the vapor density immediately adjacent to a crystal's outer edges, thus increasing the local RH
284 at the crystal over the ambient value (Pruppacher and Klett 1997; Keller and Hallett 1982; Wang
285 2002; Bailey and Hallett 2004). Quantifying the enhancement of supersaturation due to ventilation
286 requires knowledge of particle size, shape, and fall speed (Heymsfield 1975; Hall and Pruppacher
287 1976; Johnson 1997; Ji and Wang 1999). Due to computational complexity, modeling studies
288 of even simplified shapes (such as spheres or columns) have largely been restricted to qualitative
289 descriptions of the vapor field (Wang 2002; Bailey and Hallett 2004). Ventilation effects can yield
290 locally higher RH at the corners as compared to the straight edges of the same crystal (Wang 2002).
291 For a given temperature, one can infer ice ventilation effects by shifting ambient RH values to the
292 right on the diagram (see Section 5).

293 We do not use the RH limit from Bailey and Hallett (2009) which is based on the estimated
294 maximum supersaturation with ventilation and is approximated by twice the ice supersaturation
295 at $RH_w = 100\%$ for each temperature (which is distinct from both $RH_w = 200\%$ and $RH_{ice} =$
296 200%). This value is intended to represent the upper bound on the local conditions experienced
297 *at a growing crystal* (Bailey and Hallett 2004). However, this method limits the ventilation ice
298 supersaturation close to $RH_w = 100\%$ at temperatures near 0°C , where conditions consistent with
299 larger ambient supersaturations are observed to occur (Korolev and Mazin 2003; Cronicc et al.
300 2007; Ganetis et al. 2018). At low temperatures, such as near -65°C , the estimated maximum
301 supersaturation with ventilation method from Bailey and Hallett (2009) yields maximum RH_{ice}
302 of 262% ($RH_w = 145\%$). In convective clouds with strong vertical motions, observations show
303 ambient moisture values at these temperatures are never in excess of $RH_{ice} = 160\%$ ($RH_w = 88.3\%$)

304 (D'Alessandro et al. 2017). Even with ventilation, the equivalent of $RH_w = 145\%$ at -65°C seems
305 implausibly high. At the user's discretion, the code provided in Appendix B includes an option
306 to plot the Bailey and Hallett (2009) estimate of maximum supersaturation with ventilation on the
307 diagram.

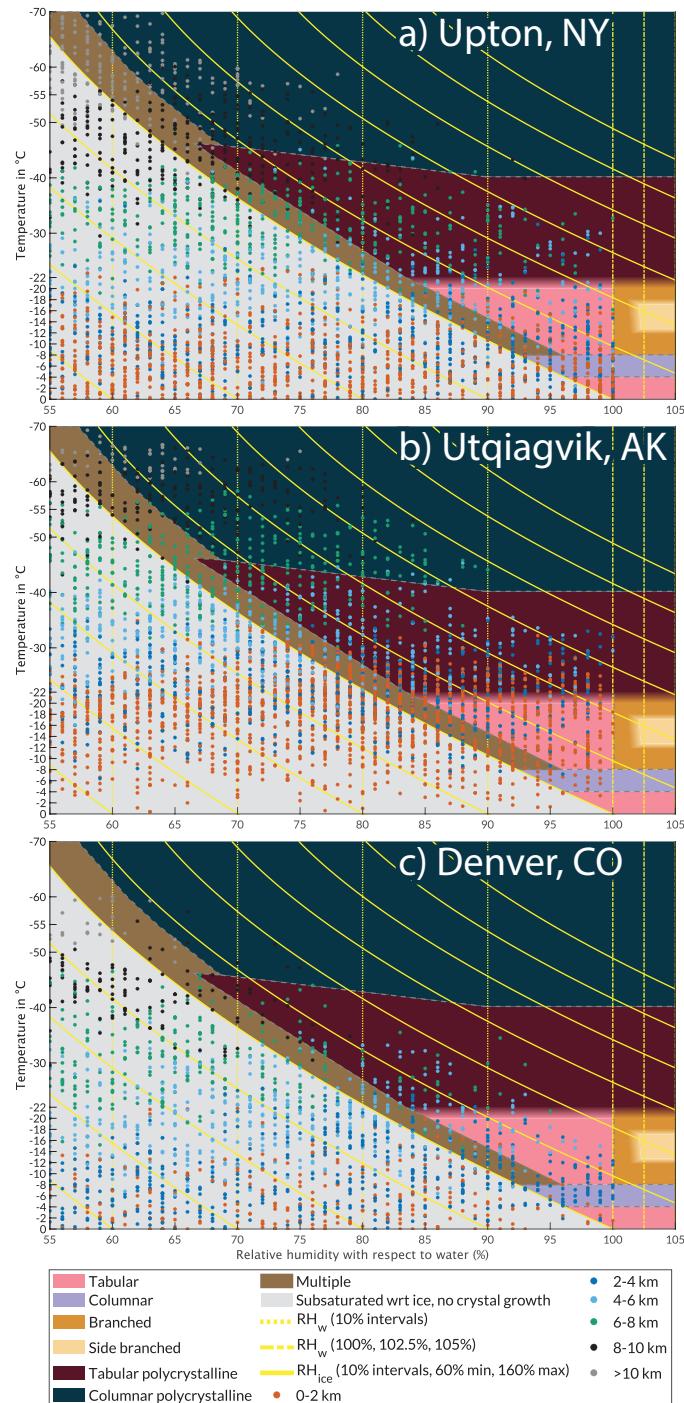
308 Laboratory work has demonstrated unique ice growth behavior at extreme supersaturations in
309 certain temperature ranges. High-temperature (0°C to -4°C) dendrites require RH_w values of up
310 to 200% (Hallett and Mason 1958). Since these supersaturations are far beyond what could be
311 achieved in either the ambient or with ventilation, they cannot occur in Earth's atmosphere (Korolev
312 and Mazin 2003; Bailey and Hallett 2004) and we exclude these from our diagrams.

313 **3. Ice growth forms from atmospheric profiles**

314 Profiles of temperature and RH_w from observations or models can be plotted on the diagram
315 to reveal the ice growth forms. In this manner, soundings datasets can be used to describe the
316 distribution of ice growth forms. This is a novel use of soundings data. Overlaying weather and
317 climate numerical model output on the diagram allows one to interpret the model's implied ice
318 growth forms, and to evaluate how predicted growth forms compare to observations.

324 When interpreting observed radiosonde data overlaid on the ice growth diagram, several caveats
325 need to be kept in mind. Commercial radiosondes cannot measure ambient supersaturations with
326 respect to water. In particular, this means these data cannot be used to identify precisely where side
327 branched growth occurs. Qualitatively, we infer higher probabilities for branched and side branched
328 growth by ventilation for the subset of points with $RH_w > 95\%$ in the proper temperature range.
329 The radiosonde characterizes the environment, not any individual crystal. Precipitation-sized
330 ice experiences a sequence of growth conditions as it falls (sediments) and will also experience
331 ventilation.

332 We contrast winter season radiosonde data sets from December 2014 through February 2015
333 from a midlatitude maritime, a polar, and a midlatitude continental site in the Northern Hemi-
334 sphere in Figure 6. All soundings during the period are used in these plots whether clouds and
335 precipitation were present or not. These three examples illustrate the prevalence of conditions for
336 the polycrystalline and multiple growth forms within the colder cloud tops at all three locations.



319 FIG. 6. Seasonal radiosonde data for three locations during the winter of December 2014 through February
 320 2015 overlaid on the ice growth form diagram. Data points are plotted with air temperature as the vertical
 321 coordinate. a) From the NWS radiosonde site at Upton, NY (178 profiles). b) From the DOE radiosonde site
 322 at Utqiagvik, AK (180 profiles). c) From the NWS radiosonde site at Denver, CO (179 profiles). Dot colors
 323 represent altitude of measurements in 2-km intervals. See key for details.

337 The example midlatitude maritime environment is from the National Weather Service's (NWS)
338 sounding site in Upton, NY (Fig. 6a). The most frequent ice growth conditions involve relatively
339 warm temperatures—the points are clustered most densely between 0°C and -10°C. In comparison,
340 there are few points near water saturation in the -12°C to -18°C range.

341 We use the Department of Energy (DOE) Atmospheric Radiation Measurement North Slope
342 Alaska Central Facility research site in Utqiagvik, AK above the Arctic Circle and along the
343 coast of the Beaufort Sea as our polar environment example in Figure 6b (DOE-ARM 2020). As
344 expected, these profiles are colder than in the midlatitudes. Ambient conditions favor tabular,
345 tabular polycrystalline, and columnar polycrystalline growth, along with the multiple regime.

346 The example midlatitude continental location is the National Weather Service's radiosonde site
347 in Denver, CO (Figure 6c). As an interior continental site, Denver's seasonal profile is far drier than
348 either Upton, NY or Utqiagvik, AK. There are very few points near water saturation in the -12°C
349 to -18°C range. The overall sparseness of points within the ice growth regions of the diagram
350 indicates background ambient conditions at Denver were rarely sufficient to maintain ice growth.
351 In addition to synoptic-scale vertical motions along air mass boundaries, mesoscale upslope flows
352 and vertical motions from waves such as those forced by topography are likely critical to locally
353 enhance supersaturations within clouds in this region.

354 **4. Rapid ice growth conditions encompass more than dendrites**

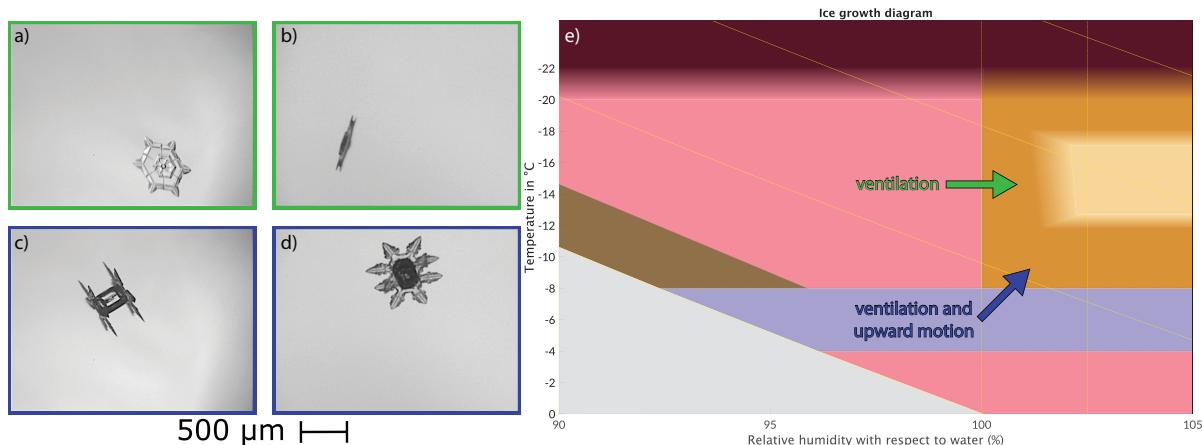
355 The higher the vapor density excess over ice saturation, the faster the vapor deposition growth
356 rate for a given moisture content of the air (water vapor mixing ratio) will be (Rogers and Yau
357 1989; Houze 2014; Harrison et al. 2016). The air temperature corresponding to the peak vapor
358 density excess varies with RH_w (Fig. 3). When accounting for the influence of latent heat released
359 from deposition, peak growth rates occur near -15°C for environments near saturation with respect
360 to water (Ryan et al. 1976; St-Pierre and Thériault 2015). High vapor density excess above 0.25
361 g m^{-3} can occur for temperatures between just below 0°C to -19°C and encompasses the tabular,
362 columnar, branched, and side-branched growth forms but not the polycrystalline or multiple growth
363 forms. Growth rate also depends in part on the starting size of the crystal (Harrison et al. 2016).

364 The temperature range -12°C to -18°C is sometimes labeled the "dendritic growth zone" and is
365 often emphasized as a region of rapid ice growth (Kumjian et al. 2014; Rauber et al. 2017; Demange

366 et al. 2017; NWS 2017). Since the formation of dendrites requires both temperatures between -12°C
367 to -18°C and $\text{RH}_w \gtrsim 101.5\%$, it is mistaken to infer the production of these crystals based only on
368 temperature conditions. Ventilation can nudge crystals growing at lower supersaturations in this
369 temperature range into the side branched growth region, producing dendrites. The enhancement
370 from ventilation is difficult to quantify and may not necessarily be sufficient to reach conditions with
371 $\text{RH}_w \gtrsim 101.5\%$. Nelson (2005) suggests that side branching is related to growth rate fluctuations.
372 Referring to the -12°C to -18°C temperature range as a dendritic growth zone implies the production
373 of a specific habit that will not always occur. Further, dendrites are an unrepresentative subset
374 of the possible varieties of crystals produced by the side branched growth form (Korolev et al.
375 1999; Bailey and Hallett 2009; Libbrecht 2017). Fundamentally, there is no set of atmospheric
376 conditions that guarantees dendrites will occur exclusively. We suggest retiring the term "dendritic
377 growth zone" for the -12°C to -18°C temperature range. Misinterpretation and overemphasis of the
378 "dendritic growth zone" is in part responsible for the mistaken impressions among students that
379 other ice growth forms cannot gain mass rapidly and that snow primarily consists of dendrites.

380 **5. Sequential growth**

381 An ice crystal can grow as a sequence of distinct ice growth forms as it falls through different
382 temperature and moisture conditions. The resulting ice crystal shape can be described by this
383 sequence of growth forms. Growth sequences can be identified using data from high-resolution
384 particle imagers such as the SPEC Inc. Cloud Particle Imager (CPI), Particle Flux Analytics Multi-
385 Angle Snowflake Camera, and the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology Particle Habit Imaging and
386 Scattering Probe (PHIPS) (Lawson et al. 2001; Garrett et al. 2012; Abdelmonem et al. 2016). These
387 sequences can reveal the history of the thermodynamic conditions that the crystal encountered.
388 One of the earliest researchers to study atmospheric ice, Ukichiro Nakaya, notably phrased this
389 as "A snow crystal is a letter from the sky" in his seminal 1954 work (Nakaya 1954). Bailey and
390 Hallett (2009) describe mixed-habit rosettes in terms of sequential growth, specifically, columnar
391 polycrystalline followed by tabular polycrystalline growth. In Figure 7, we show examples of two
392 other shapes that can be described by their growth form sequences. The images are from the PHIPS
393 mounted on the NASA P-3 aircraft during the Investigation of Microphysics and Precipitation for
394 Atlantic Coast-Threatening Snowstorms (IMPACTS) field campaign in 2020 (McMurdie et al.



397 FIG. 7. Examples of sequential growth with possible physical pathways annotated on g) the ice growth form
 398 diagram. Colors of annotations on f) correspond to colors bordering the PHIPS image pairs. Image pairs are
 399 different views of the same particle; all are from the 25 Jan 2020 IMPACTS flight. a) and b) Images obtained at
 400 22:57 UTC at 4.8 km altitude of a crystal formed by a sequence of tabular growth followed by branched growth.
 401 Kikuchi et al. (2013) classification: plate with branches, P4e. c) and d) Images obtained at 22:25 UTC at 4.9
 402 km altitude of a crystal formed by a sequence of columnar growth followed by branched and then side branched
 403 growth. Kikuchi et al. (2013) classification: column with dendrites, CP1b.

395 2022, 2019; NASA 2020). These ice particles were likely observed at lower altitudes and in
 396 different conditions than where the ice crystals initially formed and grew.

404 An example of a "plate with branches" or "P4e" habit is shown in Figure 7ab. We identify the
 405 sequence yielding this crystal as tabular growth (forming the central hexagonal plate) followed
 406 by branched growth (yielding the 6 sector branches). An enhancement of the local supersatura-
 407 tion by ventilation is likely responsible for this sequence. Tabular growth requires only suitable
 408 temperatures and a small supersaturation with respect to ice. Ventilation can then increase the
 409 supersaturation local to the crystal such that branched growth begins. Qualitatively, reviewing large
 410 numbers of CPI and PHIPS images indicates many branched and side branched crystals, including
 411 dendrites, have an inner core of a hexagonal plate. This implies branched crystals are commonly
 412 produced by sequences of tabular and branched growth, as has been suggested by prior laboratory
 413 work (Fukuta and Takahashi 1999). The in situ environmental conditions when the images were
 414 obtained were $RH_{ice} = 113.5\%$, $RH_w = 98.4\%$, and $T_{air} = -14.3^\circ\text{C}$. While these ambient conditions

415 correspond to tabular growth, ongoing ventilation may support branched growth by enhancing the
416 supersaturation local to the crystal.

417 An example of the habit informally known as "capped column" (Libbrecht 2017) is shown in
418 Figure 7cd. Kikuchi et al. (2013) classifies this as "column with dendrites" or "CP1b" (their
419 Fig. 1-CP1b). The sequence producing this crystal is columnar growth (forming the central
420 column) followed by branched growth (producing the sectorized platelike caps on the ends) and
421 then side branched growth (yielding the further branches off the initial six branches). The small
422 side branches are best seen in Fig. 7f. Upward motion, accompanied by ventilation, is a possible
423 physical pathway for this sequence. The crystal must both be cooled below -8°C and moistened
424 above water saturation to switch from columnar growth to branched growth. An enhancement of
425 supersaturation alone, as caused by ventilation, cannot yield this sequence. In situ environmental
426 conditions corresponding to the image are $\text{RH}_{\text{ice}} = 99.1\%$, $\text{RH}_{\text{w}} = 87.1\%$, and $T_{\text{air}} = -13.0^{\circ}\text{C}$.

427 **6. Summary and concluding remarks**

428 We revisualize the current state-of-the-art ice habit diagram in Bailey and Hallett (2009) by
429 simplifying the dozens of ice habits to a small number of ice growth forms and recasting the
430 diagram in terms of RH_{w} with the goals of improving clarity and ease of use for non-specialists.
431 Use of RH_{w} puts ice microphysics into a more accessible framework for students than RH_{ice} or
432 vapor density excess. The decreasing RH_{w} needed for ice saturation and cloud formation as a
433 function of decreasing air temperature is readily apparent. The important distinction that branched
434 growth requires supersaturation with respect to water whereas all other growth forms do not is
435 shown clearly.

436 In addition to the educational applications (Appendix A), we see several pathways to apply the
437 ice growth diagram in research. We think it is possible that many, if not all, observed pristine ice
438 shapes are reducible to their component growth form sequences. Joint analysis of high-resolution
439 ice particle images and thermodynamic profiles in the context of the ice growth diagram has the
440 potential to yield a classification system for ice crystals based on their sequence of growth forms.
441 Plotting atmospheric profiles from observed radiosonde data and weather and climate model output
442 on the ice growth diagram can provide insight on where and why differences between model physics
443 and the real atmosphere occur. Analysis of the decades-long radiosonde archive in the context

444 of the ice growth diagram may yield insights into impacts of the changing climate on ice cloud
445 properties.

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458 Suborbital-3 (EVS-3) program managed by the Earth System Science Pathfinder Program Office.

459 *Data availability statement.* National Weather Service radiosonde data from Upton, NY and
460 Denver, CO can be obtained from the Integrated Global Radiosonde Archive, Version 2 described
461 in Durre et al. (2006).

462 Department of Energy Atmospheric Radiation Measurement radiosonde data from the North
463 Slope Alaska Central Facility site at Utqiagvik, AK are accessible from doi.org/10.5439/1021460.

464 The Investigation of Microphysics and Precipitation for Atlantic Coast-Threatening Snow-
465 storms (IMPACTS) campaign data sets are stored at the NASA Earth Data Archive
466 (<https://ghrc.nsstc.nasa.gov/home/>). Specific data sets used in this paper are accessible at
467 dx.doi.org/10.5067/IMPACTS/P3/DATA101 for the NASA P-3 Meteorological and Navigation
468 Data and dx.doi.org/10.5067/IMPACTS/PHIPS/DATA101 for the cloud particle imagery collected
469 by the Particle Habit Imaging and Polar Scattering (PHIPS) probe onboard the NASA P-3 aircraft.

470 PNG, EPS and SVG files for the ice growth diagram variations as well as the MATLAB code
471 and documentation can be accessed at <https://osf.io/g9vzj/>

472 APPENDIX A

473 Example Classroom Exercises

474 As part of in-class exercises or homework, having students use a diagram that simultaneously illus-
475 trates the contexts of air temperature, RH_{ice} , and RH_w can aid understanding of cloud microphysics
476 processes. Two example exercises that use the version of the ice growth diagram with respect to
477 RH_w are presented below. These activities have been tested and refined for use as think-pair-share
478 formative assessments in several undergraduate and graduate courses taught by Yuter. In these
479 standalone exercises, the term RH_{water} is used rather than RH_w .

480 *a. Exercise 1*

481 This activity is used to review concepts on environments associated with different water phase
482 changes. Introductory students can answer the questions by referring to the simplified ice growth
483 diagram (Figure B1). For more advanced students, these questions can serve as a warm-up
484 exercise. *Question:* For each of the following four descriptions of phase changes indicate the
485 corresponding RH_{ice} and RH_{water} values OR indicate that the described set of phase changes for
486 the given temperature range are not physically possible in the real atmosphere. Assume $-40\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$
487 $< \text{Air Temperature} < 0\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$.

- 488 1. Sublimation of ice AND evaporation of water droplets
489 $RH_{water} < 100\%$ or $RH_{water} > 100\%$
490 $RH_{ice} < 100\%$ or $RH_{ice} > 100\%$
491 Not physically possible in the real atmosphere
- 492 2. Sublimation of ice AND condensation of water droplets
493 $RH_{water} < 100\%$ or $RH_{water} > 100\%$
494 $RH_{ice} < 100\%$ or $RH_{ice} > 100\%$
495 Not physically possible in the real atmosphere
- 496 3. Growth of ice by vapor deposition AND evaporation of water droplets
497 $RH_{water} < 100\%$ or $RH_{water} > 100\%$
498 $RH_{ice} < 100\%$ or $RH_{ice} > 100\%$
499 Not physically possible in the real atmosphere
- 500 4. Growth of ice by vapor deposition AND condensation of water droplets
501 $RH_{water} < 100\%$ or $RH_{water} > 100\%$

502 $RH_{ice} < 100\%$ or $RH_{ice} > 100\%$

503 Not physically possible in the real atmosphere

504 *Answers:* 1) $RH_{ice} < 100\%$ and $RH_{water} < 100\%$; 2) Not physically possible. RH_{ice} is always
505 less than RH_{water} for air temperatures $< 0\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$; 3) $RH_{ice} > 100\%$ and $RH_{water} < 100\%$; 4) RH_{ice}
506 $> 100\%$ and $RH_{water} > 100\%$. Many students, even advanced students, get 2) wrong. Getting
507 an incorrect answer provides an opportunity for the students to learn from their mistake and gain
508 better understanding of the relationship between RH_{ice} and RH_{water} rather than thinking of these
509 quantities as separate.

510 *b. Exercise 2*

511 This exercise asks students to apply concepts using the ice growth diagram and is designed for
512 upper-level undergraduates or first-year graduate students.

513 *Question:* Use the ice growth diagram and physical reasoning to answer the following questions:

- 514 1. An aircraft probe samples a tabular polycrystal at $-20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$. How could this crystal have formed?
- 515 2. An unrimed ice crystal consisting of a column capped with two edge plates is observed at
516 $-5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $RH_{water} = 90\%$. Could the edge plates continue to grow in this environment?
- 517 3. Branched crystals are observed in an air temperature of $-6\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $RH_{water} = 90\%$. A vertically
518 pointing radar indicates vertical air motions in the cloud are all $\leq 0\text{ m s}^{-1}$ for the last 40
519 minutes. How could these crystals form?

520 *Answers:* 1) The crystal could have formed within the tabular polycrystal region and reached this
521 location by sedimentation. It may also have grown in the mixed growth region—either at $-20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$
522 and RH_{ice} between 100% and 103.8% , or by sedimenting here from other lower temperature mixed
523 growth conditions. 2) No. At this temperature and RH_{water} , the corresponding RH_{ice} is $< 100\%$.
524 3) Since there is no indication of upward motions, ambient $RH_{water} > 100\%$ is unlikely. The
525 condition of $RH_{water} \gtrsim 101.5\%$ necessary for branched growth is likely a result of ventilation
526 increasing vapor pressure immediately adjacent to the falling ice crystal when the crystal was at
527 air temperatures between $-12\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $-18\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$.

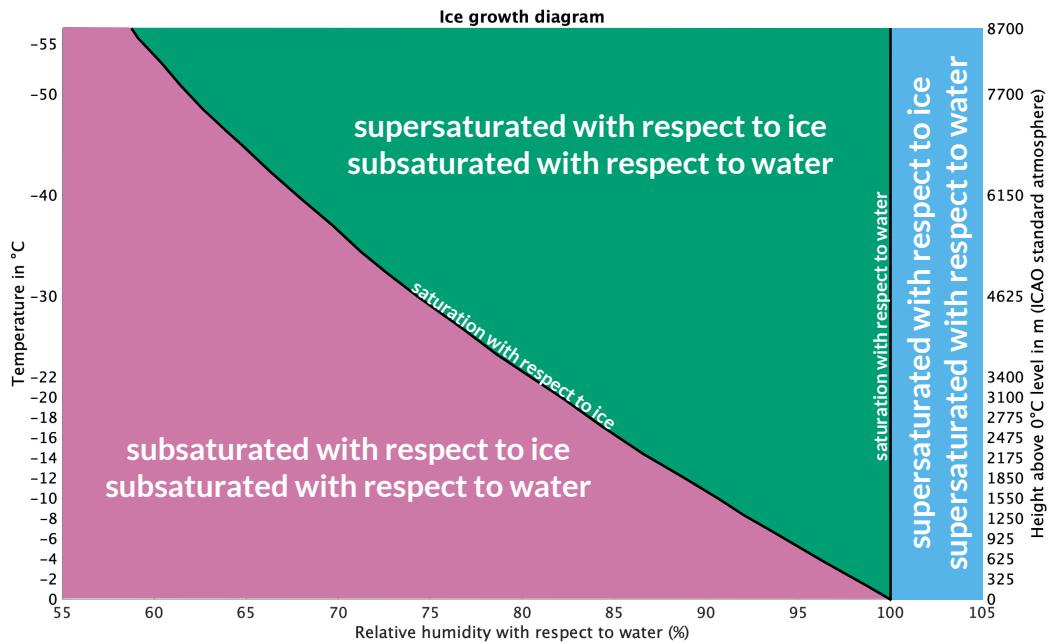
APPENDIX B

Software for Plotting Ice Growth Diagrams

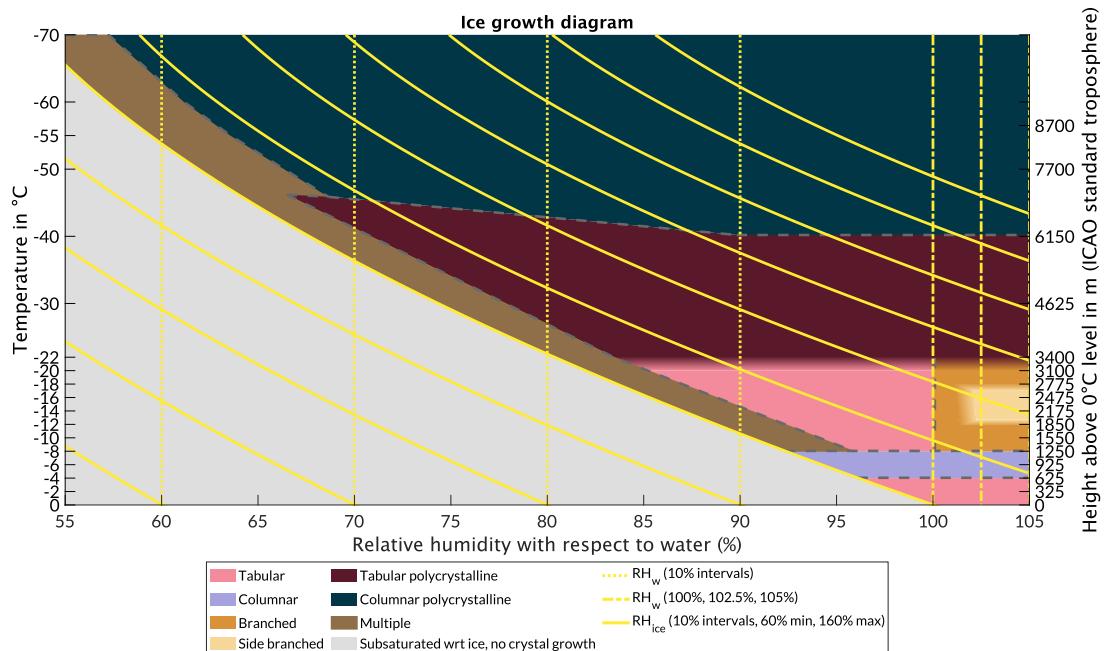
Our software to plot the ice growth diagrams in formats with muted colors and labels on the diagram (Figs. 1, 2, 3) and with brighter colors and a key at the bottom of the diagram (Appendix Figures B2, B3, B4) is on the Open Science Foundation website. The MATLAB code and documentation can be accessed at <https://osf.io/g9vzj/>.

MATLAB code to plot data from the Integrated Global Radiosonde Archive on the ice growth diagrams is included in the package. The RH_w and RH_{ice} versions are better suited than the vapor density excess version for overlaying radiosonde data. At low temperatures, the atmosphere reaches saturation at small vapor density excess. Thus, the vapor density excess diagram narrows drastically at low temperatures, particularly below approximately -30°C , and data points will be jumbled on top of each other.

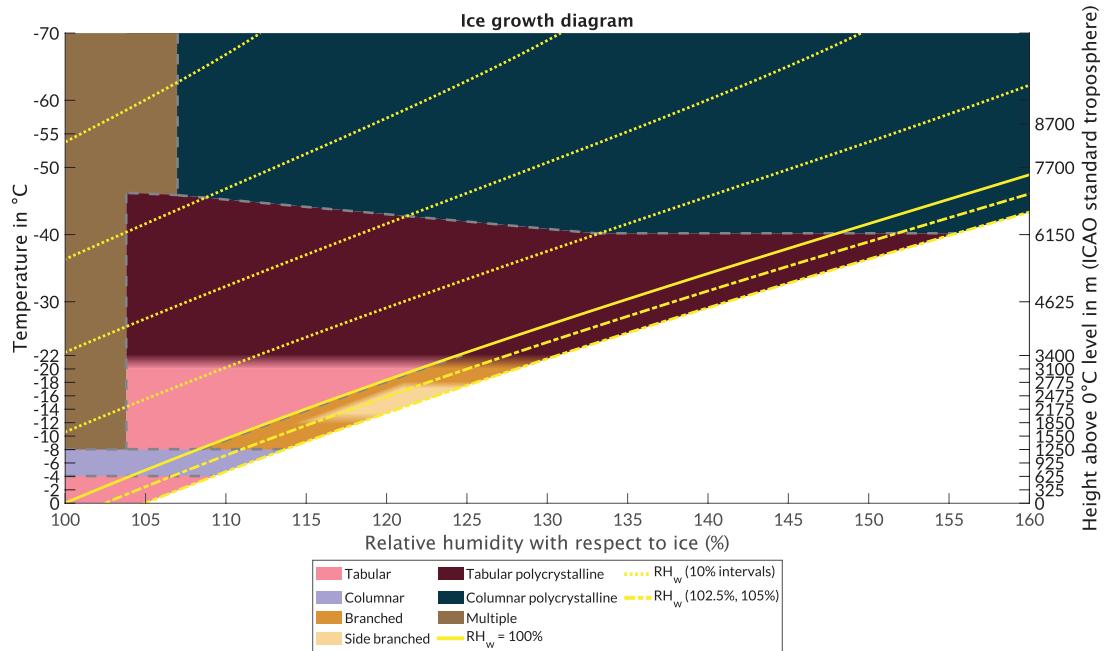
The package also includes functions to convert between the various moisture variables. This is particularly useful for conversions to and from vapor density excess, which can be unintuitive.



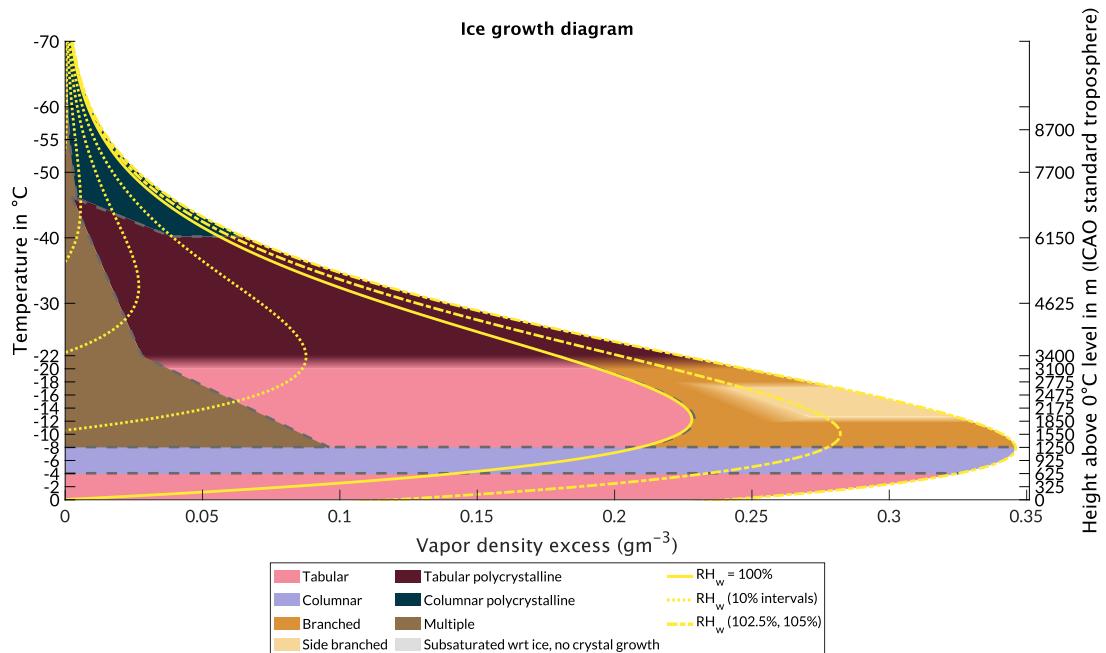
542 FIG. B1. Simplified diagram illustrating the phase space of subsaturated and supersaturated conditions with
 543 respect to water and ice in terms of RH_w , RH_{ice} , and air temperature. Pink shading indicates conditions where
 544 ice mass is lost by sublimation, and green shading shows conditions where ice mass grows by vapor deposition.
 545 Blue shading defines conditions where ice mass grows by vapor deposition and supercooled water droplets are
 546 constant or growing in mass. Riming can occur when supercooled water coexists with ice.



547 FIG. B2. The applied ice growth diagram in terms of RH_w with contours of RH_{ice} overlaid. This version is
 548 designed to have a high-contrast color scheme, appropriate for use as a base layer for data visualization.



549 FIG. B3. The applied ice growth diagram in terms of RH_{ice} with contours of RH_w overlaid. This version is
 550 designed to have a high-contrast color scheme, appropriate for use as a base layer for data visualization.



551 FIG. B4. The applied ice growth diagram in terms of vapor density excess with contours of RH_w overlaid. This
 552 version is designed to have a high-contrast color scheme, appropriate for use as a base layer for data visualization.

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