Response to Referee 1:

The authors performed a very interesting drought experiment on temperate grass monocultures, in which they assessed the effects of timing of drought on resistance, recovery and overall, annual (A)NPP. They found the lowest drought sensitivity in spring, and overcompensating post-drought growth which to a substantial extent cancelled out immediate impacts of drought on overall ANPP. By unravelling global change effects (drought) on components of ecosystem function (ANPP), the study matches the scope of the journal. Overall, I am very enthusiastic about the design of the experiment with consideration of resistance, recovery and overall perturbation, the details and reporting of measurements performed, and the consideration of both absolute and relative effects. I found the text also very well structured and well written.

Despite my positive evaluation of the manuscript, I recommend major revisions at this stage because of three main issues to be resolved, and further comments below:

1) Based on limited analyses on precipitation data and discussion on the course of soil water potential, the authors suggest that differences in spring vs summer vs fall soil moisture were likely not the main reason for the lower drought sensitivity in spring. While I tend to agree with the authors, they actually have all the necessary data to provide stronger, formal evidence that soil moisture stress was not particularly higher in summer and autumn than in spring. Based on the daily soil water potential, the field capacity and permanent wilting point, I recommend the authors to estimate daily soil moisture stress (Is), as explained in for example Vicca et al. (2012). In brief, with the approach proposed in that letter, plants or soil biota experience drought stress when soil moisture drops below a certain threshold, e.g. relative extractable water below 0.4. The amount below that threshold determines the severity of stress, and stress values for multiple days can be summed so you can get an idea of integrated soil moisture stress (e.g. for spring vs summer vs fall). I recommend the authors to calculate Is and report on their findings in the manuscript to strengthen their message, if confirmed. I also suggest to use Is in Table 2 and Figs. 4 and 9b. See also my references to this point in some of the specific comments below. Please avoid adding more display items, since four tables and nine figures is already at the higher end.
Response: *Thank you for this suggestion it confirms and helps to strengthen our interpretation of the results and, thus, the story of the paper. We followed the instructions of the referee and calculated Is according to Vicca et al. (2012) and present these data in table 2. As suspected by the referee, the resulting Is data confirm the cumulative soil water potential data that we report for the individual seasons and years. Our interpretation that "differences in spring vs summer vs fall soil moisture were likely not the main reason for the lower drought sensitivity in spring" is thus confirmed by this additional analysis.*

2) While the design and procedures done in the experiment itself were well explained, the study still lacks reproducibility in the sense that no data nor R-script were provided in a supplement or link along with the manuscript. Ideally, both the data and a comprehensive script with the main code for statistical tests are uploaded. If it is not possible to make data publicly accessible, the authors need to explain that in a section "Data availability" at the end of the manuscript. See also BG's data policy.
Response: *All data and R scripts and now provided in a separate link.*

3) Test statistics (F, df, P, ...) were not always presented along with the results in the text/tables/figures. If there is no place in figures to provide such information, please place tables in a supplement and refer to these in figure captions and in the Results section.
Response: *We now added analytical statistics in additional tables in a supplement for figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 (updated figure numbers), and added test statistics (p-values) to the text. For figures 3 and 4 we did not add additional statistics because (i) these are two figures to give the reader the overview over the time course of plant growth over all the six harvests, (ii) the analyses of the individual key harvests are given in in tables 3 and 4, and (iii) compared to the huge differences in growth among the harvests, the standard errors are so small, that an additional table would not deliver additional information. Figures 5, 6, and 7 both comprise a panel for relative and absolute changes of the response variable. Here, all statistical analyses have been done with natural log transformed data, which was needed to meet the assumptions of the models. The analyses thus match panels a) in Figures 5, 6, and 7. Panels b) with the absolute changes complement this information and are given for a better understanding of the system, and the text in the Results contains descriptive means. Given this situation, it is neither needed nor common to provide further statistics, as the relevant analyses are all done with the transformed data (which was indicated by the data itself). It would also be hard to find an appropriate parametric model for the absolute changes, given the distribution of values; and nonparametric methods are not available for multifactorial data structures. We hope that the referee kindly agrees to this strategy.*

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Line 14 – Here and throughout the paper, the authors refer to "resilience" to refer to post-drought recovery. In line with a proposal for standardized nomenclature and quantification of resilience proposed by Ingrisch & Bahn (2018), I suggest to replace "resilience" by "recovery" when specifically post-drought growth was meant. The overall "resilience", or the opposite, "perturbation", then combines both the "resistance" and "recovery" phases, resulting in e.g. the annual outcomes (see also Ingrisch et al., 2017 for an example).
<u>Response:</u> *We followed this advice and replaced "resilience" with "recovery" throughout the manuscript according to Ingritsch et al. 2017.*

Line 25 – From your experiment, you found that "(i) the resistance of growth rates in grasses to drought varies across the season and is positively correlated with growth rates in the control". While I agree that the first part of this claim will often be correct, I think there may in practice be many cases where drought resistance of growth – expressed either as absolute or relative values – will not correlate positively with control growth rates. For example, in an agricultural setting, N addition can promote plant growth under sufficient water supply (drought control), while it can exacerbate impacts of drought and thus reduce resistance (Wang et al., 2020). I suggest you either remove the second part of the sentence, or emphasize that it cannot be generalized.
<u>Response:</u> *We agree with the comment by the author that our study does not allow to conclude that highly productive grasslands are more drought resistant than low productivity grasslands. We do show, however, that the grass species and cultivars that we investigated are more drought resistant in the phenological stage of highest productivity than in the other phenological stages where productivity is much lower (Fig. 3a). To clarify this, we re-wrote this statement in the abstract and in the discussion and deleted figure 5 as suggested by the referee.*

Line 30 – Maybe the emphasis on Europe only is not needed in this paragraph. What about climate projections and ecosystem services of temperate grasslands elsewhere?
<u>Response:</u> *We agree and therefore deleted the entire first paragraph.*

Line 65, 89, 90, ... – Suggestion to replace "resilience" by "recovery", see above.
<u>Response:</u> *Resilience was replaced by "recovery" here and throughout the manuscript.*

Line 97 – Actually there were different cultivars of four grass species in total.
<u>Response:</u> *We corrected this and now talk about four species of which two were grown in two cultivars.*

Line 166 – Were temperature sums calculated based on treatment-specific temperature measurements, as referred to in Table 2 and Line 130? So in other words, Tsum was slightly higher for the drought treatments than the controls? Please add this information.
<u>Response:</u> *Temperature sums were calculated based on treatment-specific temperature measurements. Thus, Tsum was slightly higher for drought treatments than for controls.*

Line 188 – Does PPT(ctr) include the few +20 mm watering events?
<u>Response:</u> *PPT(ctr) includes the +20 mm watering events.*

Line 188 – Please also quantify and compare S per unit change in soil moisture stress (Is) – see general comments.
<u>Response:</u> *We decided to delete sensitivity from figure 9 (independent of whether calculated per mm precipitation reduction or per Is). The reason is, that it is related to another time span (annual) as well as to another basis of comparison (mm precipitation or Is) than all the other drought responses we present (individual harvest, absolute and relative loss of biomass). Due to the annual time span, it is an unfair comparison of the treatments spring, summer and autumn drought, because autumn drought has no "chance" for a compensation during recovery. In addition, changing time span and basis of comparison might lead to confusion and this new sensitivity detracts attention from the main message of the paper.*

Line 192 – You explain here the statistical analyses carried out. However, to improve reproducibility, I highly recommend you to (i) upload the data in the supplement/provide a link to the data (if allowed to share open-access), and (ii) provide a simple R-script with the code for the main analyses.
<u>Response:</u> *As explained above, we now provide these data. Since we describe the statistical analysis in detail in the manuscript, we prefer not to upload the R codes directly (which is also not required according to the journal policy).*

Line 194 – The word "regression" suggests that curves were fitted, while in fact only differences among levels in factors were assessed (i.e. ANOVA). While regression and ANOVA are statistically equivalent, I propose to replace "regression" by "models".
<u>Response:</u> *We replaced "regression" by "models".*

Line 198 – Plot was used as a random factor to take into account that the very same control plots were used for contrasting against different treatment plots in spring, summer and autumn. Should plot also be nested in grass and/or treatment? I did not think this through though, maybe it is redundant. Please comment.
<u>Response:</u> *The data matrix was coded so that each repeatedly measured plot was assigned an individual identifier. Under this condition, the lme() function in R correctly calculates the respective variance component given the structure of the fixed effects "grass" and "treatment". It is neither needed nor appropriate to nest the plot variance within "grass" and/or "treatment".*

Line 206 – Did R2 refer to marginal or conditional R2? If it does not apply here, please explain. Otherwise please provide both.
<u>Response:</u> *The marginal and conditional R2 are now provided in all summary tables of the mixed-effects analyses.*

Line 212 – Unclear. You refer here to one-way ANOVA, after which two factors (_ two-way ANOVA) are mentioned. Please resolve.
<u>Response:</u> *This has been clarified (it was a two-way ANOVA), and we apologize for the typo.*

Line 217 – Please mention and cite all R-packages used, e.g. for calculating and analyzing mixed-effects models,
<u>Response:</u> *Done.*

Line 290 – Did you average first and then perform one-way ANOVA? See also my comment on line 212. Please clarify.
<u>Response:</u> *The ANOVA was performed on un-averaged data. This is now clarified in the new table A2 in the supplement.*

Line 302 – "Drought (severity)" was defined here as precipitation reduction. Please check and report this also when expressing drought as a soil moisture index (Is). See general comments.
<u>Response:</u> *As explained above, we decided to delete annual sensitivity from figure 9 altogether.*

Line 305 – The statistical significance of the results (e.g. F- and P-values with df) is not given, here but also for other figures. If you think adding such details, even * symbols, would make figures confusing, then provide tables with statistics in a supplement and refer to those, mentioning on the significance in the Results section.
<u>Response:</u> *We agree and did add more details on statistics in tables in the supplement. More explanations are given above in the response to the general remark of R1 above.*

Line 308 – Suggestion to replace "resilience" by "resistance".
<u>Response:</u> *We guess it should read: replace "resilience" by "recovery". We changed throughout the manuscript.*

Line 320 – Not sure if you now have enough BNPP data to here and elsewhere claim that all changes in NPP will be equal to changes in ANPP. Perhaps it is safer to consistently refer to ANPP. As you mentioned in the section on root biomass (which I nevertheless recommend you to leave in the manuscript!), only the 0-14 cm layer was sampled. Maybe below more root biomass was produced during/after drought. Or would you suggest that this would in any case be negligible in magnitude compared to ANPP? Please comment.
<u>Response:</u> *We follow the suggestion of the referee and replaced NPP with ANPP throughout the entire manuscript.*

Line 322 – See my comment on the Abstract about the positive correlation resistance_ control plot growth.
<u>Response:</u> *This refers to the phonological stage (see chapter 4.2) of the highest growth rate which we now clarify in the text (and deleted figure 5). See more detailed response above (response to comment in line 25).*

Line 327 – Please replace "climatic" by "meteorological" or "environmental". Climate rather refers to long-term statistics of the weather, not weather and soil moisture differences between two years.
<u>Response:</u> *We replaced "climatic" by "meteorological" as suggested.*

Line 341 – Also here, it would be interesting to report on an integrated soil moisture stress index, besides/instead of median soil water potential. I then would expect Is to be significantly higher for 2015 than 2014.
<u>Response:</u> *In this section we report on soil water content and how it varied and not stress. We would thus like to not discuss the stress indicator here but we added Is to table 2 and discuss it in different parts of the discussion.*

Line 341 – I assume the median was taken because of the non-normal distribution of soil water potential data. However, to what extent is the median informative for any reduction in growth? Or is it rather water potential values below a certain threshold that will affect growth?
<u>Response:</u> *Stress is the product of duration of the stress and the intensity of the stress. Using the median was the best choice for us to combine both components of stress as good as possible in a single value. We decided against using arithmetic mean soil moisture values as it would potentially bias values towards a few extreme values and thus overemphasize soil moisture stress. Compared to the median of soil water potential, the metric of Is has the disadvantage that it is a yes / no response and does not take into consideration the increasing stress severity with soil water potential further decreasing over a the threshold of 0.4 MPa. Presenting both values (median of soil water potential and Is) has now the advantage that both can be seen by the reader. Interestingly, the values of the two variables (table 2) are highly correlated.*

Line 382 – Whether you consider differential soil moisture depletion among seasons as an artefact or not will depend on your point of view on the research questions. On the one hand, slower soil moisture depletion in spring than summer is something realistic that could be expected in many situations. On the other hand, it makes the unravelling of the mechanisms underlying lower drought sensitivity in spring more complicated. Please rephrase the "artefact" part.
<u>Response:</u> *We follow this suggestion by deleting "artefact. The sentence now reads: "An alternative explanation for different immediate drought effects on growth rates throughout the growing season are different experimentally induced drought severities throughout a growing season*"

Line 386 – Replace "herbs" by "forbs". Herbs include both forbs and graminoids. De Boeck et al. (2011) included only forbs in their experiment.
<u>Response:</u> *We replaced "herbs" by "forbs".*

Line 388 – Here, I want to see reference to a formal test of differences in soil moisture stress. See also in the section with general comments. Note: it may be that soil moisture stress was significantly higher in summer than spring, but was still in the same order of magnitude. So this would not necessarily invalidate your suggestion that soil moisture alone could not explain the observations.
<u>Response:</u> *Due to not measuring soil moisture in all the replicates, statistics with significant levels is not possible. However, the metrics for stress severity presented in table 2a and 2b are impressively demonstrating that drought stress in summer was not more severe than in spring. Values for soil water potential median are for 2014 -1.44 MPa and -1.44 MPa for spring and summer respectively while they were for 2015 -0.77 MPa and -0.83 MPs. For Is the values were 33 and 33 for spring and summer in 2014 and 14 and 4 in 2015.*

Line 397 – It seems that nowhere summarized data nor statistics were shown for root biomass per species/cultivar. Please provide such information in a supplement, and briefly refer to it in the Results section as well.
<u>Response:</u> *The summary tables of these analyses are now provided in the supplement (Tab. A1) and we refer to these tables in the text.*

Line 426 – Besides N, also the availability of other nutrients like P and K can increase substantially after drought (see e.g. Van Sundert et al., 2020). These may have played a role as important as N, especially since N was added multiple times a year to minimize N limitation, whereas P, K and Mn were only added at the beginning of the growing seasons. Related to that, we could even speculate that P, K, ... were depleted because of harvests over the year, and perhaps a suboptimal P/K status contributed also to the increased drought sensitivity in summer and autumn. This last part is just a thought, I do not expect you to elaborate on this extensively in the manuscript, but please incorporate briefly the role and release of other nutrients in the text.
<u>Response:</u> *We now discuss the relevance of nutrients in more general terms and added the suggested reference van Sundert et al. 2020.*

Line 453 – Please replace "resilience" by "recovery", see other comments.
<u>Response:</u> *We replaced "resilience" by "recovery" here and throughout the manuscript.*

Line 456 – Do not show statistics in the text of the Discussion section, unless absolutely necessary. Also, when P = n.s., I still prefer to see the actual P-value.
<u>Response:</u> *We deleted the stats.*

Line 484 – Refer here to more formal analyses, showing there was (almost) no soil moisture stress during this first growth period.
<u>Response:</u> *We now refer to figure 2 and table 2 (a&b) where we show this.*

Line 710 – Better write "precipitation" instead of "rainfall". Maybe sometimes precipitation fell as snow or hail?
<u>Response:</u> *We changed "rainfall" to"precipitation".*

Table 2 – It would be interesting to see integrated soil moisture stress added to this table, or instead of median soil water potential.
<u>Response:</u> *We added integrated values for Is.*

Figure 4 – For this and other figures: I am not sure how easy or difficult it would be for a color-blind person to distinguish between the red and green. Consider using another color code.
<u>Response:</u> *We tested the colors with the tool "Color Oracle" to check if they are distinguishable for color-blind people. They are distinguishable for all 3 types of clolor.blindness.*

Figure 4 – I am somewhat surprised to see that the + and - error bars in panel a have the same length, while the Y-axis was transformed. Is it because the transformation of the Y-axis was the same as the Y-variable in the analysis (e.g. ln)? And this was not the case for panel b then? Please explain or correct if necessary.
<u>Response:</u> *Note that this is now figure 5, and the comment also applies to figures 6 and 7. Panel a) and b) have indeed not the same underlying scale. In panel a) the intervals have equal distances on the ln scale (with matches the parametric analyses, as suspected by the reviewer); correspondingly, the length of the error bars is the same in + and - direction. Next, these ln values are expressed in "percent change" (linear transformation from ln values, without changing the scale!) because this is more reader friendly, and it is then reasonable to specify a range of percent values in straight numbers (here e.g. 50, 100, 150, or -25, -50, -75). If now the intervals of these percent scales are evaluated, it turns out that the percent change of the error bars in + and – direction is not equivalent, although the plotted length is. Thus, the interpretation of errors fully matches the asymmetric errors bars, if the data (and the ln scale) would be back-transformed to linear scale. In the panel b) the scale is simply linear and means and standard errors are based on the absolute changes of the data without any transformation. Our approach is common practice, as e.g. can be seen in Figure 2 of "Schneider MK et al. (2014) Gains to species diversity in organically farmed fields are not propagated at the farm level. Nature Communications, 5."*

Figure 4 – Could you make this graph also for soil moisture stress, and then discuss whether change in growth followed change in stress.
<u>Response:</u> *We like this suggestion. In fact in a companion paper (Hahn et al. in prep), where we report the physiological responses of the investigated grass species and cultivars to drought stress in spring, summer and fall we plot the physiological stress response over stress intensity experienced. In the current manuscript we prefer not to do this because we feel that the manuscript is already quite long with 9 figures and that an additional analysis would not really contribute to the overall findings we would like to report.*

Figure 5 – As indicated elsewhere, I am not a huge fan of this graph because correlation does not imply causation. While it is true that in your study, drought sensitivity of growth was highest when control growth was high, we cannot conclude in general that, where/when growth without water limitation is high, also drought resistance will be maximal.
<u>Response:</u> *We agree and deleted figure 5. Nevertheless, we would like to keep the message, that plants were most drought resistant during the most productive phenological stage in the growing season. However, the information that growth rate was much higher in the second regrowth than in the 4th and 6th regrowth (by a factor of 2 to 8 times higher!) can easily be depicted from figure 3. In addition, we now clarify in the text that this does not suggest that productive grasslands are more drought resistant than non-productive grasslands.*

Figure 7 – So did you first average the four plots per species, and then calculated mean plus se by combining the four species and taking n as 4? Or are these mixed model outputs? This also applies to some other figures where multiple species were pooled. Please explain.
<u>Response:</u> *Yes, we first averaged the replicates per species and then took n as 4 representing the different species. The means and SEs are calculated from raw data (as was done in all figures). Doing so, no specific indication is needed. If we would have presented model predictions, we would have indicated this with e.g."predicted values from the model".*

Figure 9 – Am I correctly interpreting that sensitivity did not significantly differ among seasons (no statistics shown)?
<u>Response:</u> *We did delete annual sensitivity from figure 9 (old number). The main reason is that sensitivity during drought stress (figure 6, old number; table 3) should not be mixed up with annual sensitivity. In addition, annual*

sensitivity is not a fair comparison of the treatments because fall drought has no chance to compensate yield losses during recovery (as recovers happens only in spring next year).

Figure 9 – I would like to see the sensitivity expressed per unit soil moisture drought stress, not only per mm of precipitation.
Response: *The same response as just above and as response to R1 comment to line 188.*

TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS Line 15 – Replace ", thus," by "eventually" or alike.
Line 91 – drought-stressed
Line 114 – Please remove "see".
Line 309 – Replace ", thus," by "eventually" or alike.
Line 309 – drought-induced reductions?
Line 445 – "Both could have contributed to increased growth rates (...)"
Line 459 – There is twice "the fact that" in this sentence. Please rewrite.
Line 500 – "lead to"?
Response: *We incorporated the suggested corrections in the text.*

Response to Referee 2:

The article presents the results of a seasonal drought manipulation experiment in Swiss grasses (six species) carried out in the growing seasons of 2014 and 2015. Specifically, results from three different rainfall exclusion strategies are presented: spring, summer, and fall rainfall exclusion subdivided in periods of 10 weeks each, as grass is harvested 6 times per year resulting in 6 growth periods. Nutrients were added to control and experimental plots. Beyond aboveground biomass harvest, root biomass, soil water potential, and meteorological conditions were also measured. The results show relatively minor difference across grass species. In relative terms, drought effects are more pronounced for summer and fall treatments, while aboveground biomass is less affected by drought treatment during spring and root biomass is overall not affected. The study also shows that positive legacy effects can largely compensate for the reduction in aboveground biomass production during dry periods, leading to similar annual total aboveground biomass production between control and treatment scenarios.

The presented topic is interesting as there are not many seasonal drought studies, the experiment and results are clearly explained, and the manuscript is well organized. The fact that grass in treatment plots after the drought treatment outperformed the growth rates of the grasses in the controls for extended periods of time, suggesting a considerable resilience, is definitely an important result. However, while results are interesting, it is difficult to go beyond what has been observed and learn specific mechanisms (e.g., Line 378-380), as not many physiological variables are measured, e.g., the effects of drought on photosynthesis and stomatal conductance are not reported or maybe not observed (even though a mention to a manuscript in preparation is made). Additional physiological observations could have been useful to enter the debate of carbon source vs sink limitations in growth, which is very much active (e.g., Körner 2015). Potential explanation for the physiological mechanisms (e.g., osmoregulation) explaining the higher drought resistance of the investigated grasslands in spring and the capacity to compensate for growth after drought treatments could not be investigated in the article and are only speculated. Considering that any field or numerical experiments comes with limitations, I might be satisfied with these speculations.
Response: *We thank the referee for this overall very positive evaluation. We have assessed ecophysiological variables in four out of the six species/cultivars (conductance, pre-dawn and midday water potential). These data will be presented in a different manuscript that is currently in the final stages of preparation. It was a strategic decision not to include physiological data in the current manuscript but to focus on the reported biomass patterns. We agree, however, that the reported patterns alone only allow to speculate about the mechanisms. These will then be discussed in the second manuscript. Given the wealth of data that we present (biomass data from six harvests from 192 plots from two growing seasons), we did not want to overload this paper and are convinced that the reported patterns are yet interesting and valuable.*

What it is much less satisfying, is that the key question coming from data is left unanswered. Using the data in the article (see Fig. R1), we can clearly see that the ANPP sensitivity to growing season precipitation in the control scenarios is much, much larger than during drought treatments. This is not the first time, I see such type of "mechanistically unexplainable" behavior in field manipulation experiments. Now, the question is what is happening in "nature" that is not happening in the drought treatments? If the authors will add data from similar ecosystems (from literature) – something I would recommend to increase the outreach of the article - to the two observations, they will likely find a considerable sensitivity of grassland ANPP to precipitation for the natural rainfall regime. However, the sensitivity is very different in the treatments, even though at a lower "rainfall amount" sensitivity would be expected to even increase further rather than decrease (e.g., Huxman et al 2004). This result is somehow embedded in Fig. 9 and partially explained/discussed in 4.4 as a positive legacy effect. However, it is never presently as clearly as in Fig. R1 and of course, it leaves a big question mark on the representativeness of the entire study for real conditions. My explanation in such cases, it is typically that rainfall manipulation experiments have scale issues (lateral/ vertical) that leads to such type of behavior. The authors have surely done their best to avoid any artifacts, but it remains the fact that the sensitivity they observe is completely different from the real sensitivity (but of course more years will be needed for a proper conclusion). This poses serious challenges on the extrapolation of the results to the real world. Some of the variability of ANPP can be ascribed to conditions other than precipitation, but it is difficult to find any convincing mechanistic explanation why ANPP sensitivity should be so different, and as this is unlikely what one observes in natural conditions, I am left with more doubts than answers.

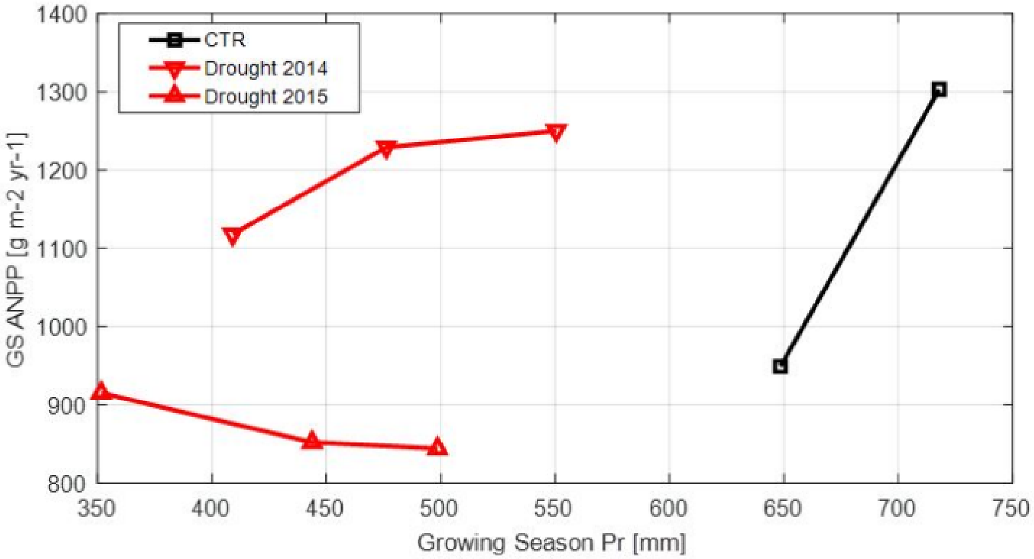

Fig. 1. Fig R1. Growing season ANPP vs growing season precipitation for the two control years (2014, 2015) and the six seasonal drought treatment carried out by the authors.

Response: *The referee raises an important point. We did, however, consider this when planning the experiment. The main reasons for this discrepancy most probably are:*
(i) Between the two years not only precipitation differs, but potentially a lot of other abiotic (e.g. temperature, frost events) and biotic (e.g. diseases, soil microbial activity, age of the sward) differ. This is the reason why experiments to study drought effects need to compare drought stress treatments with a rainfed control under otherwise exactly the same conditions.
(ii) The timing of a lack of precipitation is crucial. This can nicely be demonstrated by the response of the grasses to 100% precipitation exclusion by our treatments. In the first 5 weeks it had NO effect, while in the second 5 weeks it lead to 77-87% ANPP reduction.

- ⇨ *Consequently, we are convinced that such a comparison of whole growing season precipitation differences among years have only very limited validity to explain drought response.*
- ⇨ *We are also convinced that our treatments did not induce important artefacts. The shelters were open on all four sides and on top to guarantee good airflow. Gutters guiding the water away from the plots and not harvested plot borders of 75cm width can guarantee, that lateral water flow did not affect the studied centre of the plots (as do the soil water potential measurements).*

We can help to explain the reason why the response to the whole growth precipitation difference looks so big in the figure of the reviewer. Firstly, during the 10 weeks of the spring treatment in 2015 precipitation was exceptionally high +130 mm higher than in 2014 (Table 1). In contrast, the summer and fall periods 2015 were exceptionally dry with -195 mm less precipitation than in 2014. This had a huge effect on growth as it was in a crucial time period and because the soil water deficits lasted very long (Figure 2). There are now two effects that make the annual comparison so impressively responsive: First, the difference between the +130 mm and the -195 mm looks like a very small difference in growing season precipitation and second, the effect on plant growth was huge because the soil water deficit lasted so long (about 20 weeks), what is much longer than the second 5 weeks of our drought treatments.

Minor Comments
Line 66-77. There have been a number of publication from a drought experiment in a grassland in a similar environment near Innsbruck (e.g., Fuchslueger et al 2014; 2016, etc.), which can be relevant for this article.
Response: *We now include these references.*

Line 50. See also Paschalis et al 2020 for a recent analysis of model performance compared to rainfall manipulation experiments.
Response: *We now include this reference.*

Line 83, 140-150 181-182. I know that it is very common to refer to grassland ANPP to the sum of harvested biomass throughout the year or the growing season. However, strictly speaking ANPP should be computed based

on the continuous (flux) productivity allocated aboveground, i.e.., including also any turnover of biomass that might occur between two harvests and also the change in biomass below the 7cm cut height. I think for grassland in Switzerland the difference might not be very significant but if the drought lead to some grass wilting and litter production, there could be some difference. Overall, I think it would be good to clearly mention that what is referred to as ANPP is not the "flux ANPP" but an estimated based on harvested biomass.
<u>Response:</u> *Thank you for this advice. We now define the reported ANPP values as "standing above-ground biomass".*

Line 131. Evapotranspiration is not a variable which is directly observed. How did you get the estimate? Which equation/method has been used to derive evapotranspiration?
<u>Response:</u> *We now include a reference in the text to clearly indicate the origin of these data.*

Line 134-135. How many sensors were installed? How they were distributed? Could you be a bit more precise?
<u>Response:</u> *We installed 32 sensors that were randomly distributed among the plots. We now clarify this in the text.*

Line 136-137. While from a practical point of view, I agree with the authors, theoretically if transpiration among species differ also the soil water potential will differ especially in prolonged dry periods.
<u>Response:</u> *We agree. Nevertheless, in a previous study we assessed soil moisture decline at the same site in monocultures of the same species assessed here and found no differences. We therefore feel that the transpiration is comparable across plots with different species. We also compared the soil water potential values obtained from 32 plots in this study and found no species-specific effects suggesting mostly identical transpiration rates.*

Line 227. Each different plant species or sometime even different individual of the same species will have a different "wilting point". I know that -1.5 MPa is (wrongly) a textbook reference number, but I would strongly suggest avoiding to indicate a "single" wilting point value.
<u>Response:</u> *This comment is correct. Please be aware, however, that we use the permanent wilting point to assess from where onwards a treatment is experiencing critically low levels of soil moisture. While using a single threshold for all species/cultivars might add some uncertainty for across species comparisons, we would like to emphasize that our main focus is on the across season comparison of drought effects. A slight under or over estimation of the permanent wilting point would thus merely introduce a systematic effort that should not influence the overall outcome of our analysis.*

Figure 4, 5 and 6. Maybe, all this information can be combined in a single Figure, especially Fig. 4 and 6.
<u>Response:</u> *We actually had larger figures with more panels in a previous version of the manuscript. In the end we decided against this as the figures as they are right now already contain quite a lot of data (already 6 and 12 panels). We are afraid that expanding the figures further would make them more difficult to comprehend. Figure 5 was deleted to be more concise. In addition, we do not see how figures 4 and 6 could be combined, because figure 4 gives all harvest (but averages the six grasses) while figure 6 gives all six grasses but only one single harvest.*

Line 296-301. Please use (or not use) consistently the minus for a reduction in biomass. Now sometime is positive and sometime is negative.
<u>Response:</u> *We followed this suggestion and now consistently use the minus symbol for negative changes.*

Line 416-417. See also De Boeck et al 2018, who studied a not too dissimilar ecosystem even though at higher elevation.
<u>Response:</u> *We included De Boeck et al 2018 in the text.*

Figure 1. I think this figure can be clearly improved adding a temporal axis with the proper dates and spacing between the harvests. Now, it is very conceptual and there is no reason as this is not a proposal but an experiment, which has been already carried out.
<u>Response:</u> As the time span between the harvests was always five weeks the spacing in the figure is actually the proper temporal spacing during the experiment. We feel that a time axis and dates would not add substantial information as this is given in figure 2.

Timing of drought in the growing season and strong legacy effects determine the annual productivity of temperate grasses in a changing climate

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Abstract

The frequency of extreme weather events, such as droughts, is assumed to increase and lead~~ing~~ to alterations of ecosystem productivity and thus the terrestrial carbon cycle. Although grasslands typically show reduced productivity in response to drought, the~~ir~~ effects of drought on grassland ~~hav~~productivity have~~e~~ been shown to vary strongly~~quite dramatically~~. Here we tested in a two-year field experiment, if the resistance and the ~~resilience~~ recovery of grasses towards drought varies throughout a growing season and if the timing of drought ~~, thus,~~ influences drought-induced reductions in annual ~~ANPP~~ aboveground net primary production (ANPP) ~~(NPP)~~ of grasses. For the experiment we grew six temperate and perennial C3 grass ~~(~~species and cultivars~~)~~ in a field as pure stands~~monocultures~~. The grasses were cut six times during the growing season and subject to 10-week drought treatments that occurred either in the spring, the summer or the fall. Averaged across all grasses~~species~~, drought-induced losses of productivity in spring were smaller (-20% ~~andto~~to -51% ~~for the two years~~) than in summer and fall (-77% to -87%). This suggests a higher resistance to drought in spring when plants ~~grow~~are in their reproductive stage and their productivity ~~of the grasses~~ is the highest~~ and plants are in their reproductive stage~~. After the release of drought, we found no prolonged suppression of growth. In contrast, post-drought growth rates of formerly drought-stressed swards outperformed the growth rates of the control swards. ~~In 2014, thise overcompensation after drought release was similar in all seasons, but differed in 2015.~~ The strong overcompensation of growth after drought release resulted in relatively small overall drought-induced losses ~~of~~ in annual ANPP ~~(aboveground NPP)~~ that ranged ~~between~~ from -4% to -14% and were not affected by the timing of the drought event.

In summary, o~~O~~ur results show that (i) the resistance of growth rates in grasses to drought varies across the season and is increased during the reproductive phenological stage when growth rates are highest~~positively correlated with growth rates in the controlthe most productive phenological stage of the investigated grasses~~, (ii) that positive legacy effects of drought indicate a high recovery potential ~~resilience~~ of temperate grasses to drought, and (iii) that the high ~~resilience~~ recovery can compensate immediate drought effects on total annual biomass production to a significant~~large~~ extent.

1. Introduction

~~Temperate permanent grasslands cover 38% of the agricultural area of Europe and deliver essential ecosystem services (Pilgrim et al., 2010; Suttie et al., 2005). These services include the production of fodder for livestock and the dairy industry (Voigtländer and Boeker, 1987), the maintenance of biodiversity (Lachat et al., 2010), and the sequestration of substantial amounts of carbon (Schulze et al., 2009). Climate projections forecast significant rainfall reductions in summer for central Europe (CH2018, 2018; Fischer et al., 2015). Such drought periods will influence physiological processes of ecosystems and consequently affect the ecosystem services that are delivered from permanent European grasslands (Reichstein et al., 2013).~~

Numerous studies have attempted to quantify the effects of drought on grassland ecosystems in the past decade. In general, these studies have confirmed that drought-induced water limitation typically leads to a reduction of net primary productivity (NPP) (Fuchslueger et al., 2014, 2016; Gherardi and Sala, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2011). Importantly, however, these studies have also shown that the response of ecosystems to experimental drought can vary quite dramatically (Gherardi and Sala, 2019; Gilgen and Buchmann, 2009; Grant et al., 2014; Hoover et al., 2014; Wilcox et al., 2017). Among others, the drought response of grasslands has been shown to depend on the severity of the experienced drought (Vicca et al., 2012; Wilcox et al., 2017), and important secondary factors such as the type of grassland affected (Byrne et al., 2013; Gherardi and Sala, 2019; Sala et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2017), the intensity of land use (Vogel et al., 2012; Walter et al., 2012), the plant functional composition (Gherardi and Sala, 2015; Hofer et al., 2016, 2017a; Mackie et al., 2018), or the biodiversity of an ecosystem (Haughey et al., 2018; Isbell et al., 2015; Kahmen et al., 2005; Wagg et al., 2017). These secondary factors that affect the responses of terrestrial ecosystems to drought are just beginning to be understood (Reichstein et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2011). Defining their impact on the drought response of terrestrial ecosystems is yet essential for quantitative predictions of drought effects on the carbon cycle and for the ultimate inclusion of drought responses of terrestrial ecosystems in coupled land surface models (Paschalis et al., 2020; Schiermeier, 2010; Smith et al., 2014).

Grassland ecosystems often show a pronounced seasonality, where plants undergo different phenological, physiological, morphological or ontogenetic stages throughout a year (Gibson, 2009; Voigtländer and Boeker, 1987). Temperate European grasslands for example, are highly productive early in the growing season during reproductive growth, while they show much lower growth rates during vegetative stages in summer and fall (Menzi et al., 1991; Voisin, 1988). Several studies have addressed how the seasonal timing of drought affects aboveground ~~NPP~~ net primary productivity (ANPP) of North American C4 grasslands (Nippert et al., 2006; Petrie et al., 2018). It has been suggested that moisture availability during stalk production of the dominant C4 grass species in mid-summer is particularly important for maintaining the annual productivity of these grasslands (Denton et al., 2017; La Pierre et al., 2011). For C3 dominated temperate grasslands, this would imply that spring, when grasses flower and have the highest growth rates, is

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Formatiert: Englisch (Vereinigte Staaten) the time when the productivity should be most susceptible to drought and that productivity should be less prone to drought-induced losses in the summer and fall. Empirical evidence how the seasonal timing of a drought event affects the productivity of temperate C3 dominated grasslands is, however, missing.

The impact of drought on the annual ANPP of ecosystems depends on the immediate effects of drought on productivity (determined by the drought resistance of the ecosystem), but also on potential legacy effects that occur after drought release (determined by the drought ~~resilience~~ recovery of the ecosystem) (Sala et al., 2012; Seastedt and Knapp, 1993). In particular~~,~~ legacy effects of drought are a critical yet rarely explored component that can strongly affect the impact of drought on the annual ANPP of an ecosystem (Finn et al., 2018; Ingrisch and Bahn, 2018; Petrie et al., 2018; Sala et al., 2012). Previously it was believed that the drought history (e.g. previous year annual precipitation deficit) of an ecosystem is crucial for the annual ANPP and that the magnitude of the drought history negatively influences current ANPP (Mackie et al., 2018; Reichmann et al., 2013; Sala et al., 2012; Yahdjian and Sala, 2006). In contrast, there is now increasing evidence that drought stressed plants or ecosystems can respond to drought release also with an overcompensation of their physiological activity or growth (Griffin-Nolan et al., 2018; Hofer et al., 2017a; Shen et al., 2016). Following an experimental drought, tropical and temperate tree seedlings have, for example, exhibited higher net photosynthesis rates than seedlings that had not experienced a drought event (Hagedorn et al., 2016; O'Brien et al., 2017). In grasslands, ~~(~~Hofer et al.~~,~~ (2016) recently have shown~~ed~~ that formerly drought-stressed swards had a higher productivity in the post-drought period than non-stressed control swards. Other studies have shown ~~and~~ that the species richness of a grassland contributes to this effect (Kreyling et al., 2017; Wagg et al., 2017). Even across growing seasons it has been suggested that the previous growing season precipitation patterns can have positive legacy effects on the current year productivity of ecosystems (Shen et al., 2016). As legacy effects can either worsen or diminish immediate drought effects on annual ANPP, their assessment is essential to determine if the sensitivity of annual ANPP to the timing of drought is driven by the resistance or the ~~resilience~~ recovery of the system (Petrie et al., 2018; Shen et al., 2016). This requires, however, a detailed analysis of not only annual ANPP, but the assessment of biomass increase (i.e. productivity) during and after the release of a drought event.

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In the work that we present here, we experimentally assessed if the drought response of the annual ANPP (i.d. the productivity of standing above-ground biomass) of six different grass species and cultivars ~~es~~ that are common in temperate C3 grasslands depends on the timing of the drought event in the growing season. To do so, we determined the drought resistance and ~~resilience~~ recovery for these grasses in different times of the growing season. Specifically, we tested in our study,

i) if the timing of a drought event within the growing season (e.g. spring, summer, fall) has an effect on the immediate aboveground productivity reduction – i.e. the resistance of an ecosystem,

ii) if the timing of a drought event within the growing season affects the ~~resilience~~ recovery of an ecosystem, and

iii) how the combination of resistance and ~~resilience~~ recovery in different times of the growing season impacts the annual ~~aboveground productivity~~ANPP of drought-stressed~~s~~ C3 grasses.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research site

The experiment was performed in the years 2014 and 2015 near Zurich, Switzerland (47°26’N, 8°31’E, altitude: 490 m a.s.l., mean annual temperature: 9.4°C, mean annual precipitation: 1031 mm) on an eutric cambisol soil. For the experiment, we established ~~six ~~four perennial C3 grass species, two of them in two cultivars, ~~in monoculture that~~all of which are commonly used in agricultural practice in August 2013 on 96 plots (3 × 5 m). The grasses~~plants~~ were sown as pure stands on a highly productive field that yields typically around 12 t grass dry matter per year and hectare (i.e. 1200 g m^{-2}). The establishment followed the basic procedures of sowing permanent highly productive grasslands, where before sowing, the existing vegetation at the site (which was a winter wheat) was plowed. ~~Establishment of t~~The grasses were established in the growing season before the experiment started following~~ed~~ best practice ~~and ~~which guaranteed full establishment of the swards (including vernalisation during winter) and full productivity in the following year. The six grasses were *Lolium perenne* L. early flowering (LPe; cultivar ‘Artesia’), *Lolium perenne* L. late flowering (LPl; cultivar ‘Elgon’), *Dactylis glomerata* L. early flowering (DGe; cultivar ‘Barexcel’), *Dactylis glomerata* L. late flowering (DGl; cultivar ‘Beluga’), *Lolium multiflorum* Lam. var *italicum* Beck (LM; cultivar ‘Midas’), and *Poa pratensis* L. (PP; cultivar ‘Lato’). Phosphorous, potassium and manganese were applied following national Swiss fertilization recommendations for intensely managed grasslands at the beginning of each growing season (39 kg P ha^{-1}, 228 kg K ha^{-1}, 35 kg Mg ha^{-1}). In addition, all plots received the same amount of mineral N fertilizer as ammonium-nitrate (280 kg N ha^{-1}, divided into six applications per year). The solid N fertilizer was applied at the beginning of the growing season (80 kg N ha^{-1}) and after each of the first five cuts (40 kg N ha^{-1} each time).

2.2 Experimental design

Each of the six grass species (different species and cultivars) was subject to four treatments: one rain-fed control and three seasonal drought treatments (spring, summer, fall) (see Fig. 1). We used a randomized complete block design with four blocks representing the four replicates. Each block contained all the 24 plots (six species times four treatments) fully randomized. A drought treatment lasted for ten weeks. Drought was simulated using rainout shelters that excluded rainfall completely on the treatment plots. The rainout shelters were tunnel-shaped and consisted of steel frames (3 × 5.5 m, height: 140 cm) that were covered with transparent and UV radiation transmissible greenhouse foil (Lumisol clear, 200 my, Hortuna AG, Winikon, Switzerland). To allow air circulation, shelters were open on both opposing short ends and had ventilation openings of 35 cm height over the entire length at the top and the bottom at both long sides. Gutters were installed to prevent the water from flowing onto adjacent plots, and a 0.75 m boarder zone at each plot was not considered for measurements to prevent a possible effect of lateral water flow in the soil. These shelters and plot design had previously been successfully used in other grassland-drought experiments (Hofer et al., 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Rain-fed controls were subject to the natural precipitation regime. However, when soil water potential (Ψ_{Soil}) sank below -0.5 MPa due to naturally dry conditions, control plots were additionally watered with 20 mm of water (300 l per plot). In summer 2014 the irrigation was delayed by approximately one week due to organizational difficulties, leading to a further decrease in Ψ_{Soil} until irrigation could start. Watering happened once on June 16th and 17th 2014 and three times in 2015 (7.7., 14.7., 11.8.).

2.3 Environmental measurements

Relative humidity and air temperature were measured hourly at the field site using VP-3 humidity, temperature and vapor pressure sensors (Decagon Devices, Inc., Pullman, WA, USA). Measurements were conducted in control and treatment plots under the rainout shelters (n=2). Information on precipitation and evapotranspiration was provided by the national meteorological service stations (MeteoSchweiz) that were in close proximity of our research site (average of the two surrounding meteorological stations Zurich Affoltern in 1.4 km distance and Zurich Kloten in 4.5 km distance). Ψ_{Soil} was measured in 10 cm depth on an hourly basis using 32 MPS-2 dielectric water potential sensors (Decagon Devices, Inc., Pullman, WA, USA). The 32 soil water potential sensors were evenly distributed over the field and treatments. Daily means of all measurements were calculated per treatment, but across grasses since no grass-specific alterations in Ψ_{Soil} were expected (Hoekstra et al., 2014) or measured (n=8).

In addition to soil water potential, we determined the stress intensity (I_S) as a metric to compare plant responses to reduced water availability (Vicca et al., 2012). It reflects the actual treatment experienced by plants. I_s was calculated as in ~~(~~Granier et al.~~,~~ (2007):

$$I_S = \mathrm{sum}(\max[0, (TH-REW_t)/TH]). \qquad \text{Eq. (1)}$$

Where TH is the threshold (i.e. TH = 0.4; ~~(~~Granier et al.~~,~~ (2007)) and REW_t is the relative extractable soil water on day t. REW is calculated as follows (Jiao et al., 2019):

$$REW = (\Psi_{Soil} – \Psi_{Soil\ wp}) / (\Psi_{Soil\ fc} - \Psi_{Soil\ wp}), \qquad \text{Eg (2)}$$

with $\Psi_{Soil\ wp}$ being the soil water potential at field capacity (i.e. -0.03 MPa; ~~(~~Granier et al.~~,~~ (2007)) and $\Psi_{Soil\ fc}$ being the soil water potential at wilting point (-1.5 MPa).

2.4 Harvests

Aboveground biomass was harvested six times per year in five-week intervals in 2014 and 2015, resulting in six growth periods per year (see Fig. 1). Aboveground biomass was also harvested once in spring 2016. Such a high frequency of harvests is typical for highly productive European grasslands used for fodder production. For the purpose of our study this high-resolution biomass sampling allows the analyses of the immediate drought effects and the impacts of drought that occur after the release of drought on productivity. The harvests were synchronized with the drought treatments and occurred five and ten weeks after the installation of the shelters on a respective treatment. For the harvest, aboveground biomass was cut at 7 cm height above the ground and harvested from a central strip (5 × 1.5 m) of the plot (5 × 3 m) using an experimental plot harvester (Hege 212, Wintersteiger AG, Ried/I., Austria). The fresh weight of the total harvest of a plot was determined with an integrated balance directly on the plot harvester. Dry biomass production was determined by assessing dry weight – fresh weight ratios of the harvested biomass. For this a biomass subsample was collected for each plot and the fresh and dry weight (dried at 60°C for 48 h) were determined. After the harvest of the aboveground biomass in the central strip of a plot, the remaining standing biomass in a plot was mowed 7 cm above the ground and removed.

2.5 Roots

Belowground biomass of four grasses (DGe, DGl, LPe and LPl) was harvested six times per year. For each treatment samples were collected ~~,~~ at the end of ~~each~~ a drought ~~treatmentperiod~~ treatment and six to eight weeks after drought release ~~in 2014,~~ from the respective treatment and control plots. Samples were collected using a manual soil auger with a diameter of 7 cm. For each plot samples of the upper 14 cm soil were taken from two different spots (one sample directly from a tussock and one from in between tussocks) and pooled as one sample per plot. All samples were washed using a sieve with a mesh size of 0.5 cm × 0.5 cm and weighed after drying (at 60°C for 72 h).

2.6 Determining drought impacts on productivity

In order to allow the comparison of grassland productivity in the different treatments across the two years we standardized the productivity that occurred in between two harvest periods (i.e. during five weeks) for growth related temperature effects and calculated temperature-weighted growth rates for each of the six grasses (DMYTsum, see ~~(~~Menzi et al.~~,~~ (1991)). For this purpose, we determined temperature sums of daily mean air temperature (as measured in the treatment and control plots) above a baseline temperature of 5°C (Tsum) for each growth period (i.e. 5 weeks prior to harvest). Dry matter yield (DMY) of a given harvest was then divided by the temperature sum of the corresponding time period to obtain temperature-weighted growth rates (henceforth referred to simple as growth rate):

$$\text{DMYTsum} = \text{DMY}(\text{g m}^{-2})/\text{Tsum}(°\text{C}). \qquad \text{Eq. (3)}$$

To determine the absolute change of growth (ACG) of a drought treatment on aboveground growth rate we calculated the difference between temperature-weighted growth rates in a drought treatment (drt) and the corresponding control (ctr):

$$ACG = DMYTsum(drt)-DMYTsum(ctr). \quad \text{Eq. (4)}$$

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To determine the relative change of growth (RCG) due to drought, we calculated percentage change of temperature-weighted growth rates:

$$RCG = 100\times(DMYTsum(drt)/DMYTsum(ctr)-1). \quad \text{Eq. (5)}$$

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Annual ANPP as an average of the different grasses was determined by adding up the dry matter yields of the six harvests of a growing season. These data were not temperature-corrected dry matter yield (DMY).

~~We further calculated the sensitivity (S) of annual ANPP to the different drought treatments to quantify the response relative to the amount of precipitation change, as suggested by previous studies (Huxman et al., 2004; Knapp et al., 2017; Wilcox et al., 2017):~~

~~S = (DMY(ctr)-DMY(drt))/(PPT(ctr)-PPT(drt)) Eq. (6)~~

~~with PPT being the amount of precipitation in the treatment (drt) and control (ctr).~~

2.7 Data analysis

Relative and absolute changes in DMYTsum due to drought, the season of drought, and the tested grasses were analyzed using linear mixed-effects ~~regression~~ models (Pinheiro and Bates, 2000). Temperature-weighted growth rate (DMYTsum) was regressed on the fixed variables season (factor of three levels: spring, summer, fall), drought (factor of two levels: control, drought treatment) and grass (factor of six levels: LPe, LPl, DGe, DGl, LM, PP), including all interactions. To account for repeated measurements of the control plots over time (as the control for every seasonal drought treatment was the same), plot was specified as a random factor, thereby accounting for potential correlation of DMYTsum over time. DMYTsum was natural log-transformed prior to analysis to improve homogeneity and normal distribution of residual variance. This transformation also implies that the regressions provide the inference to relative changes in DMYTsum, namely RCG. A temporal compound symmetry correlation structure was initially imposed on the residuals, yet, it turned out that the estimated correlation parameter was very small. A likelihood ratio test indicated its non-significance (p>0.5) and it was finally omitted. However, inspection of residuals revealed clear differences in their variance among seasons and control and drought plots, and the residual variance parameter was defined as Var(e_{jk}) = $\sigma^2\delta_{jk}{}^2$, with δ being a ratio to represent $j \times k$ variances, one for each of three seasons j under control and drought conditions k (Pinheiro and Bates, 2000). The marginal and conditional R^2 of ~~explained variance of fixed effects~~the model was ~~computed~~ calculated following ~~(~~Nakagawa and Schielzeth~~,~~ (2013). This model was applied to DMYTsum at each second growth period under drought and the second post-drought growth period in 2014 and 2015. Finally, absolute changes in DMYTsum are displayed in figures to improve the interpretation of the data.

Root dry weight was analyzed in a similar way, i.e. it was natural log-transformed prior to analyses and the same explanatory factors were applied in a mixed model, except that the factor grass had only four levels (only LPe, LPl, DGe and DGl measured). Here, estimation of a single residual variance parameter e_i was sufficient to fulfill the model assumptions. This model was applied to root dry weight harvested in 2014 at the end of ~~each~~ each drought treatment and ~~period after~~ six to eight weeks after drought-release~~ in 2014~~. Absolute changes in root dry weight are displayed in figures without further tests.

Annual ANPP was analyzed by two~~one~~-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The first factor season-treatment consisted of the four levels control, spring drought, summer drought, and fall drought; t~~. T~~he second factor grass consisted of six levels, representing the six grasses. This ANOVA was performed for each of the years 2014 and 2015.

All statistical analyses were done using the statistical software R, version 3.5.1 (R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria, 2018). Mixed-effects models were fit using the package *nlme*, version 3.1-137, (Pinheiro and Bates, 2000), and g~~G~~raphics were implemented with the package *ggplot2*, version 2.1.0 (Wickham, 2016).

3. Results

3.1 Precipitation, evapotranspiration and soil water potential

Over the entire growing season, the year 2015 was exceptionally dry, while 2014 showed normal ~~climatic~~ weather conditions for the experimental site. The difference between rainfall (717.9~~634~~ and ~~568~~ 648.5 mm for 2014 and 2015, respectively; see Tab. 1) and evapotranspiration (356 and 447 mm for 2014 and 2015, respectively; shown in Fig. 1), i.e. the ecosystem water balance, was 361.9 ~~278~~ mm in 2014 and only 201.5~~121~~ mm in 2015 for the unsheltered control plots. The shelter periods reduced the total annual precipitation in the different treatments between -17.9 % and -37.0 % and the precipitation of the growing season (duration of the experiment, approx. March – November) by between -23.1 % and -45.8 % (see Table 1).

In 2014 Ψ_{Soil} was severely reduced in the drought treatments and reached values around the permanent wilting point (-1.5 MPa) for the entire second half of the sheltered periods in all treatments (spring, summer, fall) (Fig. 2b-e, Table 2). Due to low rainfall in June 2014, Ψ_{Soil} dropped not only in the sheltered summer drought treatment, but also in the control and the fall drought treatment (that was not yet sheltered). Ψ_{Soil} recovered in the treatment plots after each sheltered period and reached Ψ_{Soil} values comparable to the ones in the control plots. Because of the lack of rain in June 2014, the full rewetting of the spring drought treatment occurred only in the second post-drought growth period after the spring drought shelter period, while after the summer drought treatment rewetting occurred already in the first post-drought growth period.

In 2015, drought treatments reduced Ψ_{Soil} in all seasons (Fig. 2g-k). However, an intense rain event caused some surface runoff in the field on May 1st 2015, which partly interrupted the spring drought treatment. Still, for the second growth period of the spring drought treatment of 2015 the median of Ψ_{Soil} was at -0.77 MPa, a value comparable to that of the second growth period of the summer drought treatment (-0.83 MPa) (Table 2). Also Is values demonstrate that water stress severity in weeks six to 10 of the spring treatment (Is=14) reached levels at least as severe as during the corresponding weeks of the summer drought treatment (Is=4; Table 2). In 2015 Ψ_{Soil} reached lower values during the shelter period in the fall treatment than during the shelter period in the spring and summer treatments. Due to a lack of rain in 2015, Ψ_{Soil} and Is values recovered only partly after the end of the shelter period in the spring and summer drought treatments and remained significantly below that of the control plots for both post-drought growth periods (Table 2). Watering of the control plots during natural dry conditions lead to quick increases in Ψ_{Soil} to values close to saturation (=0 MPa).

Daily mean air temperature under the rainout shelters was 0.7°C and 0.6°C higher in 2014 and 2015, respectively (Table 2)~~between 2.9°C lower and 3.5°C higher than in the control~~.

3.2 Varying growth rates throughout the growing season

The temperature-weighted growth rates of the investigated six grass species and cultivars~~es~~ in the control plots showed a very strong~~clear~~ seasonal pattern (Fig. 3a). In both years, it was highest during the second growth period in spring and sharply declined to values that were two- to eight-fold smaller in summer and fall. In summer and autumn 2015 ~~Except for the second growth period~~ growth rates of the grasses were clearly lower ~~in 2015~~ than in 2014. Root biomass increased towards summer and slightly decreased after summer in 2014 (Fig. 3b, Table A~~S~~1;~~,~~ s~~S~~eason $p<0.001$).

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3.3 Seasonality of drought resistance

The growth rates of the six grass species and cultivars~~es~~ were barely affected by the exclusion of rain during the first five weeks of sheltering (Fig. 4). However, during the second sheltered growth period (drought weeks six to ten), the drought treatments strongly reduced temperature-weighted growth rates in all seasons, in both years, and in relative and absolute terms (Figs. 4,~~ 5~~ and 5~~6~~, Table 3). In both years, averaged over all six grasses, the relative drought-induced changes in growth rates compared to the controls were smallest in spring (2014: -51%, 2015: -20%) and clearly larger in summer (2014: -81%, 2015: -85%) and fall (2014: -77%, 2015: - 84%) (Fig.4a, Table 3; season x treatment $p<0.001$). As such, the drought resistance of temperate grasses throughout the growing season was largest in spring when their growth rates in the control were especially high (Fig. 3a;~~,~~ second regrowth)~~and positively correlated with their productivity (Fig. 5)~~. This pattern was generally observed for all six grass species and cultivars ~~es~~ tested (Fig. 5~~6~~a) even though there was a significant season × treatment × ~~grass species/cultivar~~grass interaction (Table 3). In 2014 this interaction mainly derived from DGl and PP showing an exceptionally large drought induced growth reduction in fall. In 2015 it was explained by an especially low drought response of DGl in spring and strong responses of DGl in summer and LPe and PP in fall (Fig. ~~6~~5a).

In 2014 the absolute drought-induced reduction of growth across all six grass species and cultivars ~~grasses~~ was largest in spring (-0.5 g m^{-2} °C^{-1}), followed by summer (-0.4 g m^{-2} °C^{-1}) and was lowest in the fall (-0.1 g m^{-2} °C^{-1}) (Fig. 4b). Likewise, in 2015 the absolute reduction of the growth rate in the drought treated plots was largest across the six grass species and cultivars ~~grasses~~ in spring (-0.2 g m^{-2} °C^{-1}), but slightly lower in summer (-0.1 g m^{-2} °C^{-1}) and fall (-0.1 g m^{-2} °C^{-1}).

The average standing root biomass across four of the grasses was not significantly affected by any of the drought treatments of 2014 (Fig. 6~~7;~~, Table A~~S~~1;~~,~~ treatment $p=0.572$, season x treatment $p=0.825$).

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3.4 Seasonality of post-drought ~~resilience~~recovery

When compared to corresponding controls, relative ~~(~~and absolute~~)~~ changes in temperature-weighted growth rates after drought release showed positive treatment effects in 2014 (Fig. 7~~8~~, Table 4). Across all six grass species and cultivars~~grasses~~, the relative increases in post-drought growth rates were 41% after the spring drought treatment, 31% after the summer drought treatment and 53% after the fall drought treatment, and did not differ among the seasons (Table 4; season × treatment p=0.180~~n.s.~~). In 2015, the relative increases in post-drought growth rates were 5% after the spring drought treatment, 15% after the summer drought treatment and 52% after the fall drought treatment, and did differ among the seasons (Table 4; season × treatment $p<0.001$). Increased relative and absolute growth rates were also observed in the first harvest in 2015 and 2016 for all the plots that had received a drought treatment in 2014 and 2015, respectively (Fig. 4). In this first harvest of 2015, relative growth rate increases were 110% after the spring, 36% after the summer and 53% after the fall drought treatments of 2014. In the first harvest of 2016, relative growth rate increases were 10% after the spring, 31% after the summer and 51% after the fall drought treatments of 2015.

When compared across the different grass species and cultivars~~es~~, the only grass that tended to have a weak~~er~~ ~~resilience~~ recovery (lower or no increase of growth rate during post-drought) was LM (Fig. 7~~8~~); but there was no significant difference among the grass species and cultivars~~es~~ (Table 4; treatment x grass p=0.517~~n.s.~~). In 2015 again LM showed the weakest ~~resilience~~ recovery of all the grasses after all drought treatments, the effect being significant (Table 4; treatment x grass $p<0.001$).

Root dry weight of the treatment plants generally showed no alterations in growth compared to the control ~~in either of the post-drought periods~~ (Fig. 6~~7~~,~~;~~ Table A~~S~~1; treatment p=0.553).

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3.5 Effects of seasonal drought on annual biomass production

The cumulative annual aboveground biomass production (~~i.e.~~ annual ANPP) of the controls averaged across all six grass species and cultivars~~es~~ differed strongly between the two years (Fig. 8~~9~~a), with 2014 (1303 g m^{-2} a^{-1}) being 37% more productive than 2015 (949 g m^{-2} a^{-1}). The strong reduction in biomass production in 2015 was ~~most~~ probably related to the naturally occurring lack of rain in summer and fall (Fig 2). But because the control was irrigated when strong stress occurred this cannot explain the whole extent. This is evident from the two spring growth periods being equally productive in the unsheltered plots (control, summer and fall drought) in 2015 and in 2014 (Fig. 8~~9a~~). The annual ANPP of the treatments was significantly different from control in both years (Table A~~S~~2; season-treatment p<=0.001~~\$\$\$~~ for 2014 and p=0.007~~\$\$\$~~ for 2015). In 2014, the largest drought effect on the annual ANPP across all grasses resulted from the summer treatment, which reduced productivity significantly by -14% (185 g m^{-2}) compared to the control (Fig 8). Spring and fall drought treatments in 2014 resulted in a non-significant -4% (-53 g m^{-2}) and -6% (-74 g m^{-2}) reduction of annual ANPP across all grass species and cultivars~~es~~, respectively. In 2015, drought treatments in the summer and fall significantly caused a -10% and -11% reduction of annual ANPP across all grasses (-97 g m^{-2} and -105 g m^{-2}), respectively, while the spring drought treatment reduced annual ANPP across all grasses by only -4% (-34 g m^{-2}), which was not significant (Fig. 8~~9a~~).

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~~The sensitivity of annual ANPP to drought differed between the treatments in both years of the experiment. In 2014, the annual ANPP was most sensitive to drought in the summer, while annual ANPP was less sensitive to rainfall reduction in the spring but also fall (Fig. 9b). In 2015, the sensitivity increased within the growing season so that annual ANPP was least sensitive to spring drought and most sensitive to fall drought (Fig. 9b).~~

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4. Discussion

In our study we experimentally assessed if the drought resistance and ~~resilience~~ recovery of six different temperate perennial C3 grass species and cultivars~~es~~ varies throughout the growing season and if the timing of a drought event~~, thus,~~ has an influence on drought induced reductions in annual ANPP of these grasses. All six temperate grass ~~es~~species and cultivars showed a clear seasonal pattern of drought resistance in both years. The drought-induced reduction of growth was smaller under spring drought (-20% and -51% for the two years when~~,~~ averaged ~~over~~across the six grasses) than under summer and fall droughts (between -77% and -87%). Thus, the investigated grasslands were more resistant to drought in the spring when productivity of temperate grasses is generally the highest and they were least resistant in summer and fall, when their productivity is much lower. Moreover, the examined grasslands did not show any negative legacy effects such as a prolonged suppression of growth after rewetting following the end of the drought treatments. In contrast, after the release of drought, temperature-weighted growth rates of the grasses in the treatment plots surprisingly outperformed the growth rates of the grasses in the controls for extended periods of time. This suggests a high ~~resilience~~ recovery potential of all six grasses ~~-species and cultivars es~~ that we investigated. As a consequence of the high ~~resilience~~recovery, the seasonal drought treatments resulted in only moderate drought-induced reductions in annual ~~aboveground~~ ANPP between -4% to -14% - despite the strong immediate effects of drought - and no clear effects of the timing of drought on annual ANPP were detected. With this our study shows (i) that the resistance of growth rates in different grasses to drought varies throughout the growing season and is increased during the reproductive phenological stage when~~positively correlated with~~ growth rates in the control were highest, (ii) that positive legacy effects of drought on plant productivity indicate a high ~~resilience~~ recovery potential of temperate C3 grasses throughout the entire growing season, and (iii) that the high ~~resilience~~ recovery can compensate to a significant extent~~strongly~~ ~~compensate~~ for immediate seasonal drought effects on productivity, resulting in total annual ANPP that is only marginally reduced in the drought treated plots compared to the controls.

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4.1 Differences in the meteorological conditions between the two years

While the first experimental year (2014) was characterized by more or less normal ~~climatic~~meteorological and thus growth conditions, the summer of 2015 was exceptionally dry in all of central Europe (Dietrich et al., 2018; Orth et al., 2016). These conditions led to a reduction of the annual ANPP of the control plots by -37% in 2015 compared to 2014 (Fig. 8~~9a~~). The lack of ~~rain~~ precipitation in the second half of the 2015 growing season, i.e. between the third harvest in June and the last harvest in October (Fig. 2), was of importance for our experiment, especially for the response of the treatments during the recovery phase after the removal of the shelters. In this period, the amount of rainfall was only 153 mm in 2015 while it was 405 mm in 2014. Thus, positive legacy effects directly following drought treatments were much smaller or absent following the spring and summer treatments in 2015 due to a missing rewetting (Figs. 2, 4 and 7~~8~~). Yet, strong positive legacy effects in response to the 2015 treatments were observed in the first harvest of 2016 when the experimental site was fully rehydrated. This highlights the general occurrence of positive drought legacy effects in the investigated grasslands once the soil moisture has recovered from the drought treatments and indicates some ~~long lasting~~long-lasting mechanisms behind this overcompensation, as full rewetting occurred already half a year before the harvest in 2016.

Intense rains between the first and second harvest of the year 2015 caused some water flow into the treatments. This resulted in a partial reduction of drought stress in the treatment plots (Fig. 2h). Yet, both the median of the soil water potential and the Is were~~as~~ still clearly reduced in the treatment plots compared to the control and, consequently, we observed a reduction of growth rates in the second spring harvest in 2015 despite this event (Figs. 4, 5~~6~~). We therefore conclude that the partial reduction in drought stress did weaken the immediate drought response during the growth period concerned, but that this does not question the overall drought responses of the grasslands that we report here. This is especially evident from the drought stress during weeks ~~6~~six to ten being of comparable severity (Table 2).

4.2 Grasses were most resistant to drought in spring, the most productive phenological stage~~part of the growing season~~

Previous studies have indicated that the timing of drought is relevant for the reduction of annual ANPP of ecosystems (Bates et al., 2006; Denton et al., 2017; La Pierre et al., 2011; Nippert et al., 2006). It has been argued that the variable drought sensitivity of ecosystems throughout the growing season could be linked to different phenological stages of dominant plant species, where plants in reproductive stages and periods of high growth are particularly susceptible to drought (Bates et al., 2006; Craine et al., 2012; Dietrich and Smith, 2016; Heitschmidt and Vermeire, 2006; O'Toole, 1982). We found, however, that relative reductions in temperature-weighted growth rates were lowest in the spring treatments 2014 and 2015 as compared to the summer and fall treatments. The highest resistance of plant growth rates to drought occurred, thus, when the plants showed the highest growth rates in the control (Fig. 3) and when the investigated grasses were in their reproductive stages~~ (Fig. 5)~~. With this, our findings are in contrast to previous studies that have suggested temperate grasslands and crops to be particularly susceptible to drought early in the growing season when their growth rates are the highest and plants are in reproductive stages (Bates et al., 2006; Craine et al., 2012; Dietrich and Smith, 2016; Heitschmidt and Vermeire, 2006; Jongen et al., 2011; O'Toole, 1982; Robertson et al., 2009). Our study does support, however, findings of ~~(~~El Hafid et al.~~,~~ (1998) and~~;~~ Simane et al.~~,~~ (1993), who detected that spring droughts have the least impact on annual productivity of wheat. Importantly, most of the previous studies that have reported the effects of drought timing on grasslands or other ecosystems report effects on annual ANPP but have not differentiated between immediate effects and ~~long-term~~ legacy effects of drought events as we did in our study. As drought impacts on annual ANPP combine immediate and post drought legacy effects, it is difficult to directly compare the results we present

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Formatiert: Englisch (Vereinigte Staaten) here on variably seasonal drought resistance of temperate C3 grasses to previous work reporting the influence of drought timing on annual ANPP.

One possibility for the higher drought resistance of grasses during spring is that grasses invest more resources towards the stress resistance of their tissue in this part of the growing season when they have not only the largest growth rates, but also reproduce. Such a resource allocation strategy could allow drought stressed grasses to remain physiologically active in this critical part of the growing season. Osmotic adjustment is one mechanism that reduces the effects of drought on the physiological performance of the plant (Sanders and Arndt, 2012). This is achieved through the active accumulation of organic and inorganic solutes within the plant cell. Thus, osmotic potential increases and the plant can withstand more negative water potentials in the cell while maintaining its hydraulic integrity (Sánchez et al., 1998). ~~(~~Santamaria et al.~~,~~ (1990) found that early- and late flowering cultivars of *Sorghum bicolor* L. developed a different pattern of osmotic adjustment (continuous increase of osmotic adjustment vs. first increase and later decrease of osmotic adjustment), hinting that drought tolerance may vary ~~between~~ among seasons. In a companion paper we report physiological data for the six grasses from the same experiment. We show that at a given soil water potential, foliar water potentials were less negative and stomatal conductance was higher in plants drought stressed in the spring compared to plants drought stressed in the summer or fall (Hahn et al. in prep). This suggests indeed that for a given drought level, grasses remain physiologically more active in the spring than in the summer or fall. The exact physiological mechanisms that explain the higher drought resistance of the investigated grasslands in the spring and their higher drought susceptibility in the summer and fall remain yet unknown and require further detailed ecophysiological and biochemical assessments.

An alternative explanation for different immediate drought effects on growth rates throughout the growing season are ~~experimental artefacts causing~~ different experimentally induced drought severities throughout a growing season. This could be by either residual moisture from winter dampening the experimentally induced drought more in the spring than in the summer or fall. Alternatively, higher evaporative demand of the atmosphere in the summer compared to the spring or fall could have enhanced experimentally induced drought effects in the summer. ~~(~~De Boeck et al.~~,~~ (2011) explain for example the higher drought susceptibility of growth in three ~~forbs~~ herbs in the summer compared to spring by a higher evaporative demand of the atmosphere in the summer compared to spring or fall. In our study, however, soil water potential data as well as drought stress intensity Is indicate that ten weeks of drought treatment ~~reduced plant available water in the soil to~~resulted in mostly equal water depletion and stress levels in spring, summer and fall (Fig. 2, Table 2). In addition, we found only small differences in median VPD between the spring, summer and fall drought treatment period (Fig. 2). This suggests that stronger drought stress in summer and fall compared to spring cannot explain alone the different resistances of plant growth to drought throughout the growing season. Along these lines, ~~(~~Denton et al.~~,~~ (2017), who performed a similar experiment as we report here but in a C4 grassland in North America, also did not

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find that these seasonal differences in the experimentally induced drought severity are the reason for variable drought effects on the growth rates throughout the growing season.

4.3 No increased root biomass in the top soil layer

In the entire experiment, root biomass did not generally increase under drought (Table A1~~1S~~), ~~but it~~and only increased ~~only~~ in one ~~out~~ of the ~~four~~ investigated grasses (DGe) in one (summer) of the three treatments~~response to drought in summer as well as in the post-summer drought period~~. This confirms the findings of ~~(~~Byrne et al.~~,~~ (2013),~~;~~ Denton et al.~~,~~ (2017) and ~~;~~ Gill et al.~~,~~ (2002), who did not find any changes in belowground biomass in response to drought. In a similar setting, ~~(~~Gilgen and Buchmann~~,~~ (2009) found no changes in belowground biomass to simulated summer drought in three different temperate grassland sites (from lowland to alpine grassland). While ~~(~~Denton et al.~~,~~ (2017) ascribe the missing drought response in belowground biomass to modest precipitation alterations in their experiment, we can exclude this ~~a~~ factor in our experiment since the soil water potential under drought was significantly reduced compared to the soil water potential in the controls in every season. Contrary to ~~that~~our finding, several studies have shown that drought can maintain or increase root growth while inhibiting shoot growth (Davies and Zhang, 1991; Hofer et al., 2017a; Saab et al., 1990). In an experiment by ~~(~~Jupp and Newman~~,~~ (1987), *L. perenne* increased lateral root growth under low Ψ_{Soil} indicating an increased investment in root growth under water limited conditions. In our experiment the *L. perenne* grasses did not show a trend towards increased investment in root growth, neither during drought nor after drought-release, contradicting the results of ~~(~~Jupp and Newman~~,~~ (1987). Such differences in the response of root biomass in different studies as described above may derive from the soil layer that was investigated. ~~(~~Hofer et al.~~,~~ (2017a) have shown that the response of root growth into ingrowth bags depended on the soil depth: root growth of *L. perenne* decreased in the top soil layer (0-10 cm), but increased in deeper soil layers of 10-30 cm. Thus, the superficial root sampling (0-14 cm) in our experiment might mask increased root growth in deeper soil layers.

4.4 Positive legacy effects of drought periods

Several previous studies have suggested that drought events can lead to negative legacy effects on the productivity of ecosystems (De Boeck et al., 2018; Petrie et al., 2018; Reichmann et al., 2013; Sala et al., 2012). We found, however, that growth rates of previously drought-stressed plots were significantly larger than in the corresponding control plots after rewetting, indicating not only~~positive legacy effects and~~ a high ~~resilience~~ recovery potential of the investigated grasses but even positive legacy effects (Figs. 4 and 7~~8~~). Interestingly, we did not only observe growth rates that were larger in the treatment plots than in the control plots immediately after the drought release, but observed larger growth rates in all treatment plots compared to the control plots even in the first harvests of the following growing season (Fig. 4). This pattern was consistent for both years of the experiment. ~~(~~Bloor and Bardgett~~,~~ (2012) and also ~~(~~Denton et al.~~,~~

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(2017) found that drought events promote soil fertility and nutrient retention following drought release. Likewise, ~~(~~Gordon et al.~~,~~ (2008) found an increase in microbial activity after a rewetting event, possibly leading to a rapid and sudden influx of plant available ~~nitrogen~~ nutrients in the soil (Mackie et al., 2018; Schimel and Bennett, 2004; Van Sundert et al., 2020). ~~(~~Hofer et al.~~,~~ (2017a) also attributed growth increases relative to control plots in post-drought periods to nitrogen availability in the soil and ~~(~~Karlowsky et al.~~,~~ (2018) found evidence that interactions between plants and microbes increase plant nitrogen uptake in grasslands after rewetting events. It could, thus, be that the enhanced productivity in the treatment plots following drought release is the result of increased microbial activity leading to enhanced nitrogen availability and/or changes in resource limitation following drought release as suggested by ~~(~~Seastedt and Knapp~~,~~ (1993) in their Transient Maxima Hypothesis.

We applied nitrogen fertilizer in our experiment to each plot after each harvest, also at the beginning and in the middle of a drought treatment. Since we applied the fertilizer in form of water-soluble pellets, it is possible that precipitation exclusion prevented dissolution and, thus, nitrogen fertilizer pellets could have accumulated in the drought-treated plots during the treatment phase. The rewetting of the soil could have resulted in a massive release of nitrogen fertilizer from these pellets so that plant growth rates in formerly drought-stressed plots were stimulated by the release of this fertilizer and, thus, was larger than those of the control plots. However, ~~(~~Hofer et al.~~,~~ (2017a) observed strongly increased N availability and plant growth rates after drought release not only in plots that received mineral fertilizer during the drought treatment period, but also in plots that did not receive any N fertilizer during drought. We suggest therefore that the release of accumulated fertilizer nitrogen in the treatment plots might explain some, but not all post-treatment growth responses in the formerly drought treated plots in our study.

~~(~~Hagedorn et al.~~,~~ (2016) have shown that rewetting events trigger intrinsic processes that lead to a sudden increase of photosynthesis in young beech trees. Moreover, ~~(~~Arend et al.~~,~~ (2016) found a rapid stimulation of photosynthesis immediately after rewetting that continued until the end of the growing season, partly compensating the loss of photosynthetic activity during drought. ~~(~~Hofer et al.~~,~~ (2017b) found an increased root mass and increased water-soluble carbohydrate reserves in the stubbles of drought stressed *L. perenne* at the end of a drought stress period. Both of which could have contribute to increased growth rates observed in their study once rewetting had occurred. Also, drought-induced shifts in plant phenology could lead to a shift in high productive stages, e.g. leading to peak growth rates not in spring, but in summer (O'Toole and Cruz, 1980). With the data we collected throughout our experiment, we cannot clearly identify the mechanisms behind the strong and consistent post-drought growth increase that extended even into the next growing season. In the end, several biogeochemical and ecophysiological mechanisms might be responsible for the overcompensation of growth following drought release.

4.5 ~~The g~~Grass species and cultivars~~es~~ only slightly differed in drought resistance and recovery

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During the seasonal drought events the six tested grass species and cultivars~~es~~ showed a mostly universal response with only slight and not consistent differences in their growth rate reductions. Post-drought legacy effects differed, however, among the different grasses in the second year ~~(grass x treatment; *p*=n.s. for 2014 and *p*<0.001 for 2015)~~. *D. glomerata* and *P. pratensis* showed a high potential for ~~resilience~~ recovery and overcompensation after drought, while *L. multiflorum* generally showed the lowest ~~resilience~~recovery. ~~(~~Wang et al.~~,~~ (2007) found that plant communities consisting of less productive species were more resistant to drought than plant communities consisting of more productive species. The fact that inter-specific differences in the responses to the drought stress and to the following rewetted post-drought period in our study were smaller than in other studies~~,~~ may be related to the fact that all six tested grass species and cultivars ~~es~~ belong to a relatively narrow functional group of productive fast-growing grasses with high demands for mineral N in the soil. The availability of mineral N in the soil was found to be a key factor for the response during as well as after drought for non-leguminous species (Hofer et al., 2017a, 2017b).

4.6 Small to moderate impact of seasonal drought on annual A~~aboveground net primary production~~NPP

Although the immediate effects of drought on growth rates were severe in all three seasons in our study, the overall effects on total annual ANPP of -4 to -14% were only small to moderate compared to drought effects observed in other studies (Gherardi and Sala, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2011) (Fig. 8~~9a~~). We also did not find any consistent effects of the drought timing on annual ANPP, contrary to other studies (Denton et al., 2017; La Pierre et al., 2011; Nippert et al., 2006; Petrie et al., 2018). This is likely a consequence of the small overall drought effects on annual ANPP in our study. The small drought effects on annual ANPP that we report here are in line with ~~(~~Finn et al.~~,~~ (2018) and can be explained by the high ~~resilience~~ recovery of growth rates in the treatment plots following the drought release. This is in particular evident in the spring treatment, where we observed on the one side the largest absolute reduction in growth in response to drought, but at the same time also the strongest ~~positive legacy effects~~recovery after drought, leading to relatively small total drought effects on annual ~~aboveground~~ ANPP. Because the fall drought treatment period lasted until the end of the vegetation period, the positive post-drought legacy effects for this treatment were not included in the calculation of annual biomass production. Nevertheless, the fall drought treatment in 2014 did also not strongly affect the annual ~~aboveground~~ ANPP. This is because the growth period affected by the fall drought treatment, was the least productive part of the growing season, and, thus contributed only little to the annual productivity.

The overall effect of drought on annual ANPP might also be small compared to other studies because our study was conducted in highly productive grasslands that, according to best practice management, were harvested six times in the growing season. The drought treatments occurred, however, only in two out of these six growth periods throughout the growing season. In addition, the first sheltered growth period generally did not show a reduced growth rate (Fig. 4), ~~because the soil with its water holding capacity acted as a buffer~~as soil water stress in this period was low (Fig. 2, Table

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2). With the absence of negative legacy effects, the impact of the immediate drought effect of one drought stressed growth period on annual NPP was therefore diluted by the five other harvests of the vegetation period (Finn et al., 2018).

The majority of studies that have assessed the impact of drought on grassland productivity have either assessed immediate drought effects, i.e. drought resistance (Bollig and Feller, 2014; Kahmen et al., 2005; Walter et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2007), or have assessed the net effects of drought on annual NPP (Gherardi and Sala, 2019; Wilcox et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2011). Our study highlights that it is important to also quantify immediate and post-drought effects – even in the following growing season – if the causes of drought reduced annual productivity are to be understood.

Effects of drought on annual ~~aboveground~~ ANPP of grasslands have been shown to vary, depending on the severity of the experienced drought (Vicca et al., 2012; Wilcox et al., 2017), ecosystem type (Byrne et al., 2013; Gherardi and Sala, 2019; Sala et al., 2015; Wilcox et al., 2017), the intensity of land use (Vogel et al., 2012; Walter et al., 2012), the plant functional composition (Gherardi and Sala, 2015; Hofer et al., 2016, 2017a; Mackie et al., 2018), or the biodiversity of an ecosystem (Haughey et al., 2018; Isbell et al., 2015; Kahmen et al., 2005; Wagg et al., 2017). ~~In accordance with work in C4 grasslands, o~~Our study shows that the timing of a drought event in the growing season is also crucial for the immediate effects of a drought on grassland productivity. Importantly, however, our study also shows that strong positive legacy effects can occur after rewetting and that these legacy effects are even important in spring of the next year. These effects can partially compensate the strong immediate drought effects and lead to relatively small overall seasonal drought effects on annual ANPP.

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Author contributions:

AK and AL planned,~~ and~~ designed and supervised the research. CH and SEH performed the experiments. CH and MS analyz~~s~~ed the data; CH~~ and~~ wrote the manuscript. AK,~~ and~~ AL and MS co-wrote the manuscript.

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Tables

Table 1: Amount of precipitation fallen in the experiment and associated amount of excluded precipitation ~~rainfall~~ during the sheltered drought periods in the years 2014 and 2015. Growing season precipitation refers to the time period ~~of time~~ between the set-up of the shelters and the last harvest of each year.

		2014		
annual precipitation (mm)	growing season precipitation (mm)	spring	summer	fall
		excluded precipitation (mm)		
937.1	717.9	167.4	308.8	241.7
		excluded precipitation annually (%)		
		17.9	33.0	25.8
		excluded precipitation in growing season (%)		
		23.2	43.0	33.7
		2015		
annual precipitation (mm)	growing season precipitation (mm)	spring	summer	fall
		excluded precipitation (mm)		
801.9	648.5	296.9	204.7	149.9
		excluded precipitation annually (%)		
		37.0	25.5	18.7
		excluded precipitation in growing season (%)		
		45.8	31.6	23.1

Table 2: (a) Median of soil water potential, (b) stress intensity I_S and (c) average air temperature during the two growth periods of the drought treatments and the two post-drought growth periods as well as the corresponding periods of the rain-fed control. Post-drought values of soil water potential, stress intensity I_S and average air temperature are not displayed (n.d.) ~~a.: not available~~as calculating these values for the long winter period between the end of the fall treatment and the spring harvests has little meaning.

a) Growth period	Control			Treatment		
	spring	summer	fall	spring	summer	fall
2014	MPa					
1st drought	-0.03	-0.41	-0.01	-0.09	-0.72	-0.73
2nd drought	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-1.44	-1.44	-1.61
1st post-drought	-0.41	-0.01	-	-1.1	-0.05	-
2nd post-drought	-0.01	-0.01	n.d~~a~~.	-0.01	-0.02	n.d~~a~~.
2015	MPa					
1st drought	-0.01	-0.02	-0.14	-0.08	-0.45	-0.85
2nd drought	-0.01	-0.25	-0.34	-0.77	-0.83	-1.34
1st post-drought	-0.02	-0.14	n.d~~a~~.	-0.57	-0.73	n.d~~a~~.
2nd post-drought	-0.25	-0.34	n.d~~a~~.	-0.7	-0.88	n.d~~a~~.

b) Growth period	Control			Treatment		
	spring	summer	fall	spring	summer	fall
2014						
1st drought	0	8	0	1	13	3
2nd drought	0	0	0	33	33	41
1st post-drought	8	0	n.d~~a~~.	24	9	n.d~~a~~.
2nd post-drought	0	0	n.d~~a~~.	0	0	n.d~~a~~.
2015						
1st drought	0	0	0	0	4	13
2nd drought	0	0	1	14	4	34
1st post-drought	0	0	n.d~~a~~.	0	8	n.d~~a~~.
2nd post-drought	0	1	n.d~~a~~.	14	13	n.d~~a~~.

c) Growth period	Control			Treatment		
	spring	summer	fall	spring	summer	fall
2014	°C					
1st drought	10.3	18.0	16.6	11.0	19.0	17.3
2nd drought	10.9	18.0	15.2	11.5	18.7	15.8
1st post-drought	18.0	16.6	~~7.1~~n.d~~a~~.	18.0	16.6	n.d~~a~~.~~7.1~~

2nd post-drought	18.0	15.2	n.d~~a~~.	18.0	15.2	n.d~~a~~.
2015	°C					
1st drought	7.1	16.2	20.3	7.6	16.9	20.5
2nd drought	13.3	22.7	13.0	14.4	23.7	13.5
1st post-drought	16.2	20.3	n.d~~a~~.	16.2	20.3	n.d~~a~~.
2nd post-drought	22.7	13.0	n.d~~a~~.	22.7	13	n.d~~a~~.

Table 3: Summary of analysis for the effects of season, drought treatment, grass species and cultivars (grass), and their interactions on temperature-weighted growth rates (DMYTsum, natural log-transformed) from the second growth period during drought ~~(weeks six to ten)~~. The inference (*F*- and *p*-values) refers to the fixed effects ~~from~~ of the linear mixed model. df_{num}: degrees of freedom term, df_{den}: degrees of freedom of error.

			2014		2015	
Effect	df_{num}	df_{den}	*F*-value	*p*	*F*-value	*p*
Season (spring, summer, fall)	2	36	1051.1	<0.001	2655.3	<0.001
Treatment (control vs. drought)	1	72	341.9	<0.001	642.9	<0.001
Grass	5	72	9.4	<0.001	14.2	<0.001
Season × Treatment	2	72	25.9	<0.001	366.2	<0.001
Season × Grass	10	36	6.8	<0.001	10.3	<0.001
Treatment × Grass	5	72	2.9	0.018	2.0	0.094
Season × Treatment × Grass	10	72	3.3	0.001	3.4	0.001
Marginal R^2			0.901		0.965	
Conditional R^2			0.917		0.967	

Table 4: Summary of analysis for the effects of season, drought treatment, grass~~,~~ species and cultivars (grass), and their interactions on temperature-weighted growth rates (DMYTsum, natural log-transformed) from the second post-drought growth period ~~(weeks six to ten)~~. See Table 3 for additional explanation.

			2014		2015	
Effect	df_{num}	df_{den}	*F*-value	*p*	*F*-value	*p*
Season (spring, summer, fall)	2	36	783.4	<0.001	1428.6	<0.001
Treatment (control vs. drought)	1	72	63.5	<0.001	25.5	<0.001
Grass	5	72	18.4	<0.001	39.4	<0.001
Season × Treatment	2	72	1.8	0.180	16.6	<0.001
Season × Grass	10	36	15.7	<0.001	9.6	<0.001
Treatment × Grass	5	72	0.9	0.517	6.4	<0.001
Season × Treatment × Grass	10	72	2.2	0.025	0.8	0.621
Marginal R^2			0.810		0.944	
Conditional R^2			0.866		0.946	

Figures

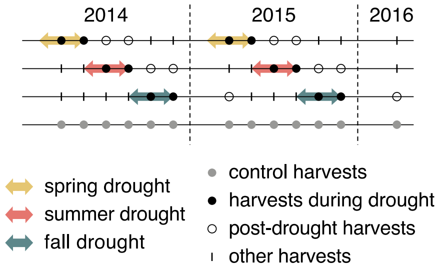


Fig. 1: Experimental design:~~;~~ The experiment lasted for two consecutive years (2014, 2015) with six evenly distributed harvests in both years and one additional harvest in the beginning of 2016. Arrows indicate the duration of each drought treatment (ten weeks). Each treatment was replicated four times ~~with~~ for each of six grass species and cultivars~~es~~.

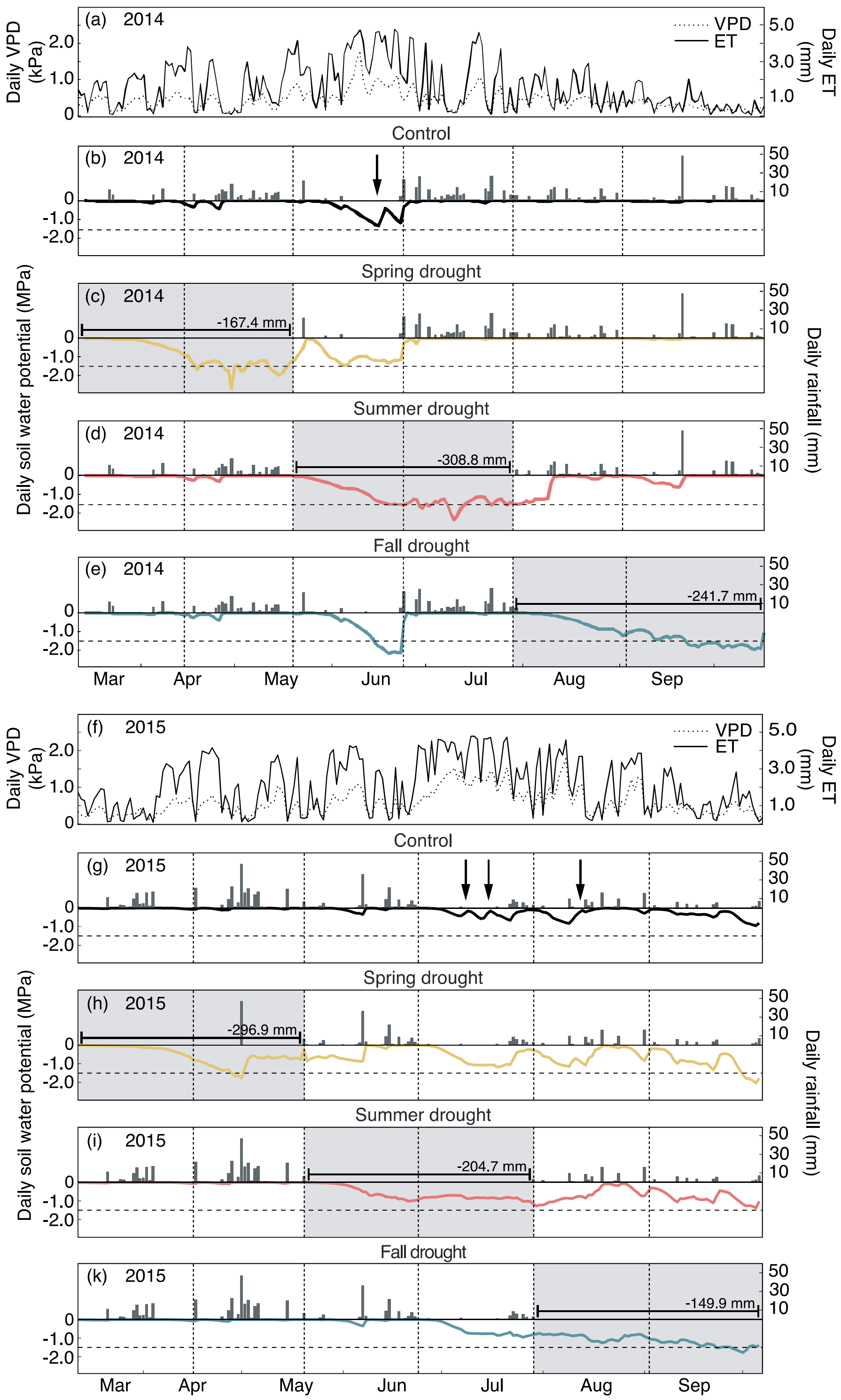

(a) 2014
Daily VPD (kPa)
2.0
1.0
0
VPD
ET
5.0
3.0
1.0
Daily ET (mm)
Control
(b) 2014
Spring drought
(c) 2014
-167.4 mm
Summer drought
(d) 2014
-308.8 mm
Fall drought
(e) 2014
-241.7 mm
Daily soil water potential (MPa)
0
-1.0
-2.0
50
30
10
Daily rainfall (mm)
Mar
Apr
May
Jun
Jul
Aug
Sep
(f) 2015
Daily VPD (kPa)
VPD
ET
Daily ET (mm)
Control
(g) 2015
Spring drought
(h) 2015
-296.9 mm
Summer drought
(i) 2015
-204.7 mm
Fall drought
(k) 2015
-149.9 mm
Daily soil water potential (MPa)
Daily rainfall (mm)
Mar
Apr
May
Jun
Jul
Aug
Sep

Fig. 2: (a, f) Daily evapotranspiration (ET) and vapor pressure deficit (VPD), (b-e, g-k) daily rainfall and soil water potential (Ψ_{Soil}) in 10 cm depth over the growing seasons 2014 (a-e) and 2015 (f-k) for the control and drought treatment (sensors per treatment: n=8). Grey shaded areas represent the experimental drought when rainfall was excluded. Dashed horizontal line shows permanent wilting point (Ψ_{Soil}=-1.5MPa). Dashed vertical lines represent dates of harvest. Arrows indicate watering events (in control plots only).

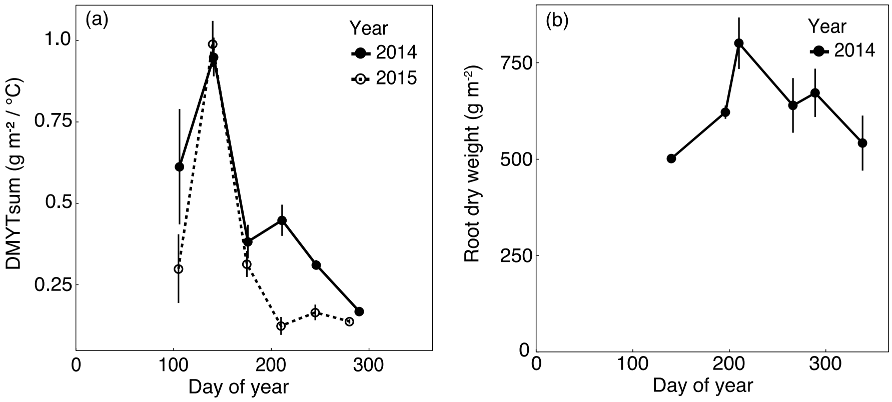


Fig. 3: (a) Temperature-weighted growth rates (DMYTsum) of aboveground biomass of rain-fed control plots in 2014 and 2015. V~~; v~~alues displayed are the means across ~~all~~ the six investigated grass species and cultivars ~~es and four replicates~~ (n=6, ± se). ~~and~~ (b) B~~b~~elowground biomass of rain-fed control plots in 2014. V~~; v~~alues displayed are the means across the four grasses *L. perenne* early (LPe) and late (LPl) flowering and *D. glomerata* early (DGe) and late (DGl) flowering (n=4, ± se).

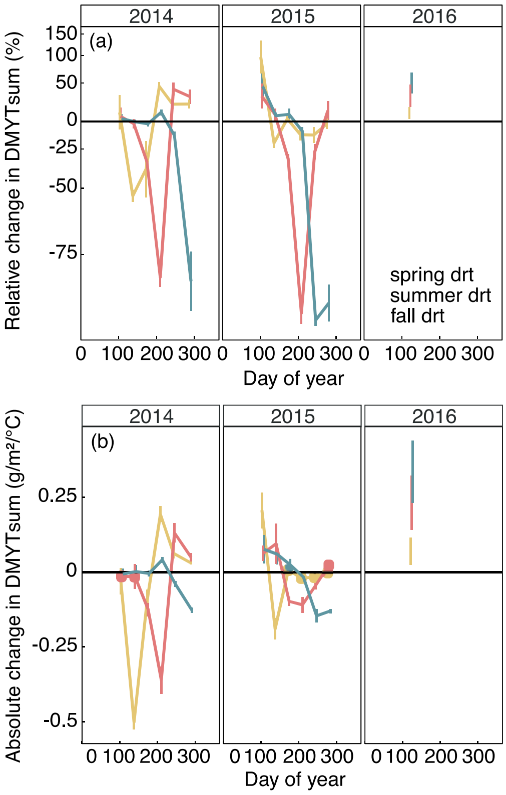
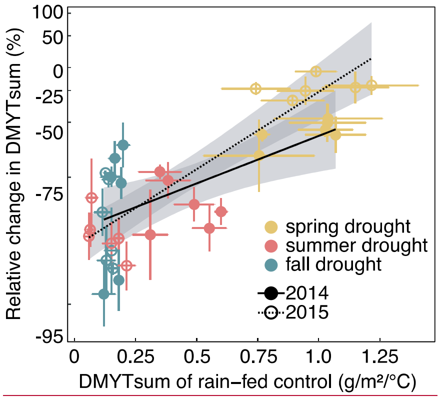


Fig. 4: (a) Relative (RCG) and (b) absolute (ACG) changes in temperature-weighted growth rates (DMYTsum) of the respective drought (drt) treatment compared to the control (ctr) for 2014, 2015 and 2016. Values shown are means ~~± se~~ across all six investigated grass species and cultivars~~es~~ (n=6, ± se)~~each in four replicates~~. Values below the horizontal black line indicate reduced growth compared to the control. Values above the line indicate an increase of growth. RCG=100×(DMYTsum(drt)/DMYTsum(ctr))-1); displayed on log-scale); ACG=DMYTsum(drt)–DMYTsum(ctr).



~~Fig. 5: Relative changes of temperature-weighted growth rate due to drought (RCG; %) as a function of temperature-weighted growth rate (DMYTsum) of the corresponding rain-fed control plots (g/m²/°C). Values are means ± se for all six investigated grasses each in four replicates.~~

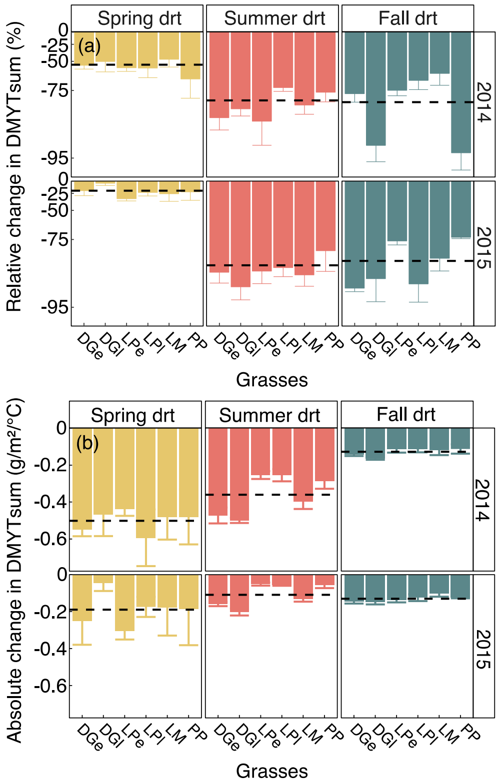


Fig. 5~~6~~: (a) Relative (RCG) and (b) absolute (ACG) changes in temperature-weighted growth rates (DMYTsum) for the second growth period (weeks six to ten) of the respective drought (drt) treatment for 2014 and 2015 for the individual grasses. Values shown are means of four replicates per species and cultivar (n=4, ± se)~~± se~~. Dashed black lines represent the means across all grasses. See Fig. 4 for additional explanation. The corresponding statistical analyses are shown in Table A1 in the Appendix.

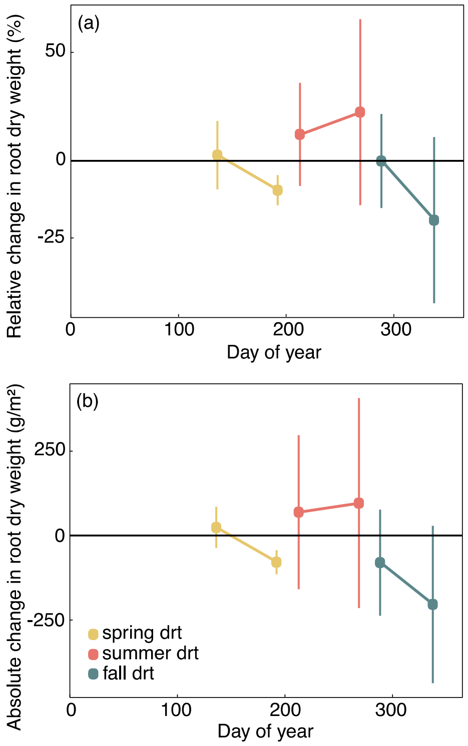


Fig. 6~~7~~: (a) Relative and (b) absolute changes in root dry matter at the end of each drought ~~treatment~~ ~~period~~treatment and after six to eight weeks after drought-release in 2014. Values shown are means ~~± se~~ of four grasses of *L. perenne* (LPe and LPl) and *D. glomerata* (DGe and DGl) each in four replicates (n=4, ± se).

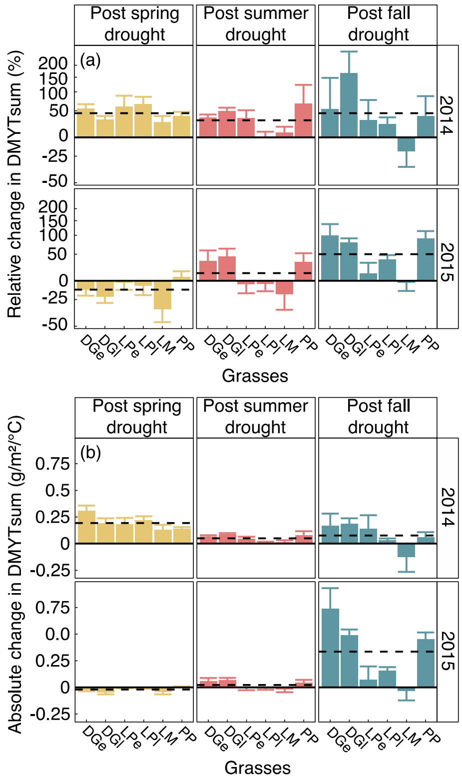


Fig. 7~~8~~: (a) Relative (RCG) and (b) absolute (ACG) changes in temperature-weighted growth rates (DMYTsum) for the second post-drought growth period (weeks six to ten) in 2014 and 2015 after the respective drought (drt) treatment for the individual grasses. Values shown are means of four replicates (n=4, ± se)~~± se~~. Post-drought growth period of the fall drought treatment is the first growth period of the following year. See Fig. 4 for additional explanation. The corresponding statistical analyses are shown in Table A1 in the Appendix.

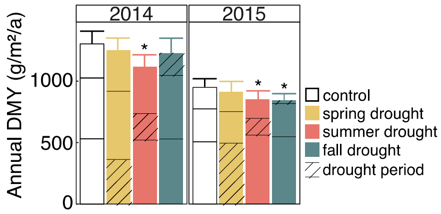


Fig. 8~~9~~: ~~(a)~~ Annual ANPP under rain-fed control and under the three seasonal drought treatments ~~and (b) sensitivity of the three seasonal drought treatments~~ in the years 2014 and 2015. Values shown are means ~~± se~~ across all six investigated grass species and cultivar~~es each in four replicates~~s~~.~~ (n=6, ± se). Bars in (a) are stacked according to growth in spring (bottom part), summer and fall (top part). Significant differences to the control are marked with * (*p*<0.05). The corresponding statistical analyses are shown in Table A2 in the Appendix.