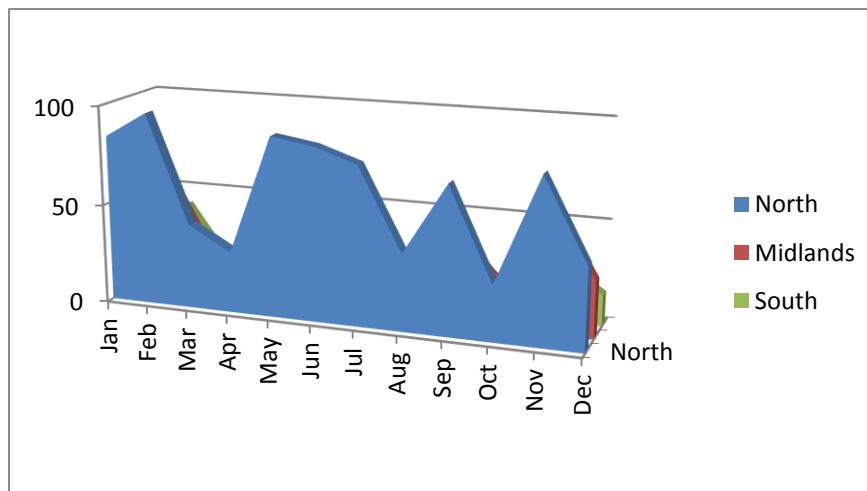# Microsoft Excel 2013: Area Charts

If your worksheet contains data that is arranged in columns or rows then using an area chart may be a good way to display that data. Area charts emphasize the magnitude of change over time, and can be used to draw attention to the total value across a trend. Area charts are good for emphasizing totals. They offer the time-tracking qualities of a line chart but also display relative proportions very well. You can visualize area charts as being line charts with different colors in the areas below the lines.

By displaying the sum of the plotted values, an area chart also shows the relationship of parts to a whole. Here is a worksheet containing average rainfall figures for different regions. So now let's copy & paste the data below into Excel.

	North	Midlands	South
Jan	83.99051	63.92317	32.28511
Feb	96.77387	61.45216	41.45216
Mar	42.42745	22.11609	12.07822
Apr	30.68292	20.8399	18.98015
May	89.9614	52.50021	36.03099
Jun	86.61778	75.07897	39.28048
Jul	79.48647	31.071008	12.5648
Aug	38.60841	20.18422	9.37121
Sep	74.07762	40.67657	32.58123
Oct	28.004939	21.38717	8.02473
Nov	81.98656	64.32691	29.97225
Dec	41.17771	28.339805	15.653858

We can plot that data in an area chart by first of all selecting it. Make sure that you select the column and row headings – these will then appear on the chart itself.

Click **Insert, Charts, Area**, and select a chart type. I selected a 3-D area chart below:
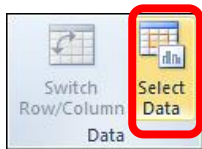
It looks good; however, can you see a potential problem with this area chart? Some of the colored areas in the background are obscured by those in the foreground, so you can't see how the rainfall varies.
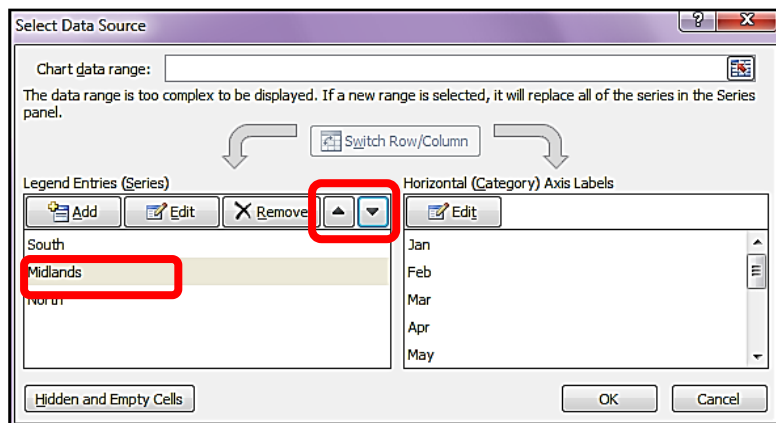
First click on the Chart which will bring up the **Chart Tools**.

The **Chart Tools**, click on the **Design** tab, in the **Data** grouping click on **Select Data**.

The **Select Data Source** dialog box, the **Legend Entries** where you can move the various Entries by clicking on the one you want to move, then click on the Arrow, for either up or down. Pull this to the side of your Chart and watch it move with the dialog box open.

This graph looks better now.