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Autumn - so much more than just leaves!



Fun facts about Autumn

Fall was called “harvest” because of the “harvest moon” that occurs when the full moon is closest to the autumn equinox. Before man-made lighting, this moonlight was essential to a prosperous harvest. - **Until about 1500**, autumn was just called “harvest.”

Weight gain around this time of year may not only be due to comforting fall foods like pumpkin pie and cider. Researchers have found that **lack of vitamin D** reduces fat breakdown and triggers fat storage.

Pumpkins, perhaps the most iconic image of autumn, are grown on six of the seven continents (sorry, Antarctica). Their name comes from the Greek word *pepon*, roughly meaning “**large melon.**”

Evergreen trees such as pines, cedars, and spruces stay green because their leaves (needles) are covered with thick wax and they contain materials that

How do Christmas trees stay green in the coldest, darkest months? Thank the needles. Coniferous needles are compact, watertight, and generally harder for weather and insects to destroy.

The first day of autumn, the autumnal equinox, has 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness. The term **equinox** comes from the Latin words *aequus*, meaning equal and *nox*, meaning night.

In Greek mythology, Autumn began when Persephone was abducted by Hades to be the Queen of the Underworld. In distress Persephone's mother, Demeter (the goddess of the harvest), caused all the crops on Earth to die until her daughter was allowed to return, marking Spring.

No film with "autumn" in its title has ever won an Oscar. *The Virgin Spring* (1960), *Summer of '42* (1971), and *The Lion in Winter* (1968) provide the other seasons one statue apiece.

Since 1997, Autumn has been one of the top 100 names for girls in the United States.

Autumn is good for the economy in foliage-blessed states like New Hampshire and Vermont. "Leaf peeping," the slang term for fall leaf tourism, is reportedly a \$3 billion dollar business in New England, where millions of out-of-state visitors flock to take in the changing colors.

Our bodies love to "fall back." The end of daylight savings time gives us an extra hour of sleep. According to a *New England Journal of Medicine* report, Americans' rate of heart attacks has been known to fall on the Monday following the end of daylight savings time in November, while the rate of both heart attacks *and* car accidents tends to rise on the Monday following the start of DST in Spring.

One of the oldest autumn festivals is **Mexico's *Dia de Muertos*** (November 1st and 2nd), a celebration of departed loved ones and the cycle of life that Mesoamerican cultures may have observed thousands of years before Christmas.

Some places never get to see autumn. Autumn is a fact of life for most of us, but in tropical climes near the Equator, like the Caribbean islands, weather stays beautifully mild all year.

Sources: wpnr.org, justfunfacts.com, rd.com

2021 Best Leaf Peeping Dates

NC: Oct 12-28 (inland) and Oct 19-Nov 4 (coastal)

SC: Oct 19-Nov 4

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