

## What you may not know about Autumn



### Myths and Superstitions

**Catching a falling leaf can bring you good luck.** That is, if you're a superstitious person. There's a popular belief that *"as many falling leaves as can be caught in the hand in autumn, so many happy months will follow."*

**The Greeks gave autumn a great origin story.** According to Greek legend, the season is caused by Persephone's return to the underworld, where she rules as Hades' queen. Her mother, Demeter, the goddess of fertility and harvest, is so upset that she allows the planet's crops to wither—until Persephone's return in the spring.

**Johnny Appleseed was a real guy.** You've probably heard the story of the guy who walked through large swaths of the American Midwest, planting apple trees as he went. But you probably also assumed he was a character out of folklore. In fact, John Chapman was a real person.

**The Cornucopia Has Mythic Origins.** Ancient Greeks associated the cornucopia (literally, "horn of plenty") with Zeus, who broke it from the head of a magical goat that suckled him when he was a baby. Romans, in turn, adapted the story for their own hero: Hercules separated it from the brow of a river god. There's no written record linking one to the pilgrims' first Thanksgiving in America, but the storied vessel has retained its ancient significance on this continent, too.

Sources: [bestlifeonline.com/fall-facts/](https://bestlifeonline.com/fall-facts/), [hgtv.com/lifestyle/holidays/brilliant-fall-facts-and-autumn-curiosities-pictures](https://hgtv.com/lifestyle/holidays/brilliant-fall-facts-and-autumn-curiosities-pictures), [factretriever.com/autumn-facts](https://factretriever.com/autumn-facts)

### People Tidbits

**The "contrast effect" makes women even more attractive in the autumn.** This theory holds that since men see more of women's bodies during the warmer months of the year, it

takes less stimuli to catch their attention once the cold weather causes them to start layering up.

**Those Halloween frights can be good for your heart.** While you might say that a scare "*almost gave me a heart attack*," the opposite may be true. Some medical professionals believe that an innocent scare now and then (say while visiting a haunted house or watching a scary movie) can, in fact, promote heart health.

**Only Americans and Canadians Say "Fall".** Until the 16th century, English speakers referred to the season between summer and winter as "harvest" (in reference to picking, plucking or reaping), a term that evolved to both "autumn" ("the passing of the year") and "fall" (short for "fall of the leaf" and "fall of the year") as people began to move away from farmland.

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## Nature Tidbits

**You can spot a harvest moon.** Appearing sometime in September or October, this harvest moon can appear almost orange (usually when it's closest to the horizon), a bit like a giant pumpkin in the sky—very seasonally appropriate!

**There's a distinct "fall" scent that you can only smell in certain months.** According to meteorologist Matthew Cappucci, the smell is a product of deciduous trees shedding their leaves (in part, at least). "When the leaves fall, they die," he wrote for *The Washington Post*. "As they take their last breath, they 'exhale' all sorts of gases."

**Pumpkins grow on nearly every continent!** No matter where you are in the world, you'll be able to find a pumpkin (unless you plan to visit Antarctica). The top producers of pumpkins include China, India, Ukraine, the United States, Egypt, and Mexico. And, fun fact, the top pumpkin-producing U.S. state is Illinois.

**Tempura-fried maple leaves are a delicacy in Japan.** Autumn brings tons of seasonal treats. But in Japan, you can essentially taste the season itself by nibbling on crispy tempura-fried maple leaves. The delicacy is called *momiji* and it's typically served in Minoh City, Osaka.

**The smell of the first rain of the season has a name.** The smell of the first rain in the fall is so special, in fact, there's a specific word for it. According to Merriam-Webster, petrichor is "a distinctive, earthy, usually pleasant odor that is associated with rainfall especially when following a warm, dry period and that arises from a combination of volatile plant oils and geosmin released from the soil into the air and by ozone carried by downdrafts."

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## Food Tidbits

**There are more than 7,500 varieties of apples in the world.** According to the University of Illinois, there are 7,500 varieties of apples in the world and 2,500 varieties in the United States.

**The U.S. produces 4.27 million gallons of maple syrup each year.** According to numbers from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the United States produces more than five million gallons of maple syrup each year. Vermont leads the pack; the state produced some 2.5 million gallons in 2022.

**Hot Cocoa Could Date Back to 600 B.C.** Archaeological remains found in pottery in what is now Belize suggest that cacao was prepared as a medicinal beverage at *least* as early as 600 B.C. The conquistador Hernán Cortés visited the New World and brought cacao back to Spain in 1512, where it quickly gained popularity as a restorative beverage that could induce euphoria — medically, of course.

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National Pumpkin Day recognizes a favored autumn decoration and food on October 26th. Not only do they make great fall decorations, but the pumpkin also completes a variety of tasty recipes. Join a pumpkin competition or visit any of the many fall festivals featuring the beautiful gourds.

**#NationalPumpkinDay**

Source: [nationaldaycalendar.com/national-pumpkin-day-october-26/](http://nationaldaycalendar.com/national-pumpkin-day-october-26/)

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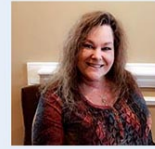
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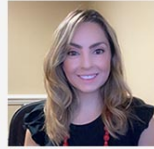
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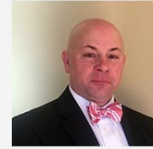
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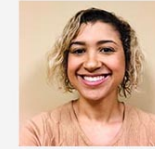
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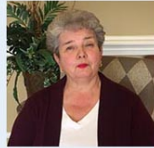
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