

EXTRA!

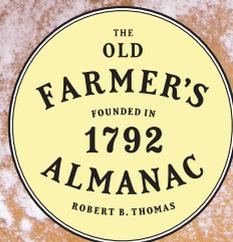
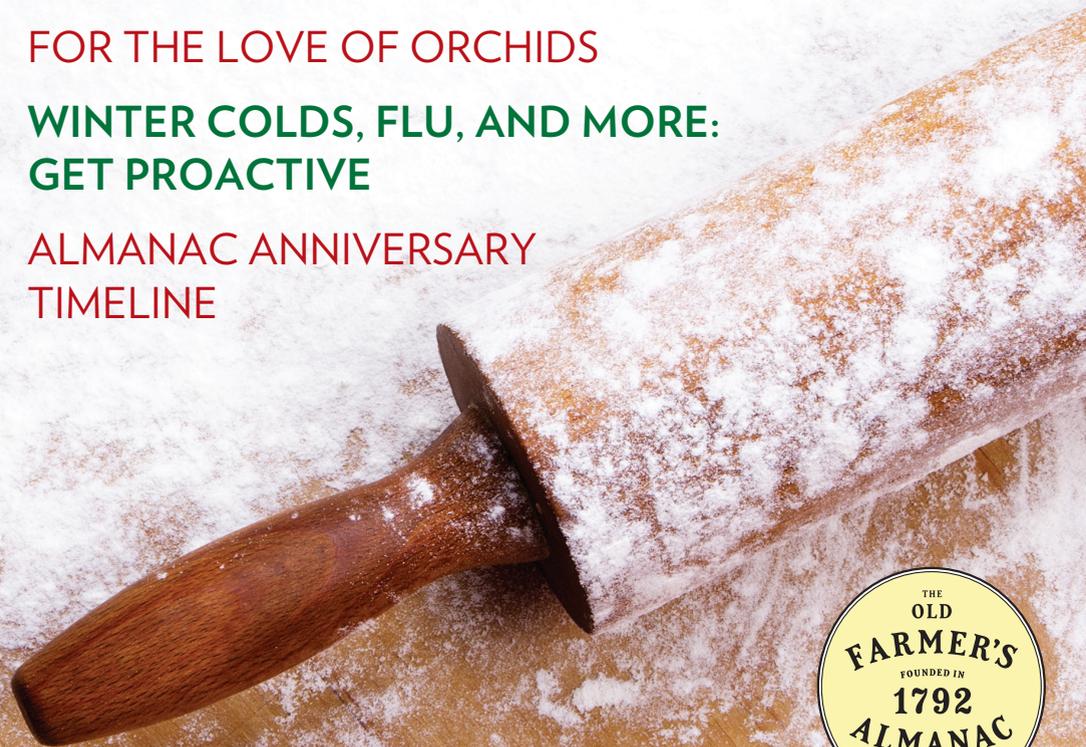
FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

HOMEMADE GIFTS FROM
THE KITCHEN

FOR THE LOVE OF ORCHIDS

WINTER COLDS, FLU, AND MORE:
GET PROACTIVE

ALMANAC ANNIVERSARY
TIMELINE



DECEMBER 2016

FEATURES

FOOD

Homemade Gifts
From the Kitchen

GARDENING

For the Love of
Orchids

LIVING NATURALLY

Winter Colds, Flu,
and More: Get
Proactive

ANNIVERSARY

Almanac Timeline
*More highlights from
The Old Farmer's
Almanac's 225 years of
continuous publication*

DEPARTMENTS

CALENDAR

Moon View, This
Month in History,
Calendar Q&A



ASTROLOGY

Best Days to
Do Things

Gardening by the
Moon's Sign

ASTRONOMY

Sky Map for December

HOT PRODUCTS

Popular Presents!

WEATHER FORECASTS

How We Make Our
Predictions

December U.S.
and Canadian
Weather Forecasts

Weather Update

WIT

Humor Me
*Grins and groans from
the Almanac*

WHAT'S NEXT

See what's coming
up in our January
2017 issue!



THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, AND FOLKLORE



MOON VIEW

December's full Moon, the **Full Cold Moon**, occurs on the 13th, at 7:06 P.M. EST.

Seasonal Note

The December solstice occurs on the 21st at 5:44 A.M. EST. At this time, winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere and summer begins in the Southern Hemisphere.

 TAP FOR MORE MOON PHASES

 TAP FOR MORE ABOUT THE FULL COLD MOON

 TAP FOR MORE ABOUT THE WINTER SOLSTICE

FOLKLORE FUN

Thunder in December presages fine weather.

SAY HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

You never know where life's gonna take you. That's what I love about it.

—Dick Van Dyke, American actor (b. December 13, 1925)



DECEMBER'S ZODIAC SIGNS

Sagittarius: November 23–December 21

Capricorn: December 22–January 19



DECEMBER'S BIRTH FLOWERS:

Holly and Narcissus

- The holly means foresight or domestic happiness in the language of flowers.
- The narcissus can mean egotism or self-love, but also the wish for your beloved to never change.

 TAP FOR MORE ABOUT THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY



DECEMBER 11: HUB OF COMMERCE

On this day in 1816, Indiana was admitted to the Union as the 19th state. The capital was Corydon until 1825, when it switched to Indianapolis. Indiana’s state motto, “crossroads of America,” was adopted in 1937 and refers to the state’s role in the transportation of goods and services because of its accessibility via ports, waterways, railways, airports, and several interstates.

DECEMBER 24: HEAR, YE! HEAR, YE!

On this day in 1906, ships of the U.S. Navy and the United Fruit Company sailing the Atlantic heard the world’s first radio program broadcast.

In the early 1900s, scientist Reginald A. Fessenden was working on a continuous wave theory: He proposed that a sound wave could piggyback with a radio wave and reach a receiver, which then could strip out the radio wave, leaving just the sound wave for listeners to hear. For one experiment, Fessenden set up on Brant Rock in Massachusetts and planned a demonstration using a 420-foot radio tower.

His experiment was a success. The Christmas Eve broadcast began at 9:00 P.M. Eastern Time. Fessenden first explained the itinerary and then played a recording of Handel’s “Ombra mai fu” (Handel’s Largo) from a phonograph. Next, he played “O Holy Night” on his violin and then sang a few bars of Gounod’s “Adore and Be Still.” In conclusion, he read a passage from the Bible and then wished a Merry Christmas to listeners. The broadcast was heard as far as Norfolk, Virginia, and was a welcome change from the dits and dahs of Morse code.

WHICH FOUR STATES BORDER INDIANA? TAP FOR ANSWER

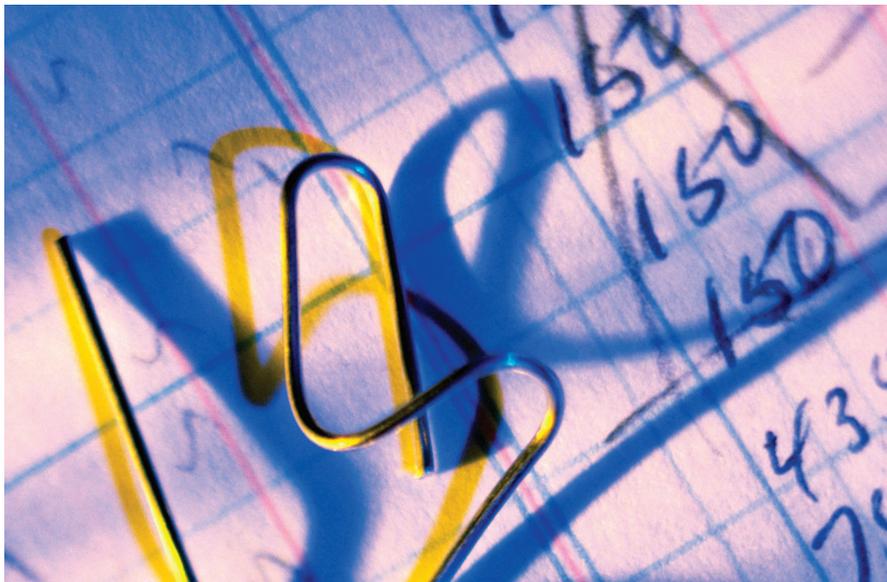


**WHICH FOUR STATES
BORDER INDIANA?**

A: Kentucky, Illinois,
Michigan, and Ohio.



CALENDAR Q&A



How did the word “calendar” originate?

“Calendar” comes from the Old French *calendier*, meaning “list” or “register,” which was derived from the Latin *calendarium*, meaning “account book.” *Calendarium* came from *calendae*, or calends. Calends (also spelled with a “k”) was the first day of the month in the ancient Roman calendar and the date when accounts were due—just like the deadline for many of our monthly bills today.

The early ancient Roman calendar was divided into three sections (calends, nones, ides), based on three Moon phases: new, first quarter, and full. Each month, a priest (or pontiff) would watch the skies for the time of the new Moon (actually, when it showed the first thin crescent). He would then declare the start of the new month, calends. “Calends” got its name from *calare*, “to call” or “to proclaim.”



BEST DAYS TO DO THINGS

These December dates, deemed to be propitious in astrology, are based on the astrological passage of the Moon. However, consider all indicators before making any major decisions. —*Celeste Longacre*

PERSONAL

Begin diet to lose weight: 15, 19, 24
 Begin diet to gain weight: 7, 11
 Cut hair to encourage growth: 6, 7
 Cut hair to discourage growth: 21, 22
 Have dental care: 19, 20
 Quit smoking: 15, 19, 24
 Wean children: 15, 19, 24

AROUND THE HOUSE

Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut: 15, 23–25
 End projects: 28
 Start projects: 30

OUTDOORS

Begin logging: 1–3, 28–30
 Go camping: 26, 27
 Go fishing: 1–13, 29–31
 Set posts or pour concrete: 1–3, 28–30

IN THE GARDEN

Destroy pests and weeds: 8, 9
 Graft or pollinate: 14, 15
 Prune to encourage growth: 8, 9
 Prune to discourage growth: 16–18
 Plant aboveground crops: 6, 7
 Plant belowground crops: 23–25
 Harvest aboveground crops: 10, 11
 Harvest belowground crops: 19, 20

ON THE FARM

Breed animals: 23–25
 Castrate animals: 4, 5, 31
 Cut hay: 8, 9
 Set eggs: 12, 13, 20–22
 Slaughter livestock: 23–25
 Wean animals: 15, 19, 24



GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN

Use the December dates shown in the Moon's Astrological Place calendar below to find the best days for the following garden tasks:

PLANT, TRANSPLANT, AND GRAFT: Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces

HARVEST: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius, Gemini, or Aquarius

BUILD/FIX FENCES OR GARDEN BEDS: Capricorn

CONTROL INSECT PESTS, PLOW, AND WEED: Aries, Gemini, Leo, Sagittarius, or Aquarius

PRUNE: Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius. During a waxing Moon, pruning encourages growth; during a waning Moon, it discourages growth.

THE MOON'S ASTROLOGICAL PLACE IN DECEMBER

1 Capricorn	9 Aries	17 Leo	25 Scorpio
2 Capricorn	10 Taurus	18 Leo	26 Sagittarius
3 Capricorn	11 Taurus	19 Virgo	27 Sagittarius
4 Aquarius	12 Gemini	20 Virgo	28 Capricorn
5 Aquarius	13 Gemini	21 Libra	29 Capricorn
6 Pisces	14 Cancer	22 Libra	30 Capricorn
7 Pisces	15 Cancer	23 Scorpio	31 Aquarius
8 Aries	16 Leo	24 Scorpio	



TAP FOR
MERCURY IN
RETROGRADE
DATES



APP EXTRA!
TAP FOR
DECEMBER
MOON PHASES

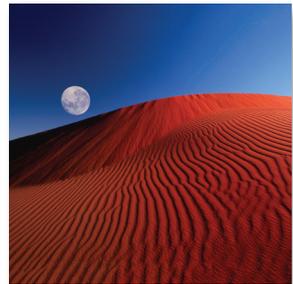
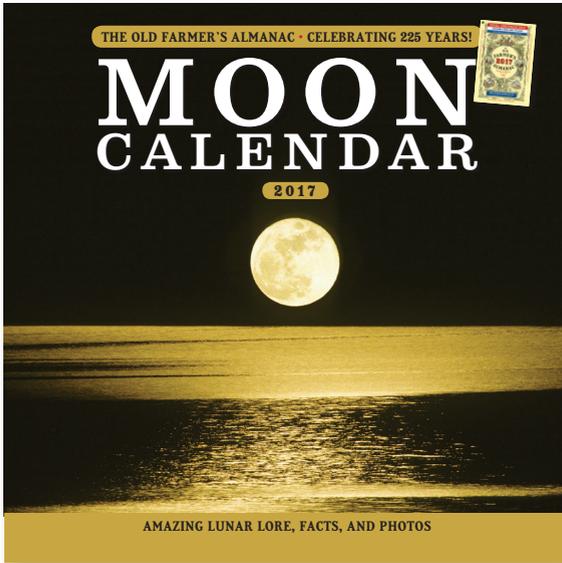
MERCURY IN RETROGRADE

Sometimes the other planets appear to be traveling backward through the zodiac; this is an illusion. We call this illusion retrograde motion.

Mercury's retrograde periods can cause our plans to go awry. However, this is an excellent time to reflect on the past. Intuition is high during these periods, and coincidences can be extraordinary.

When Mercury is retrograde, remain flexible, allow extra time for travel, and avoid signing contracts. Review projects and plans at these times, but wait until Mercury is direct again to make any final decisions. **Mercury is retrograde from December 19, 2016, to January 9, 2017.** —*Celeste Longacre*

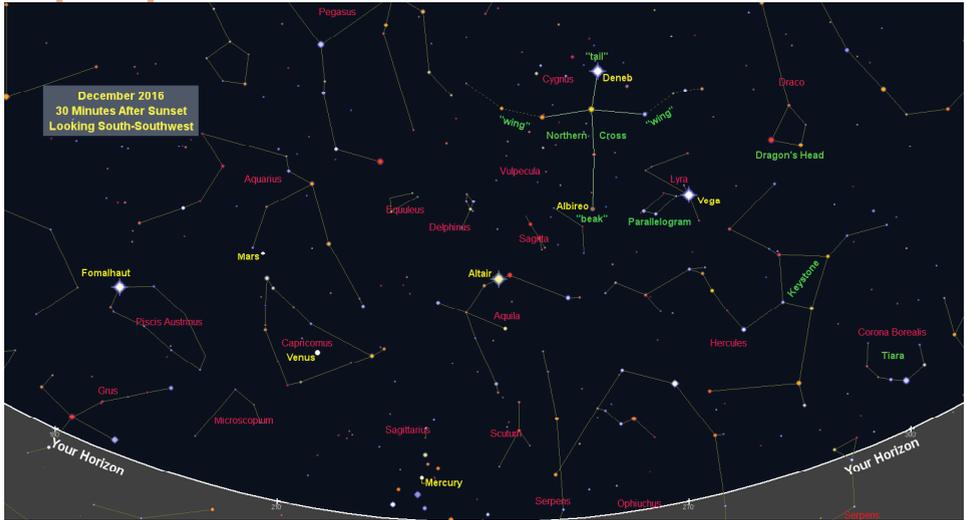
AMAZING LUNAR LORE, FACTS, AND PHOTOS!



The 2017 Old Farmer's Almanac Moon Calendar

Only \$10.99 | Printed in the USA

[LEARN MORE](#)



FOUR ROCKS, THE CROSS, AND THE SWAN

APP EXTRA!

TAP TO GET
A PRINTABLE
DECEMBER
SKY MAP

APP EXTRA!

TAP TO
FOLLOW
OHIOAN JEFF
DETRAY'S SKY
ADVENTURES

Few people ever see Mercury, the planet closest to the Sun. It never strays far from the Sun and thus is usually hidden in the glare of our star. Occasionally, the position of Mercury, the location of the Sun, and the hours of darkness all combine to allow us to glimpse this elusive planet. So it is this year in the second week of December.

Scout around in the daytime for a location where your view toward the south-southwest is free from trees, buildings, and other obstructions. On the first clear night, go to your chosen observing location about 30 minutes after sunset, and look for a bright-ish starlike object low in the south-southwest. This is Mercury, and you are among the small minority of humans ever to see it!

Mercury's location, so close to the Sun, makes it difficult to observe with Earthbound telescopes and tricky to reach with spacecraft. The *Mariner 10* spacecraft flew



past Mercury three times in 1974 and 1975. Then in 2011, the *Messenger* spacecraft was placed into orbit around Mercury, only the second spacecraft ever to explore the planet.

While searching for Mercury, you may be distracted by the bright blaze of the planet Venus to the upper left. Venus is the second planet from the Sun and comes closer to Earth than any other planet. Its proximity to us, along with a highly reflective covering of clouds, makes Venus appear brighter than any other planet from our viewpoint.

Venus has long been considered Earth's "twin." It is approximately the same size, has the same mass, and is made of the same types of materials as Earth. The big difference between the two planets is that Venus's thick atmosphere, consisting largely of carbon dioxide, has created a runaway greenhouse effect on the planet, raising the surface temperature to above 700°F.

Also in view this December is Mars, the Red Planet and fourth from the Sun. Look to the upper left of Venus; Mars is the only bright object in the vicinity. Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars are known as the "rocky" planets. Compared to the outer "gas giant" planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune), the rocky planets are small and have solid surfaces and interiors. Earth really is the "third rock from the Sun," and you are standing on it!

After observing three bright planetary dots, let's look at something much larger, the glorious constellation Cygnus, the Swan. High in the sky, the brightest stars of Cygnus form the nearly perfect Northern Cross asterism. The bright star Deneb, 19th brightest in the sky, sits at the very top of the cross. The star Albireo is at the base. The Northern Cross is a beautiful sight in itself, but if your sky is dark enough, you may be able to see the entire Swan.

Additional stars are off the ends of the cross; these form the wings of Cygnus. With Deneb at its tail and Albireo forming the beak, the Swan is poised head down, swooping toward the ground.

Take a look! It's yet another really big show!

—Jeff DeTray



POPULAR PRESENTS!



GIFTS FOR COOKS

Get great deals on innovative and beautiful carving boards while supplies last.
\$19.97–\$99.97

[LEARN MORE](#)

GIFTS FOR GARDENERS

Choose from many different nature-inspired wind bells, spinners, and chimes.
\$29.95–\$49.95

[LEARN MORE](#)



GIFTS FOR WEATHER WATCHERS

Shop now for a wide selection of traditional and decorative thermometers!
\$19.97–\$179.97

[LEARN MORE](#)

GIFTS FOR HOME KEEPERS

Discover American-made candle and votive holders.
\$18.95–\$39.95

[LEARN MORE](#)



Homemade Gifts From the Kitchen

Want to give homemade gifts this year?
These simple culinary creations are
perfect to give during the holiday season
and serve well as hostess gifts, too.
And we promise—no fruitcake!

FOOD

Never-Fail Holiday Fudge

 TAP FOR
RECIPE



NEVER-FAIL HOLIDAY FUDGE

- 2 cups sugar
- 2/3 cup evaporated milk
- 12 marshmallows (not minis)
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Grease or line an 8x8-inch pan with nonstick foil. Set aside.

In a 2-quart saucepan over medium heat, combine sugar, milk, marshmallows, butter, and salt. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture is bubbling. Boil and stir for 5 minutes, then remove from heat. Stir in chocolate chips until completely melted. Add walnuts and vanilla.

Spread fudge into prepared pan and cool for 4 to 6 hours in the refrigerator before cutting. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator or at room temperature.

Makes 30 pieces of fudge.



SHARE
THIS
RECIPE



FOOD



 TAP FOR
RECIPE

Cranberry Pistachio Biscotti



PHOTO: IRINA MOS/SHUTTERSTOCK

CRANBERRY PISTACHIO BISCOTTI

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup toasted pistachios
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 2 ounces white chocolate, melted

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

Using a stand or hand mixer, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Add vanilla. Lower speed and beat in dry ingredients. Stir in pistachios and cranberries by hand.

Form dough into a log, 14 inches long by 4 inches wide by 1-1/2 inches high.

Bake for 30 minutes, or until golden. Transfer baking sheet to a rack and let cool for 5 minutes.

Using a serrated knife, slice log on the diagonal into 1/2-inch-thick pieces.

Arrange slices on lined baking sheet and bake for 8 minutes per side. Transfer biscotti to a rack and cool completely. Drizzle with melted white chocolate. Refrigerate until set, about 10 minutes.

Makes 4 dozen biscotti.

SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

Pecan-Crusted Sweet Potato Pound Cake

FOOD



TAP FOR
RECIPE


 SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

PECAN-CRUSTED SWEET POTATO POUND CAKE

1-1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, for pan	1 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup coarsely chopped pecans	1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup packed brown sugar, plus 2 tablespoons	1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
2 cups cooked sweet potatoes	1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1/2 cup buttermilk	1 cup granulated sugar
3 cups all-purpose flour	4 large eggs, at room temperature
2 teaspoons baking powder	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking soda	2 teaspoons orange zest

Preheat oven to 350°F. Adjust oven rack to one setting below the center position, with no racks above it. Butter a 10-inch Bundt pan. Sprinkle pecans evenly around bottom of pan, then sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of brown sugar.

In a food processor or blender, process sweet potatoes and buttermilk until smooth.

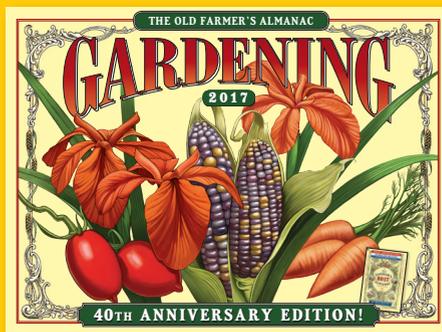
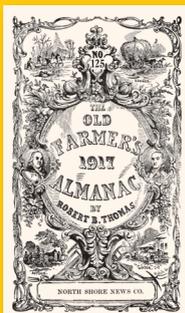
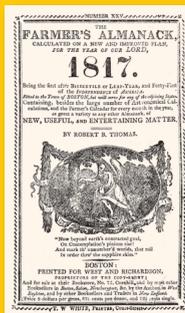
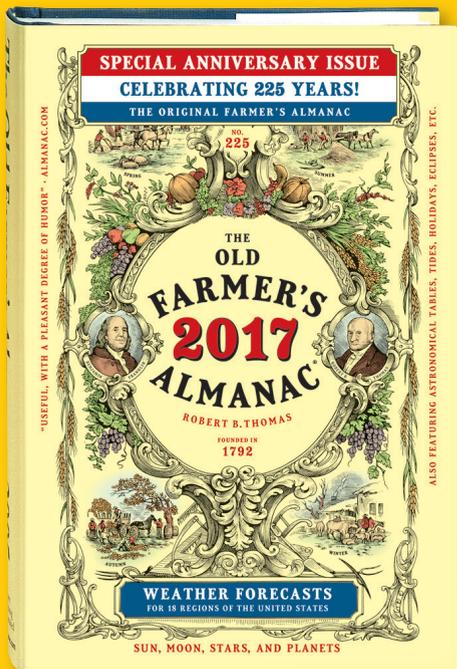
In a bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg.

Using a stand or hand mixer, cream the 1 cup butter, then gradually beat in sugar and remaining brown sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla and orange zest and beat to blend. Add sweet potato mixture and beat on low until evenly blended. Add flour mixture, one third at a time, mixing well after each addition.

Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake for 60 to 70 minutes, or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then invert cake onto a large platter. Cool for at least 30 minutes more before slicing.

Makes 16 servings.

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



Celebrating 225 Years! THE 2017 OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

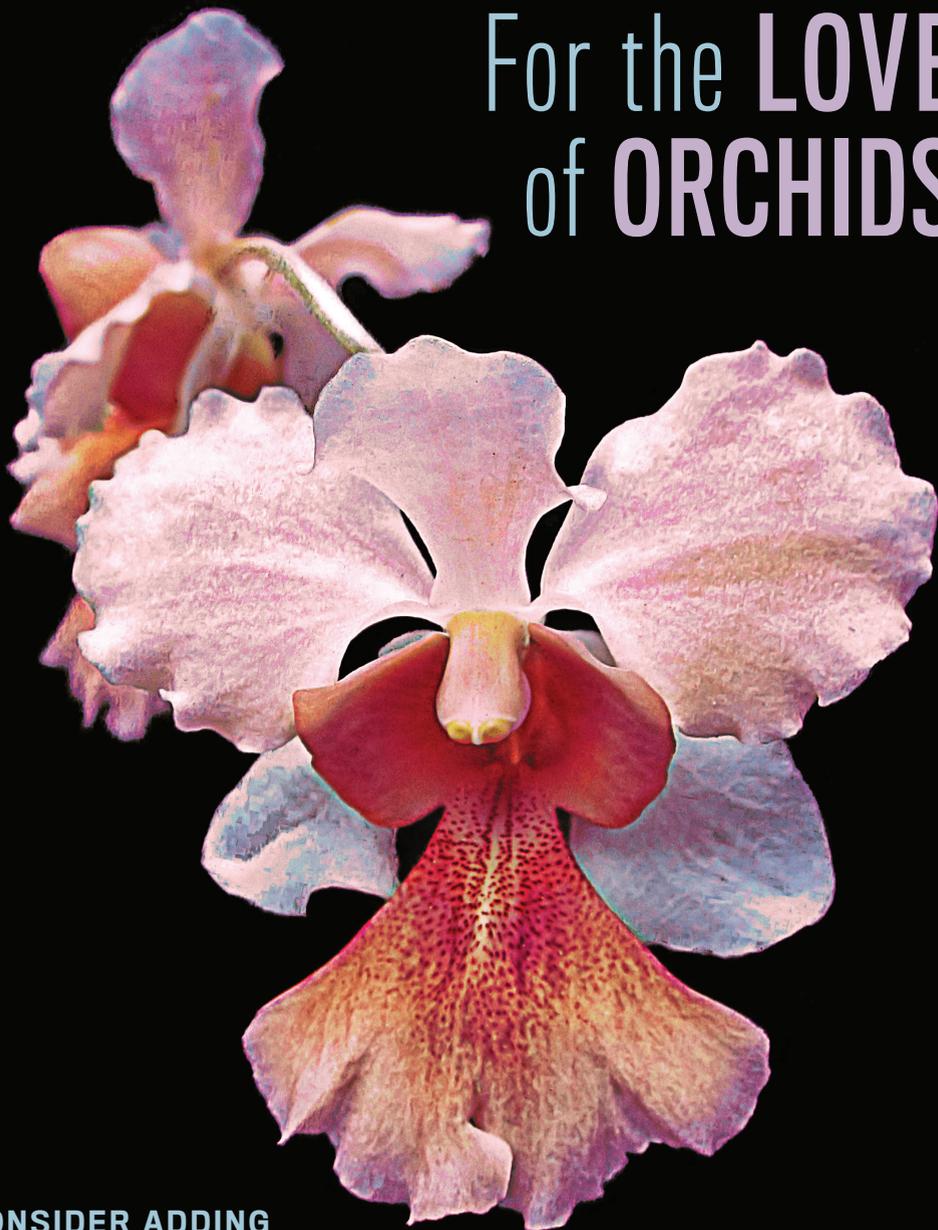
GET 3 FREE GIFTS with purchase.

\$15.95 | Printed in the USA

[LEARN MORE](#)

GARDENING

For the LOVE of ORCHIDS



CONSIDER ADDING
ORCHIDS TO YOUR HOLIDAY
DECORATING LIST.

GARDENING

Orchids have no equal: They are breathtakingly beautiful, delicate, long-blooming, long-lived, fascinating in fragrance and form, and extremely varied. Few pleasures in gardening surpass the thrill of seeing orchids thrive and bloom.

Once rare and expensive, orchids now outsell every other houseplant, surpassing even African violets, chrysanthemums, and poinsettias. This is because modern cloning techniques allow for mass production of plants, and cultivation that used to take 7 years from seed to bloom now takes 2 years.

We've all seen orchids at supermarkets and home stores and wondered if they're a wise purchase. Absolutely! Inexpensive orchids are no less likely to thrive. Just choose a strong, healthy-looking plant and give it plenty of TLC.

TLC BASICS

In their native habitats, orchids grow like weeds, but they are inclined to homesickness as houseplants. For best results, provide the conditions they prefer. Some species have individual preferences, but all need a balance of light, air, water, food, rest, and, from time to time, a new pot in order to thrive—all detailed here.





GARDENING



TAP FOR ORCHIDS'
NATIVE HABITATS



TAP FOR FRAGRANT
ORCHID VARIETIES

LIGHT

Without adequate light, expect lush growth but no flowers. Direct sunlight can burn orchids, but insufficient light is the most common reason for failure to bloom. Leaf color is a good indicator of the amount of light a plant is getting:

- Healthy orchids have bright green leaves.
- Dark green leaves signal that a plant is not getting enough light.
- Yellowish-green or red leaves indicate that a plant is getting too much light.

If you suspect that your orchid is exposed to too much light, feel the leaves. If they feel noticeably warmer than the surrounding air, move the plant to a location with less intense brightness.

NATIVE HABITATS

The orchid family is one of the very largest in the realm of flowering plants: More than 25,000 species grow naturally, on every continent except Antarctica. The world's richest concentration of orchid varieties is found in the tropics—mostly in Asia and Central and South America. In most of North America, orchids must be grown indoors (exceptions include natives such as the lady's slipper). –C.V.H.

THE SWEET SMELL OF ORCHID SUCCESS

Some orchids have an amazing fragrance. Among the most sweet-smelling are . . .

Angrathes grandalena: sweet jasmine

Brassavola nodosa: freesia or lily-of-the-valley

Cattleya walkeriana and hybrids: cinnamon and vanilla

Maxillaria tenuifolia: roasted coconut

Miltoniopsis santanaei: roses

Neofinetia falcata: jasmine

Oncidium 'Sharry Baby': vanilla and chocolate

Phalaenopsis bellina: freesia with a touch of lemon

P. violacea: spicy, cinnamon

Rhynchostylis gigantea: powerful citrus

Zygopetalum: hyacinth –C.V.H.

GARDENING

AIR

Orchids must also have fresh, circulating air. In the wild, continual gentle breezes are vital for their survival. Air in motion helps to evaporate stagnant water, a breeding ground for fungi and bacteria that are trapped during watering. Create gentle breezes: Open windows in the summer and use an oscillating fan in winter. Without ventilation, orchids eventually die from rot, lack of carbon dioxide, or infection.

WATER

Experts say that more orchids are killed by incorrect watering than die from any other cause. Orchids should be watered just as they dry out. Overwatering causes rot, which kills orchid roots. In general, douse plants early in the day with tepid water once a week in winter and twice a week in warm weather. Water until the water runs out of the pot freely; this also flushes out any naturally occurring





GARDENING

salts. When indoor air is dry, spray orchids with tepid water to keep the humidity up.

FOOD

As a general rule, fertilize orchids every 2 weeks in spring and summer and once a month in fall and winter. Use a 30-10-10 fertilizer diluted to half-strength or orchid food. Approaching bloom, use a balanced fertilizer, such as 20-20-20.

REST

Many orchids need a period of dormancy, or rest, generally in winter. During this time, plants strengthen their root systems, grow leaves, and stockpile energy for their next growth spurt. Typically, an orchid can rebloom every 8 to 12 months.

REPOTTING

When an orchid spills out of its pot or its growing medium is reduced to crumbs, repot at the beginning of the next growth cycle (typically the spring).

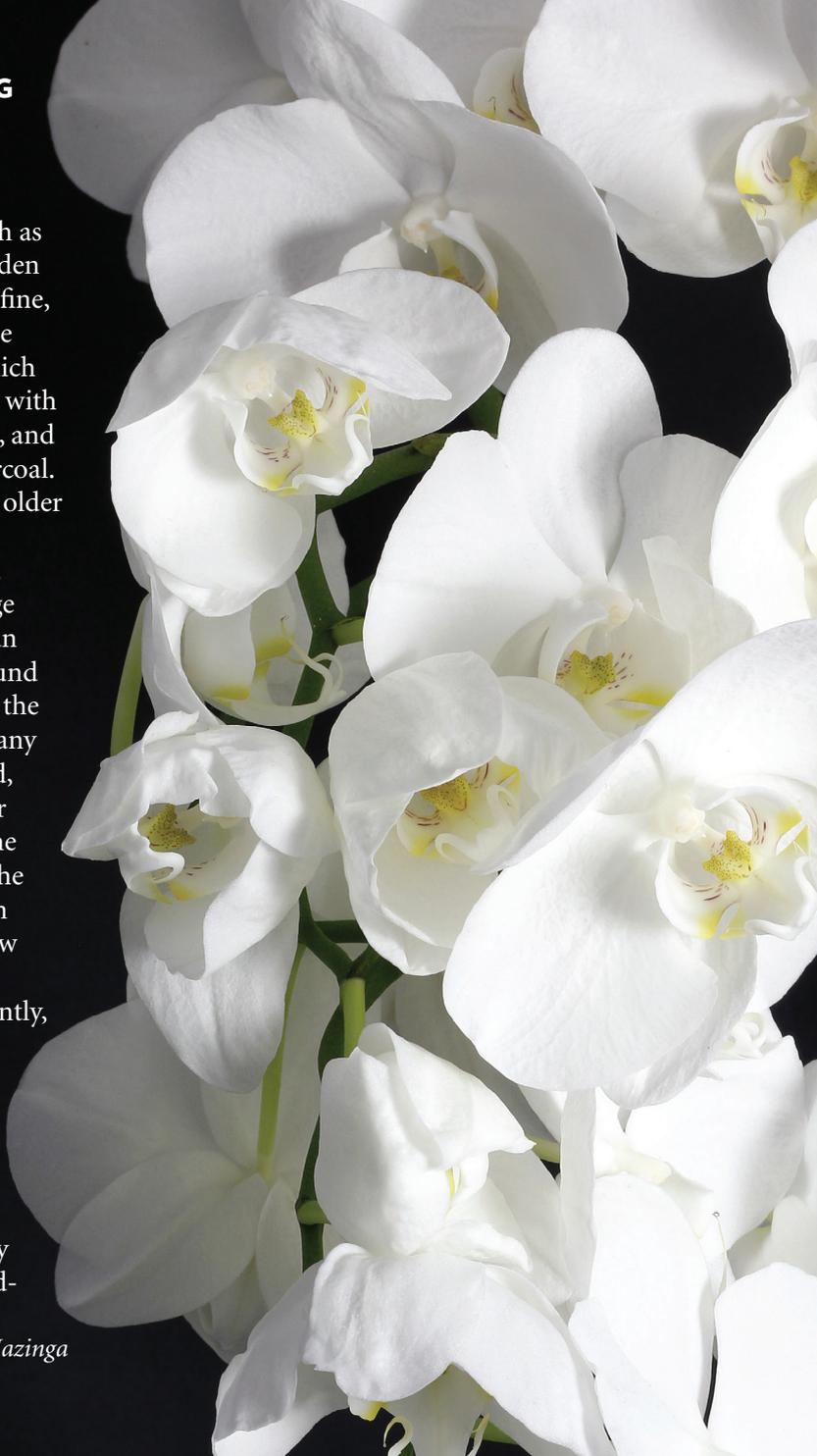
Never pot an orchid in soil. All orchids need a lot of air around their roots. The best medium is one that is very

GARDENING

light, porous, and fast-draining, such as fir bark. Most garden stores can supply fine, medium, or coarse bark particles, which are usually mixed with perlite, peat moss, and horticultural charcoal. Large plants with older roots do better in coarser mediums.

Select a pot large enough to allow an inch of space around the roots. Inspect the roots and cut off any that are blackened, hollow, spongy, or damaged. Hold the plant upright in the new pot and fill in around it with new potting material, tamping down gently, to about an inch from the top of the pot. Water well and stake the plant to keep it steady. Green bamboo and curly willow make good-looking stakes.

—*Cynthia Van Hazinga*



LIVING NATURALLY

WINTER COLDS, FLU, AND MORE: GET PROACTIVE



PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

LIVING NATURALLY

Here in the northern latitudes, the incidence of colds, flu, pneumonia, strep, chicken pox, and norovirus infections (“stomach flu”) rises dramatically during the winter months. We even suffer more (and more damaging) heart attacks and strokes during winter.

Why do we fall prey to these infections and cardiovascular events more often in winter, anyway?

It turns out that the

answers are complex, elusive, and still evolving.

For a long time, experts told us that we catch more colds and flu in winter because we huddle together indoors in poorly ventilated surroundings—especially schoolchildren, who then pass along the infections to their families.

Skeptical scientists have since proposed many other theories, which may interact and overlap in complex ways. They range from shorter day length, Vitamin D

deficiency (either or both of which may alter hormone balance, which in turn lowers immune response), climate and weather factors, physiological responses to exposure to chilly air, and the properties of some viruses themselves, which favor transmission in cold air and low humidity. Furthermore, the dry winter air can slow the normal process of cleaning the nasal mucus linings and drying them out, making them more susceptible to infection.

THE INCIDENCE OF COLDS, FLU, PNEUMONIA, ETC., RISES DRAMATICALLY DURING THE WINTER MONTHS.





MOST EPIDEMIOLOGISTS CITE
FREQUENT HANDWASHING AS THE NUMBER ONE
DEFENSE AGAINST COLDS.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Regardless of an affliction's cause, research has confirmed the value of many self-care practices for helping to ward off winter infections. Most of them won't surprise you.

- Wash your hands—often. Most epidemiologists cite frequent handwashing as the number one defense against colds and many other common winter bugs. Effective handwashing means 20 seconds of vigorous rubbing with plain soap and water.
- Humidify inside and out. Keep your body

well hydrated and your indoor air humidified. We add moisture to the air of our wood-heated home by hanging laundry indoors, keeping a lot of houseplants, and setting steamers on the stoves that release moisture gradually into the surrounding air.

- Exercise. Studies show that exercise boosts the immune system to help your body fight infection. One caution: If you have a fever or anything more serious than a light cold, rest up and lay off the exercise.
- A corollary: Get outdoors more often, especially in midday.

Many of us hidebound northerners experience a better mood and a boost in energy when we get out on cold, sunny, winter days. We've found that investing in full-spectrum (mimics the wavelengths in natural sunlight) compact fluorescent lights throughout our house goes a long way toward staving off winter depression (low energy, food cravings, lack of enthusiasm). Some scientists believe that daily exposure to full-spectrum light helps to boost immune function, too.

- Eat your vegetables. Increase your daily intake of green, red, yellow,

LIVING NATURALLY

and white vegetables. A growing body of research reveals that eating a greater amount and variety of vegetables and fruit improves the immune function. The big bonus: It's one food group on which you can't overdose.

- Get enough sleep. Research confirms the value of a good night's sleep. Sleeping well reduces your chances of heart problems and other chronic diseases, improves immune function, and even helps to prevent obesity. Don't brag about how little sleep you need. Get your *zzzzzz*'s.

- Reduce stress. Stress weakens the immune system, and winter adds several layers of stress for most of us (e.g., dealing with storms and power outages, sick kids, less daylight, snow shoveling, and the sometimes-overwhelming demands of the winter holidays—including financial stress). Make this your season to explore stress-reducing strategies.

- Keep holiday food safe. Foodborne illnesses sicken 48 million Americans each year. Avoid becoming one of them.

- Bone up on tips for

preventing winter heart attacks.

- Say **Yes!** to a seasonal flu shot.
- And **Yes!** to staying away from sick people (good luck!). Many people take supplements of vitamin D, vitamin C, echinacea, and other products reputed to boost immunity. Please check with your doctor or other trusted healthcare source before you try any new herb or vitamin supplement.

—Margaret Boyles

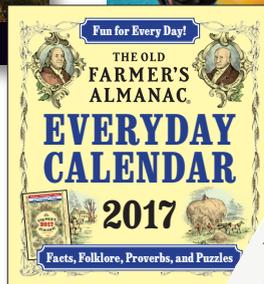
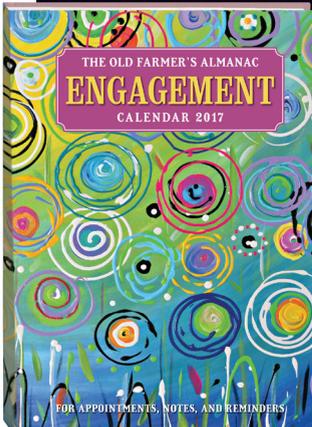
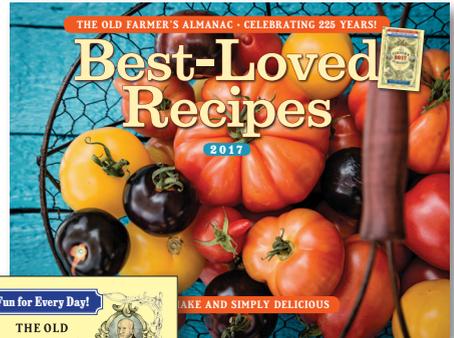
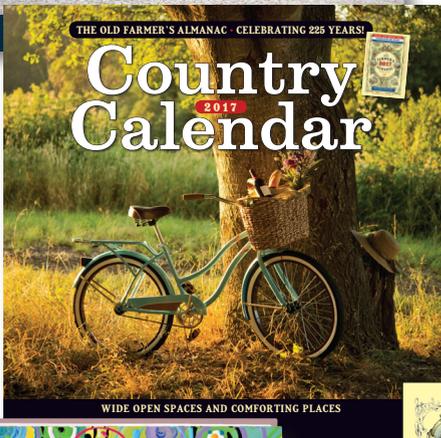
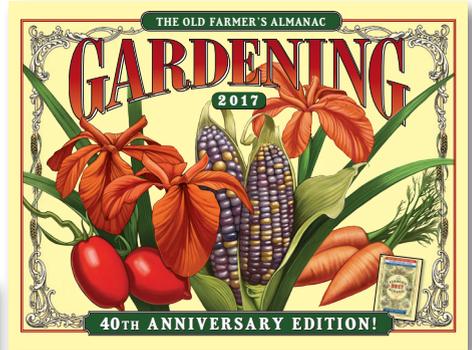
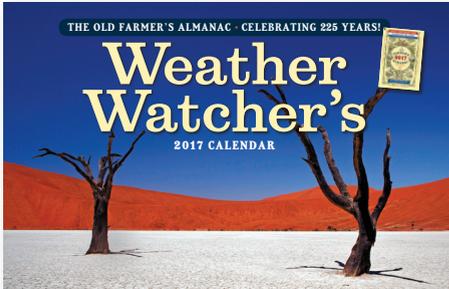


TAP TO READ MORE OF MARGARET BOYLES'S POSTS IN HER "LIVING NATURALLY" BLOG

SAY **YES!** TO A SEASONAL FLU SHOT AND **YES!** TO STAYING AWAY FROM SICK PEOPLE (GOOD LUCK!).



Loaded with fun, facts, lore, and more! 2017 Almanac Calendars



LEARN MORE

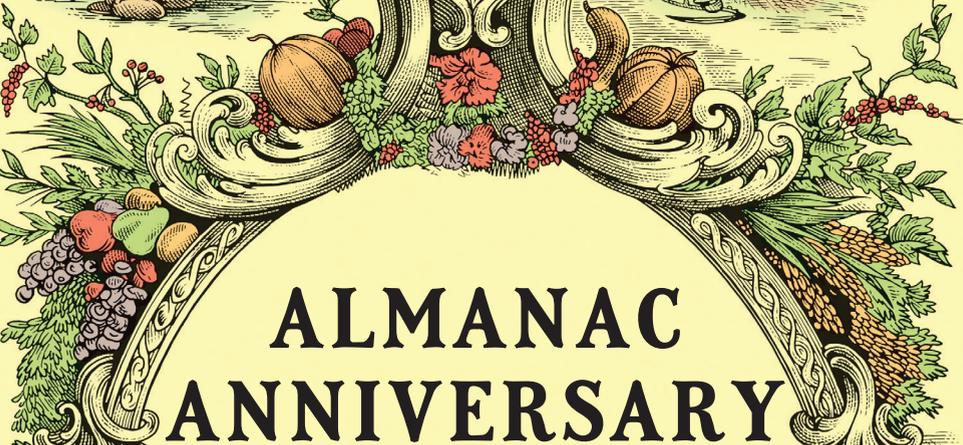
\$9.99 - \$14.99

ANNIVERSARY

ALMANAC ANNIVERSARY TIMELINE

More highlights from *The
Old Farmer's Almanac's*
225 years of continuous
publication

The 2017 edition of *The Old Farmer's
Almanac*, parent publication of *EXTRA!*,
marks its quasibicentennial anniversary.



A QUASQUIBICENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

No small word for no small achievement: The term means “a quarter [century] more than 200 years” and refers to this Almanac’s 225 years of continuous publication—a record unmatched by any other periodical in North America.

People often ask us how and why the “little yellow book” (the inspiration for this monthly missive) has lasted so long. Luck has played a big role. Here are a few such serendipitous situations, excerpted from the 2017 Almanac.

1792: Robert Bailey Thomas publishes *The Farmer’s Almanac* for 1793, “containing as great a variety as

any other Almanac of new, useful, and entertaining matter.” Also this year, the cornerstone for the U.S. president’s mansion is laid in Washington, D.C.; George Washington is unanimously re-elected to his second term as president; and the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, produces the Birch cent, with the head of Liberty on one side and a wreath on the other.

1803: After a courtship of 13 years, Thomas marries Hannah Beaman.

1815: Thomas is ill with influenza. His Boston printers send a boy to his bedside in Sterling,

Massachusetts, for the July weather forecast. “Tell the printer to print anything he wishes,” he tells the boy. Thus, the printer sets “Rain, Hail, and Snow” for July 13, 1816. When Thomas recovers, he is furious and tries to call in every single printed sheet. However, a few escape. When, in July 1816, rain, hail, and snow do fall, people experience “The Year Without a Summer” and Thomas’s Almanac moves into the supremacy it has held ever since.

1862–66: A “chronological record of events connected with the rise and progress of the rebellion against the national government [the Civil



1847: With “deep and heartfelt regret,” Almanac publishers announce the passing of Robert B. Thomas on May 19, 1846, at age 80: “Prior to Mr. T’s death, arrangements were made to continue the Almanac through the present century, at least.”

War] commencing November 1860, [appears] in the Calendar Pages” and continues through the conflict.

1932: A hole is punched in the corner. (Until now, readers made their own hole.)

1944: “With the Almanac staff at present in the armed forces or in war service, this edition [was] born in the all too few hours of evenings and Sundays . . . in candlelight.”

1956: A woodcut image of Father Time created for the 1809 edition by Abel Bowen, “Boston’s first professional woodcut

artist,” appears on page 1. Bowen’s “work in the OFA antedates all other woodcuts revealed in any other almanac today.”

1967: Weather forecasts appear for five U.S. climatic regions: New England, Eastern States, Midwestern States, Western and Mountain States, Southern States.

1980: The Almanac page size increases to its current dimensions.

1989: A survey says that 9 million people read the Almanac each year.

1995: “A good number of letters received last year—and every year—are addressed to Robert B. Thomas, who has, of course, been resting

peacefully in the cemetery at Sterling, Massachusetts, for almost 150 years. But no matter.”

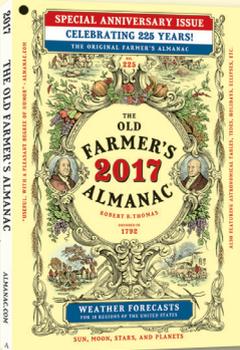
2010: The Almanac joins Facebook; by 2016, it has 1.4 million friends. Activity on Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Google+, and Tumblr follows.

JOIN THE PARTY

To learn more about this Almanac, see replica pages of the 1793 edition, and read Robert B. Thomas’s story in his own words, buy *The 2017 Old Farmer’s Almanac Collector’s Edition* in traditional print or get the digital edition for your tablet, computer, or smart phone.



TAP TO BUY
**THE 2017 OLD
FARMER’S ALMANAC
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION**



2017: This year will mark the Almanac’s 225th edition, thanks to generations of fans and enthusiasts.



WEATHER FORECASTS

IF AT CHRISTMAS ICE HANGS ON THE WILLOW,
CLOVER MAY BE CUT AT EASTER.

HOW WE MAKE OUR PREDICTIONS

We derive our weather forecasts from a secret formula that was devised by the founder of this Almanac, Robert B. Thomas, in 1792. Thomas believed that weather on Earth was influenced by sunspots, which are magnetic storms on the surface of the Sun.

Over the years, we have refined and enhanced this formula with state-of-the-art technology and modern scientific calculations. We employ three scientific disciplines to make our long-range predictions: solar science, the study of sunspots and other solar activity; climatology, the study of prevailing weather patterns; and meteorology, the study of the atmosphere. We predict weather trends and events by comparing solar patterns and historical weather conditions with current solar activity.

Our forecasts emphasize temperature and precipitation deviations from averages, or normals. These are based on 30-year statistical averages prepared by government meteorological agencies and updated every 10 years. Most-recent tabulations span the period 1981 through 2010.

We believe that nothing in the universe happens haphazardly, that there is a cause-and-effect pattern to all phenomena. However, although neither we nor any other forecasters have as yet gained sufficient insight into the mysteries of the universe to predict the weather with total accuracy, our results are almost always very close to our traditional claim of 80 percent.

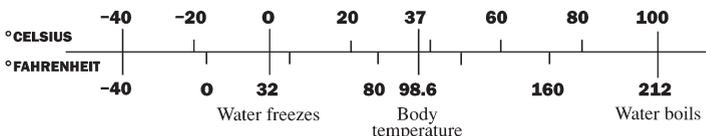


TAP TO FIND OUT THE WEATHER HISTORY OF THE DAY



LOVE ALL THINGS WEATHER? TAP FOR THE WEATHER FOLKLORE OF THE DAY

CELSIUS-FAHRENHEIT TABLE

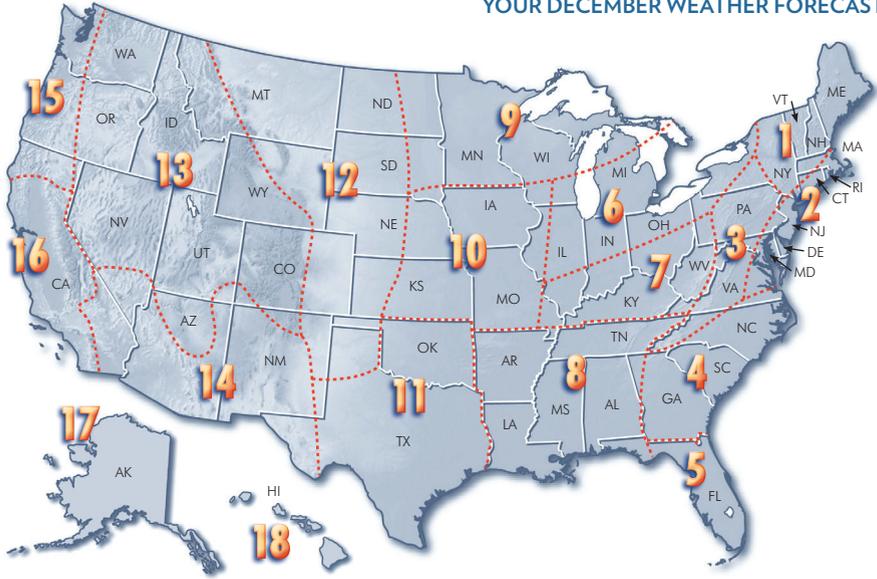




WEATHER FORECASTS

MAP OF U.S. WEATHER REGIONS

CHECK YOUR REGION TO SEE YOUR DECEMBER WEATHER FORECAST.



MAP OF CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS





WEATHER FORECASTS

IF AT CHRISTMAS ICE HANGS ON THE WILLOW,
CLOVER MAY BE CUT AT EASTER.

U.S. FORECASTS DECEMBER 2016

REGION 1: **NORTHEAST**

Temp. 28° (3° below avg. north, 3° above south); precip. 3" (avg.). 1–5 Showers, quite mild. 6–9 Snow showers, then sunny, mild. 10–16 Snow showers, cold. 17–22 Rain and snow showers; cold north, mild south. 23–28 Snow, then sunny, mild. 29–31 Flurries, very cold.

REGION 2: **ATLANTIC CORRIDOR**

Temp. 45° (6° above avg.); precip. 1.5" (1.5" below avg.). 1–6 Sunny, warm. 7–10 Showers, mild. 11–14 Rain and snow, then sunny, mild. 15–21 Showers north, sunny south; turning warm. 22–29 Periods of rain and snow north, showers south. 30–31 Sunny, cold.

REGION 3: **APPALACHIANS**

Temp. 42° (6° above avg.); precip. 2" (1" below avg.). 1–4 Sunny, mild. 5–10 Showers, mild. 11–15 Snow showers, then sunny, mild. 16–24 Showers north, sunny south; quite mild. 25–31 Snow showers north, rain showers south.

REGION 4: **SOUTHEAST**

Temp. 55° (8° above avg.); precip. 2" (1.5" below avg.). 1–3 Sunny, warm. 4–10 A few showers, mild. 11–16 Showers, then sunny, cold. 17–22 Sunny, warm. 23–29 Showers, mild. 30–31 Sunny, cold.

REGION 5: **FLORIDA**

Temp. 70° (7° above avg.); precip. 1.5" (1" below avg.). 1–9 Sunny, warm. 10–17 Scattered t-storms, warm. 18–23 Sunny, warm. 24–29 Scattered t-storms, warm. 30–31 Sunny, cool.



WEATHER FORECASTS

REGION 6: LOWER LAKES

Temp. 37° (5° above avg.); precip. 5" (0.5" above avg. east, 3" above west). 1–6 Rain, then sunny, mild. 7–9 Snow to rain. 10–12 Snow showers, cold. 13–19 A few rain and snow showers east, sunny west; mild. 20–22 Rain and snow showers. 23–24 Snow east, rain west. 25–31 Rain to snow, then snow showers, cold.

REGION 7: OHIO VALLEY

Temp. 45° (8° above avg.); precip. 2.5" (0.5" below avg.). 1–9 Showers, quite mild. 10–12 Snow showers, cold. 13–17 Sunny, mild. 18–23 Rainy periods, mild. 24–31 Rain and snow showers, colder.

REGION 8: DEEP SOUTH

Temp. 56° (8° above avg.); precip. 5" (avg.). 1–9 A few showers, warm. 10–12 Rainy, cool. 13–19 Sunny, warm. 20–26 Showers, mild. 27–31 Snow north, rain south, then, sunny, cold.

REGION 9: UPPER MIDWEST

Temp. 16° (1° above avg. east, 1° below west); precip. 1" (avg.). 1–6 Snow showers, cold. 7–9 Snowstorm east, snow showers west; mild. 10–18 Snow showers; cold, then mild. 19–25 Snowstorm, then flurries, mild. 26–31 Flurries; cold east, mild west.

REGION 10: HEARTLAND

Temp. 37° (5° above avg.); precip. 3" (avg. north, 3" above south). 1–8 Rainy periods, mild. 9–10 Sunny, cold. 11–19 Sunny, mild. 20–25 Occasional snow north, rain south; mild. 26–29 Snow showers, cold. 30–31 Sunny, mild.

REGION 11: TEXAS-OKLAHOMA

Temp. 59° (6° above avg.); precip. 1.5" (1" below avg.). 1–6 Rainy periods; cold north, warm south. 7–20 Rain, then sunny, turning warm. 21–26 Rainy periods, mild. 27–31 Snow north, rain south, then sunny, cold.



WEATHER FORECASTS

REGION 12: HIGH PLAINS

Temp. 27° (5° below avg. north, 3° below south); precip. 0.3" (0.2" below avg.). 1–7 Flurries, cold. 8–15 Snow, then sunny, milder. 16–17 Snow north, sunny south. 18–23 Sunny, turning mild. 24–28 Snowstorm, then sunny, frigid. 29–31 Sunny, mild.

REGION 13: INTERMOUNTAIN

Temp. 30.5° (1° below avg. north, 4° below south); precip. 2" (0.5" above avg.). 1–4 Snowstorm north, flurries south; cold. 5–9 Snow, then flurries, cold. 10–13 Sunny, cold. 14–17 Snow, then sunny, mild. 18–20 Sunny north, snowstorm central, rainy south. 21–28 Snow showers, cold. 29–31 Sunny; mild north, cold south.

REGION 14: DESERT SOUTHWEST

Temp. 45° (3° below avg.); precip. 0.5" (avg.). 1–5 Sunny, cold. 6–12 Rain and snow, then sunny, cold. 13–19 Sunny east, a few showers west; turning mild. 20–31 Rain and snow showers east, sunny west; cold.

REGION 15: PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Temp. 42° (1° below avg.); precip. 6.5" (avg.). 1–4 Rain and wet snow, cold. 5–7 Rainy, cool. 8–13 Rainy periods, cool. 14–18 Rain, some heavy; cool. 19–20 Sunny, cold. 21–22 Snow to rain. 23–31 Periods of rain and mist, turning milder.

REGION 16: PACIFIC SOUTHWEST

Temp. 51° (3° below avg.); precip. 2.5" (0.5" below avg. north, 2" above south). 1–6 Rainy periods, cool. 7–13 Sunny, cool. 14–16 Rainy periods, cool. 17–21 Rain, some heavy; warm, then cool. 22–31 Sunny, cold.

REGION 17: ALASKA

Temp. -2° N, 30° S (5° above avg. north, 1° below south); precip. 0.2" N, 5" S (avg.). 1–8 Snow showers, cold. 9–22 Snowy periods, mild. 23–31 Flurries, turning cold N; snow showers, mild EW.

KEY: Panhandle (P), Aleutians (A), north (N), central (C), south (S), west-central (WC), east-central (EC), south-central (SC), elsewhere (EW)



CANADIAN WEATHER FORECASTS

REGION 18: HAWAII

Temp. 74° (1° below avg.); precip. 8.3" (15" above avg. E, avg. C+W). 1–8 Rain and t-storms E, daily showers C+W; seasonable. 9–13 Rainy periods with heavy t-storms, cool. 14–31 Rain and t-storms, cool.

KEY: east (E), central (C), west (W)

IF NEW YEAR'S EVE NIGHT WIND BLOW SOUTH, IT
BETOKENETH WARMTH AND GROWTH.

CANADIAN FORECASTS DECEMBER 2016

REGION 1: ATLANTIC CANADA

Temp. -3°C (avg.); precip. 130mm (avg.). 1–6 Snow showers, cold north; rainy periods, mild south. 7–13 Snowy north, showers south. 14–17 Flurries, cold. 18–21 Snowstorm. 22–26 Snowy periods, very cold. 27–31 Rain to heavy snow, then flurries, very cold.

REGION 2: SOUTHERN QUEBEC

Temp. -4°C (3°C above avg.); precip. 90mm (10mm above avg.). 1–5 Snowy periods, some heavy; mild. 6–8 Sunny, turning cold. 9–17 Snowstorm, then snow showers, cold. 18–24 Snow, then flurries, cold. 25–28 Snowy periods, turning mild. 29–31 Flurries, cold.

RÉGION 2: QUÉBEC DU SUD

Temp. -4°C (3°C au-dessus de la moy.); précip. 90mm (10mm au-dessus de la moy.). 1–5 Périodes de neige, certaines fortes; doux. 6–8 Ensoleillé, devenant froid. 9–17 Tempête de neige, puis chutes de neige, froid. 18–24 Neige, puis rafales, froid. 25–28 Périodes de neige, avec radoucissement. 29–31 Rafales, froid.



CANADIAN WEATHER FORECASTS

REGION 3: SOUTHERN ONTARIO

Temp. -1.5°C (2.5°C above avg.); precip. 65mm (25mm above avg.). 1–4 Rainy east and central, rain and snow west; quite mild. 5–8 Showers east, snow showers west; mild. 9–10 Rain east, rain to snow west. 11–14 Snowy periods, cold. 15–19 Rain and snow showers, mild. 20–23 Rain east, snow central, flurries west. 24–25 Snowstorm east, flurries west. 26–31 Snow showers, turning cold.

REGION 4: THE PRAIRIES

Temp. -13°C (2°C below avg. east, 6°C below west); precip. 20mm (10mm below avg. east, 10mm above west). 1–10 Flurries, cold east; snow, then snow showers, very cold west. 11–14 Flurries, cold. 15–19 Snowy periods, very cold. 20–25 Flurries, turning mild. 26–31 Snow showers, cold, then mild.

REGION 5: SOUTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Temp. -4°C (5°C below avg.); precip. 180mm (20mm above avg.). 1–5 Snowstorm, then snow showers, cold. 6–8 Snowstorm, cold. 9–11 Snow to rain coast, snow showers inland. 12–15 Snow showers, cold. 16–22 Snowstorm, then flurries, turning very cold. 23–27 Rainy periods coast, snow showers inland. 28–31 Snow, then showers coast; snow showers inland; turning mild.

REGION 6: YUKON

Temp. -26°C (3°C below avg.); precip. 23mm (2mm below avg.). 1–3 Snow showers, mild. 4–10 Snow showers, very cold. 11–14 Flurries, mild. 15–19 Flurries, very cold. 20–26 Snow showers, turning very mild. 27–31 Flurries, cold north; snowy periods, mild south.

REGION 7: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Temp. -28°C (2°C below avg.); precip. 9mm (3mm below avg.). 1–7 Flurries, frigid. 8–11 Snow showers, cold. 12–19 Clear, bitter cold. 20–27 Flurries, turning mild. 28–31 Clear, cold.

THE BIG WARM-UP

With warmer-than-normal temperatures and several hurricanes and tropical storms affecting the eastern states, the first half of autumn across North America had rather extreme weather, in line with our forecast.

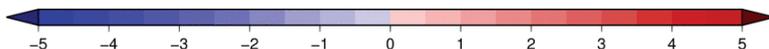
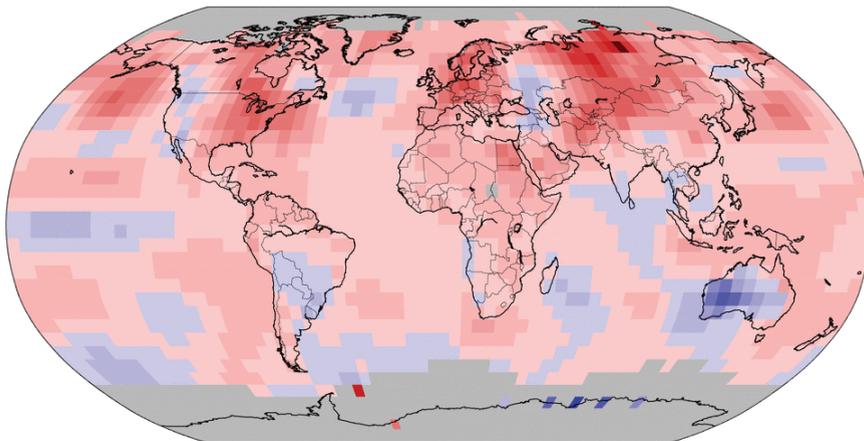
Warmer-than-normal temperatures were the rule in most other places as well. In the world as a whole, September 2016 was the second warmest September ever recorded, behind only September 2015.

September was the first month this year that did not set a new record for global warmth, although 2016 will still wind up as the Earth's warmest overall year in history.

As you can see from the map showing September temperature departures from normal, most of the world had above-normal temperatures.

Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average Sep 2016 (with respect to a 1981–2010 base period)

Data Source: GHCN–M version 3.3.0 & ERSST version 4.0.0





Delving into some of the map's details reveals that . . .

- North America had its third highest September temperature departure since continental records began in 1910.
- Ohio experienced its warmest September ever while, as a whole, this was the ninth-warmest September across the United States in the 122-year period of record.
- Much-warmer-than-normal temperatures prevailed in northern South America while, in contrast, those in central and southern South America were near to below normal.
- Europe and Asia had their warmest September in more than 100 years of records, while Africa experienced its second warmest, behind only 2015.
- Temperatures were below normal across much of Australia, which had its second wettest September on record, behind only 2010.
- Arctic sea ice was well below average, with the fifth smallest sea ice extent since satellite records began in 1979. Antarctic sea ice had its smallest extent since 2002 and the fifth smallest on record.

ALL OF THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE CHANGE FROM LAST WINTER'S STRONG EL NIÑO TO A WEAK TO PERHAPS MODERATE LA NIÑA THIS FALL AND WINTER.

Along with the other factors that control our winter weather, this means that nearly all of the country will be colder than last winter, although most places will still have above-normal temperatures when averaged across the entire winter season.

Snowfall will be above normal from southern New England and western New York southwestward through the Appalachians; from eastern Minnesota eastward to the U.P. (Upper Peninsula) of Michigan and southward to St. Louis, Missouri; and from central North Dakota westward to the Pacific coast. Other locales that normally receive snowfall should expect below-normal amounts.

Unfortunately, we expect rainfall and precipitation to be below normal in California, which could result in higher food prices next spring and summer.

—Michael Steinberg, *Old Farmer's Almanac meteorologist*



HUMOR ME

GRINS AND GROANS FROM THE ALMANAC

Too Late



A man boarded the sleeper train in New York late one evening and said to the porter, as he prepared to retire, “I have an important engagement in Syracuse in the morning and must get

off there. I am a very hard man to awaken, but I am going to give you this \$50 bill. You see that I get off in Syracuse.”

Some time later, the man awakened and discovered that the Sun

was shining. He called the porter and asked, “Where are we now?”

Said the porter: “We’ll be getting in to Buffalo in a short time.”

The traveler burst out in an angry protest to the porter, using words that do not ordinarily appear in print.

The train conductor overheard the conversation and called the porter. He said, “You are expected to be courteous to people on the train, but you don’t have to stand for conversation of that kind.”

The porter replied, “If you think that was bad, you should have heard the man I put off in Syracuse!”



Unto Us, a Child Is Born

A young businessman, a deacon in his local church, was going to Chicago on business and while there was to purchase a new sign to be hung in front of the church.

He copied the motto and dimensions of the old sign, but when he got to Chicago, he discovered that he had left the paper behind, whereupon he wired his wife: "Send motto and dimensions."

An hour later, a message came over the wire, and the new lady clerk at the sign shop, who had been out to lunch and knew nothing of the previous message, read it and fainted.

The message said: "Unto us a child is born. 6 ft. long and 2 ft. wide."



Pundemonium

- Did you hear about the patient who refused Novocain during a root canal? He wanted to transcend dental medication.
- The short fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.

THE CORNIEST DOG JOKE OF ALL TIME

A man takes his Rottweiler to the vet and says, "My dog's cross-eyed, is there anything you can do for him?"

"Well," says the vet, "let's have a look at him."

So he picks the dog up and examines his eyes, and then checks his teeth.

Finally, he says, "I'm going to have to put him down."

"What?! Because he's cross-eyed?"

"No," says the vet, "because he's really heavy."

19TH-CENTURY NONSENSE:

PUN MATERIAL

Passing by a house that had been almost consumed by fire, a Bostonian inquired as to whose it was.

On being told that it had belonged to a hatter, he observed: "Well, then, I guess the loss will be much felt."

“Curtains of white
and green light draped
over us. It seemed
like we could reach up
and touch the folds.”

—Nancy V., Ventura, CA,
about a Bob Berman trip

See the Northern Lights with *The Old Farmer's Almanac!*

Join us in Alaska to see the aurora borealis from February 26–March 3, 2017.
Led by the Almanac's astronomy editor, Bob Berman,
this 6-day, 5-night adventure promises to be the trip of a lifetime.

By night, behold the blazing and magical curtains of light. By day, tour Alaska!

Highlights include:

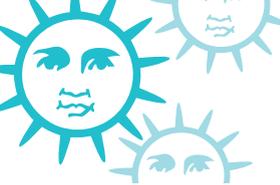
- accommodations, most meals
- luxury bus transport in Alaska
- Museum of the North,
University of Alaska Fairbanks
- World Ice Art Championships
- dog sledding
- hot springs pool
- astronomy lectures
- photography tutorial
- optional train tour
- and much, much more!



Space is limited! For details and reservations, call 845-901-7049.

LEARN MORE

Ice Sculpture photo: FairbanksMike



WHAT'S NEXT



GARDENING

Grow nutrient-dense, “powerhouse” plants



CALENDAR

Full Wolf Moon, perihelion, garnets, State of the Union addresses, first woman doctor Elizabeth Blackwell, 1793 Almanac tidbits



LIVING NATURALLY

How fitness is frugal



ASTRONOMY

Explore with our Sky Map



FOOD

Warm up to oatmeal recipes, plus how to enter our 2017 Recipe Contest



ANNIVERSARY

The life and times of Almanac founder Robert B. Thomas

PLUS: Weather Update • U.S. and Canadian Weather Forecasts • Best Days to Do Things • Gardening by the Moon’s Sign • Humor • and much more in the January 2017 *EXTRA!*

CELEBRATING THE ALMANAC’S 225TH YEAR!