

EXTRA!

FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

 KITCHEN USES
FOR SNOW AND ICE

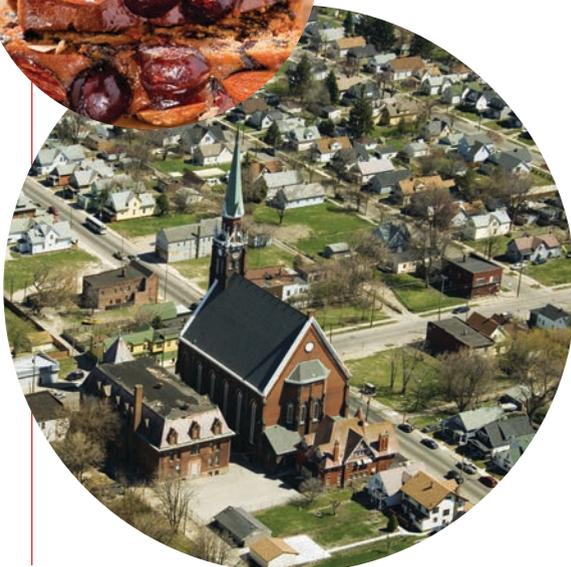
 WINTER
LANDSCAPING:
AN ARMCHAIR
ADVENTURE

 3 HOLIDAY
FRUITCAKE
RECIPES

 GARDENING
BY THE
MOON'S SIGN

DECEMBER 2015





FEATURES

LIVING NATURALLY
USE SNOW AND ICE
IN THE KITCHEN

GARDENING
WINTER LANDSCAPING:
AN ARMCHAIR ADVENTURE

FOOD
WARNING: IT'S
FRUITCAKE SEASON
3 holiday fruitcake recipes

WEATHER
"IT WAS SO
COLD THAT . . ."
When the big chill hits
Canada, things can get
downright scary.

AMUSEMENT
WHY THE MIDWEST IS
SQUARE
Ever wonder about all
of those right angles?

DEPARTMENTS

CALENDAR

This Month in the Universe

Monthly Happenings

Kwanzaa; An Echo 1 Anniversary

Getting Married in December?

Choose Your Theme; Explore the Lore

ASTROLOGY

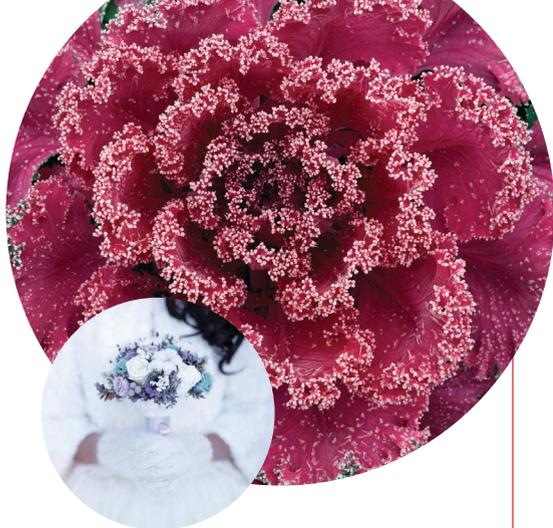
Best Days

Gardening by the Moon's Sign

ASTRONOMY

Sky Map for December 2015

Visually navigate the night sky from your own backyard.



HOT PRODUCTS

Winter Essentials

WEATHER FORECASTS

How We Make Our Predictions

December U.S. and Canadian
Weather Forecasts

Weather Update

WIT

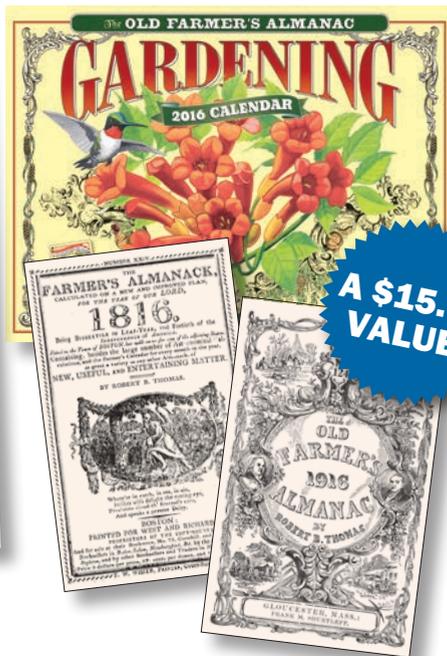
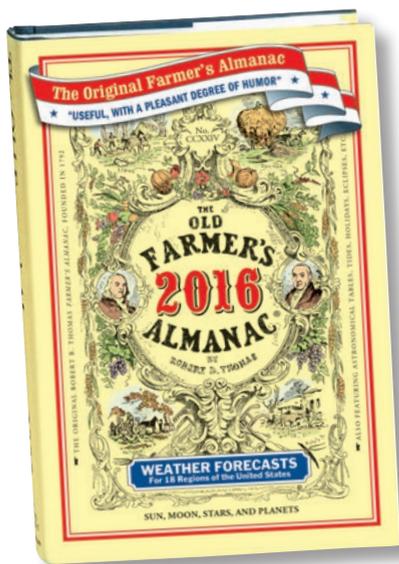
Humor Me

*Grins and groans from the
Almanac archive*

WHAT'S NEXT

See what we have in store for
our January 2016 issue!





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THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, AND FOLKLORE



This Month in the Universe

December's full Moon, the Full Cold Moon, occurs on the 25th, at 6:11 A.M. EST.

The December solstice occurs on the 21st, at 11:48 P.M. EST. At this time, winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere and summer begins in the Southern Hemisphere.

 TAP FOR MORE ABOUT FULL MOON NAMES.

 TAP FOR MORE ABOUT THE WINTER SOLSTICE.

SAY HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

I always prefer to believe the best of everybody; it saves so much trouble.

—Rudyard Kipling,
English writer
(b. Dec. 30, 1865;
d. Jan. 18, 1936)



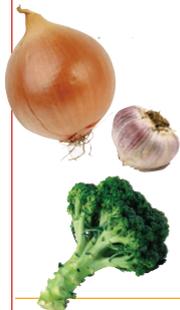
MONTHLY HAPPENINGS

KWANZAA

December 26 through January 1

Created in 1966 by Maulana Karenga, professor and chair of Africana Studies at California State University, Long Beach, Kwanzaa is an weeklong African-American holiday that celebrates African heritage. Each day celebrates one of seven basic principles: unity (*umoja*), self-determination (*kujichagulia*), collective work





TAP FOR A CURRIED KWANZAA STEW RECIPE.



and responsibility (*ujima*), cooperative economics (*ujamaa*), purpose (*nia*), creativity (*kuumba*), and faith (*imani*).

During Kwanzaa, people decorate their homes in black, red, and green and display traditional African objects along with straw mats, ears of corn, and other symbolic items. Candles (one black, three red, and three green) are lit each evening. After the lighting, the day's principle is discussed and a traditional meal may be served. The celebration ends with a feast, usually with music and dancing.

ECHO 1 STAMP ISSUED

December 15

On this day in 1960, a commemorative stamp of *Echo 1* was issued from Washington, D.C. Designed by artist Ervine Metz, its value was 4 cents.

Launched by NASA on August 12, 1960, the *Echo 1* satellite orbited at about 1,000 miles above Earth, completing one revolution in approximately 2 hours. The

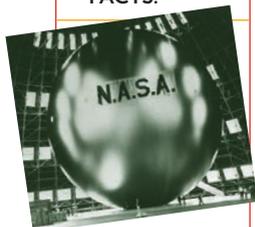


100-foot-wide balloon was easily visible at night by sky watchers, as it was brighter than most stars.

Echo 1 was the world's first communications satellite designed

to have signals from one point on Earth bounce off it and redirect to another location on the planet. It was used to redirect telephone, radio, and television signals across the continent and between continents. The first live voice communication via satellite, the first coast-to-coast telephone call via satellite, and the first image transmitted via satellite were all accomplished with *Echo 1*.

TAP FOR ECHO 1 FUN FACTS.



DID YOU KNOW?

- *Echo 1* was originally called *Echo 1A*. The first *Echo 1* was destroyed after its launching rocket failed.
- This relatively simple satellite was nicknamed a “satelloon.” The balloon was made of a thin film of Mylar plastic covered with a thick coating of aluminum.

TAP TO SHARE
YOUR
IDEAS FOR A
WINTER
FOREST
WEDDING
THEME.



Getting Married in December?

CHOOSE YOUR THEME

For a wedding in the 12th month of the year, consider a winter forest theme. Embellish wedding invitations with illustrations of evergreen trees or pinecones. Include sprigs of conifers, holly, and ferns in the bridal bouquet and groom's boutonniere. Decorate the reception area in deep greens, white, and silver. Hang evergreen garlands coated with artificial snow (available from craft stores) and icicles; mix them with crystal garlands.

Set potted evergreen trees in corners and twine strings of white lights among the branches; tuck in artificial birds' nests or other woodland treasures. Candles in faceted clear-glass holders placed throughout the room will add a festive glow. Cover guest tables with rich-green tablecloths and provide sparkling dinnerware; for a more rustic look, set crystal goblets on tree slice coasters and clear glass plates on tree slice chargers or placemats.

For centerpieces, gather pine twigs, artificial white branches, and

TAP TO LEARN
ABOUT OUR
WEDDING
PHOTO
CONTEST.



WHEN
DECEMBER
SNOWS
FALL FAST,
MARRY AND
TRUE LOVE
WILL LAST.



other accents and pop them into glass vases inserted into small, hollowed-out logs. For favors, offer pine needle sachets or tiny evergreen seedlings wrapped in burlap.

There are many options to make this a truly magical winter woodland wonderland! Can you think of more?



TAP FOR MORE
WEDDING
FOLKLORE
OR TO SHARE
YOUR OWN
TRADITIONS.

EXPLORE THE LORE

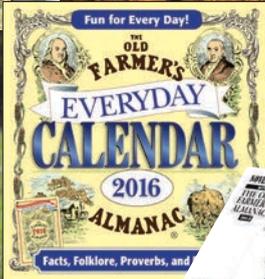
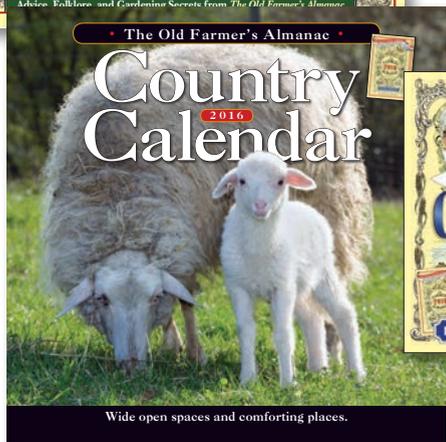
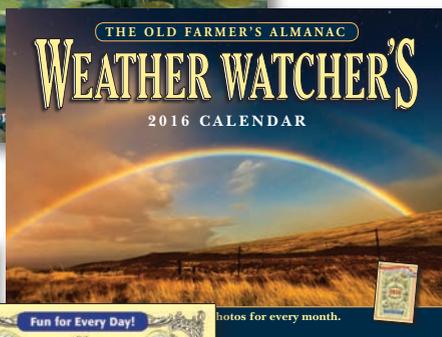
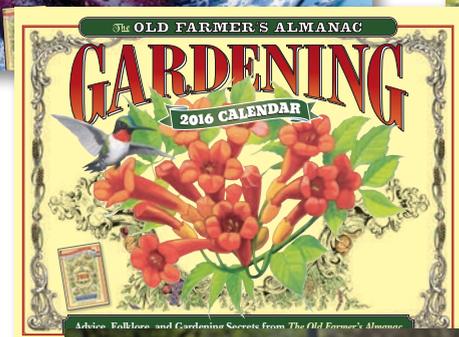
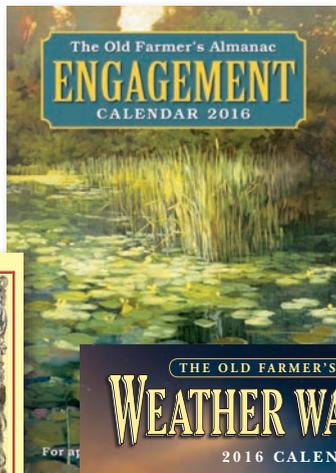
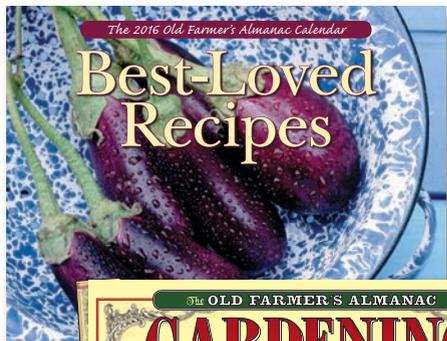
Wedding folklore can add a bit of whimsy and tradition to an invitation, a place card, even a thank-you note. Here are a few to use or adapt:

- If a girl is kissed under the mistletoe seven times in one day, she will marry one of the fellows within the year.
- It is good luck for the wedding couple to stand on a white rug.
- Expect another marriage soon if an unmarried person sits between the bride and groom at the wedding dinner.



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BEST DAYS

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: 3, 8
- Begin diet to gain weight: 17, 21
- Cut hair to encourage growth: 17, 18
- Cut hair to discourage growth: 5, 6
- Have dental care: 2–4, 30, 31
- Quit smoking: 3, 8
- Wean children: 3, 8

AROUND THE HOUSE

- Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut: 26
- End projects: 9, 10
- Start projects: 12, 13

OUTDOORS

- Begin logging: 12, 13
- Go camping: 10–11
- Go fishing: 11–25
- Set posts or pour concrete: 12, 13

IN THE GARDEN

- Destroy pests and weeds: 19, 20
- Graft or pollinate: 25, 26
- Prune to encourage growth: 19, 20
- Prune to discourage growth: 1, 27, 28
- Plant aboveground crops: 17, 18
- Plant belowground crops: 7–9, 26
- Harvest aboveground crops: 21, 22
- Harvest belowground crops: 2, 3, 30, 31

ON THE FARM

- Breed animals: 7–9
- Castrate animals: 14, 15
- Cut hay: 19, 20
- Set eggs: 4, 22–24, 31
- Slaughter livestock: 7–9
- Wean animals: 3, 8



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

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 will next be retrograde
from January 5 to 25, 2016.**

—Celeste Longacre



“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

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Join us in Alaska to see the aurora borealis from March 8–13, 2016.

Led by the Almanac's astronomy editor, Bob Berman, this 6-day, 5-night adventure promises to be the trip of a lifetime.

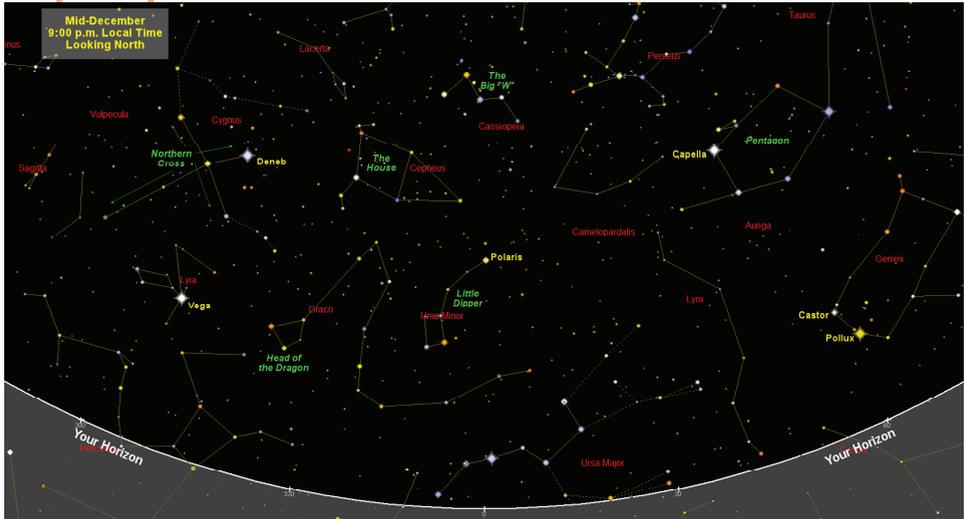
By night, behold the blazing and magical curtains of light. By day, tour Alaska!

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ASTERISMS AND METEORS RULE THE SKY

It's human nature to search for patterns; that's how the constellations of the night sky came to be. The ancients gazed at the heavens and saw kings and queens, heroes and warriors, lions and eagles. Different cultures saw different patterns. It was not until modern times that astronomers agreed to divide the sky into 88 official constellations. By definition, every star belongs to one of the 88 constellations.

IS EVERY STAR IN A CONSTELLATION?

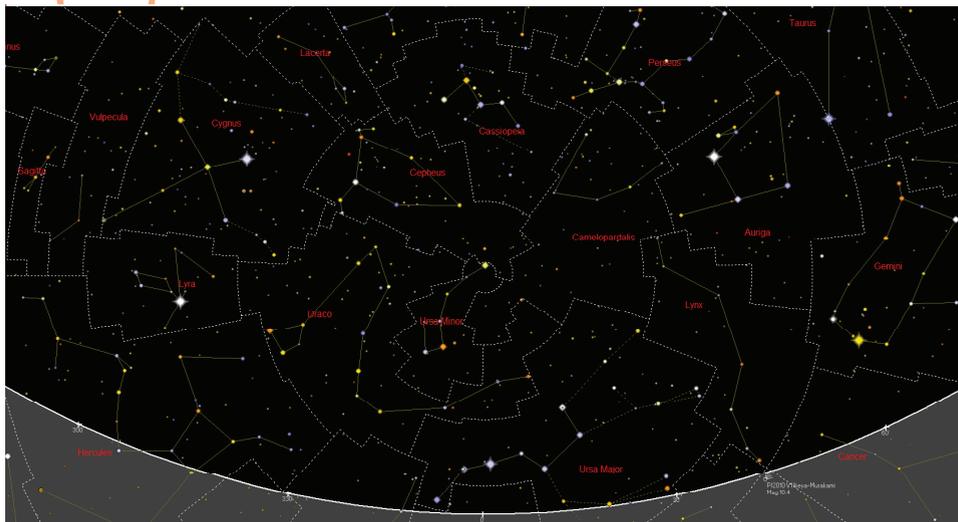
Yes! Each constellation is defined as an area of the sky with specific boundaries, like a map of the United States divided into states. Every star lies within the boundaries of a constellation, just like every U.S. resident dwells within the boundaries of one of the states. All of the stars within the

APP EXTRA!

TAP TO GET
A PRINTABLE
DECEMBER
SKY MAP

APP EXTRA!

TAP TO
FOLLOW
OHIOAN JEFF
DETRAY'S SKY
ADVENTURES



MAP OF CONSTELLATION BOUNDARIES

boundaries of a constellation are part of the constellation even though they are not part of the “stick figure.”

Although the number of constellations is fixed by international agreement at 88, within these 88 official star patterns are many smaller, unofficial patterns known as asterisms. Asterisms are typically made up of the brightest stars in a constellation. There are several notable asterisms in the December sky.

Looking north, as shown on this month’s Sky Map, the constellation Cassiopeia, the Queen, hangs high in the sky. Cassiopeia contains many stars, but it’s the big “W” asterism that catches the eye (even though it looks more like a big “M” at this time of year). The big “W” includes the five brightest stars in Cassiopeia. It’s a case where the asterism completely dominates the constellation.

A similar example is the Little Dipper asterism, which sits below Cassiopeia in the constellation Ursa Minor, the Lesser Bear. The stars of the Little Dipper



are the brightest in the Ursa Minor constellation.

The sinuous body of Draco, the Dragon, loops around the bowl of the Little Dipper. Follow the body to the left until you come to the four-sided asterism forming the head of the Dragon. Here the asterism is only a small part of a much larger constellation.

Above Draco is Cepheus, the King (Cassiopeia is his queen). The main portion of Cepheus is the House asterism, which clearly resembles a child's drawing of a home, albeit tipped on its side.

To the left of Cepheus is Cygnus, the Swan. His beak is down and to the left; his tail is the bright star Deneb. But within the body of the Swan are five bright stars forming the Northern Cross asterism, with Deneb at its top. The Northern Cross asterism is often visible even when the larger portion of Cygnus is too dim to see.

Finally, on the right side of the map, is Auriga, the Charioteer, which contains the lopsided Pentagon asterism.

From a not-very-dark location, you can often spot an asterism even when most of the stars in a constellation are too dim to be seen. And since asterisms are entirely unofficial, you are free to give a name of your own to any distinctive pattern of stars that catches your eye!

THE GEMINIDS ARE ONE OF THE BEST AND MOST RELIABLE METEOR SHOWERS OF THE YEAR.

While you're eyeing the sky, don't miss the annual Geminid meteor shower on the nights of both December 13 and 14. The Geminids are one of the best and most reliable meteor showers of the year. The Moon will be a slim crescent, so it won't interfere with meteor viewing. As long as the sky is clear and you're in a dark location, expect to see a shooting star per minute in any part of the sky from darkness to the wee hours. If your schedule or curiosity allows, you might also see some meteors a few nights before and after these dates, too.

—Jeff DeTray

WINTER ESSENTIALS



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BUY



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LIVING NATURALLY

*Use Snow
and Ice
in the
Kitchen*

(So, these ideas are a little flaky!)

LIVING NATURALLY

Snow cream with
sliced almonds and
cheesecake chunks



JT'S WINTER! In central New Hampshire where I live, snow from the first big storm of the season is falling and ice has covered the pond behind my house.

I'll get a lot of exercise today and tomorrow shoveling pathways, de-icing the driveway, and snowshoeing in the adjacent woods.

Snow and ice can be cold comfort in the kitchen. If you don't have any just outside your kitchen door, use cubed or crushed ice from your freezer to benefit in these ways:

Make Snow Cream

Many parts of the nation consider this mixture of fresh snow, sugar, milk (cream, evaporated milk, or half-and-half), and vanilla extract a winter treat. I've tasted it but never made it myself. If you do make it, work fast or make it outside just before serving to keep your snow cream cold. Don't be afraid to add some berries!



Maple sugar candy

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

Make Maple Sugar On Snow

Growing up in Vermont in a family with many farmer relatives, every spring I sampled the world's most fabulous candy. Anyone can make it. Collect clean, fresh snow and pack it hard into small bowls. Leave it outdoors until you're ready. Boil some maple syrup until a bit of it dribbled into cold water forms a ball that you can lift out with your fingers. Drizzle onto the bowl of snow, where the syrup will harden into a soft maple leather. Pull it off and pop it into your mouth. Indescribable sweet pleasure! Chasing it with a sour dill pickle cuts the sweetness and enables you to keep eating.

Thicken a Salad Dressing

Throw a chunk of ice into your oil-and-vinegar dressing, shake, and then remove the ice. The ice will have formed a thick emulsion, allowing the dressing to distribute itself evenly over your salad without separating.

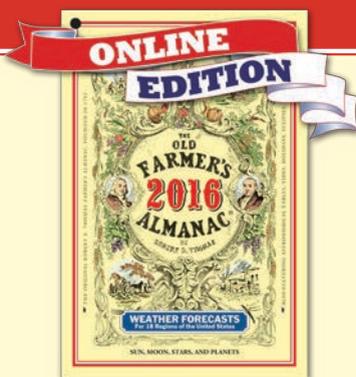
Fluff Up Rice

If you're reheating leftover rice or another grain dish, toss a couple of ice cubes or a small ball of fresh snow into the dish before microwaving.

—Margaret Boyles

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GARDENING

Winter Landscaping

An Armchair
Adventure

PUSSY WILLOWS

PHOTO: THINKSTOCK

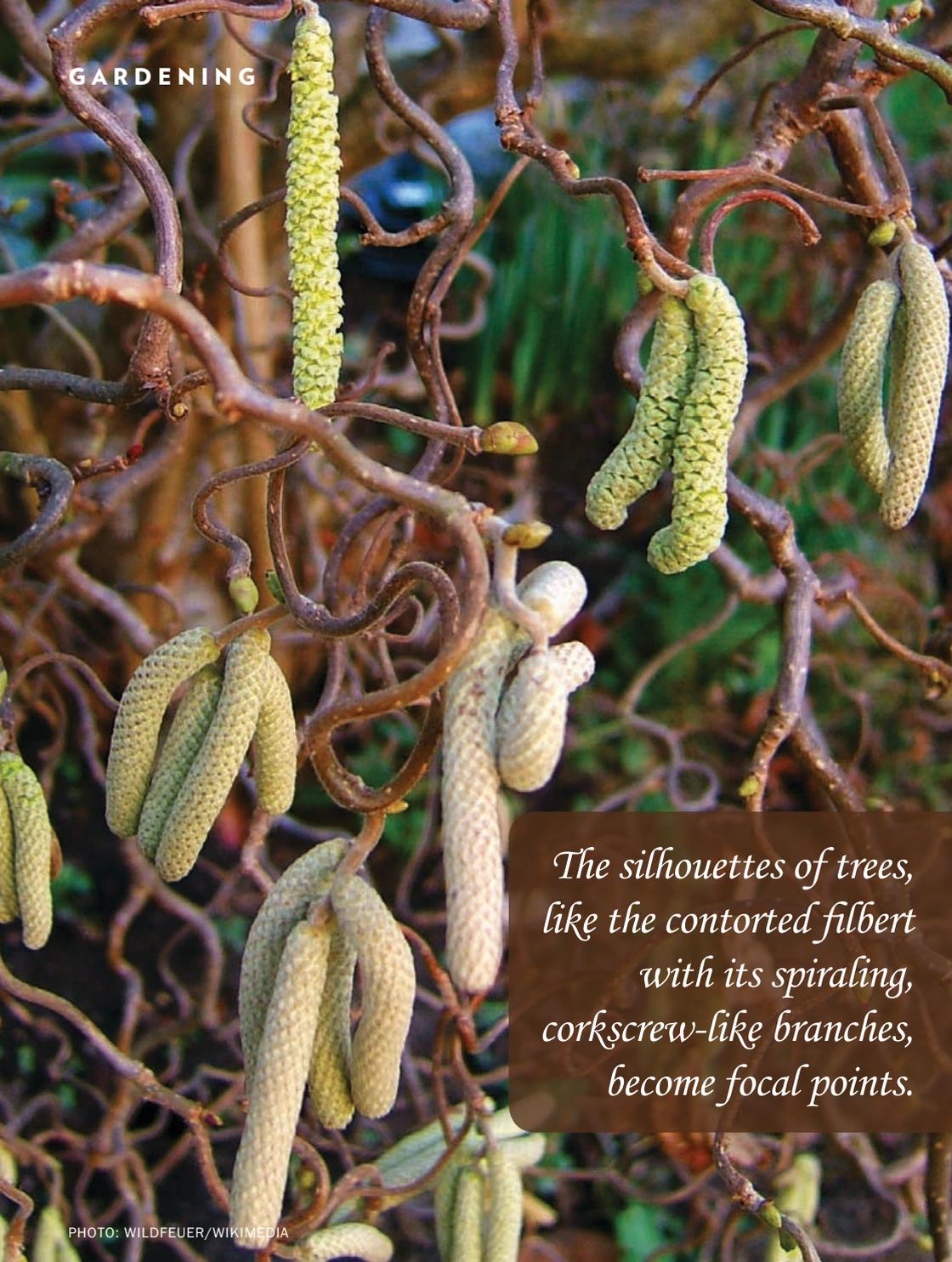
IMAGINE A WINDOW view of a landscape that is alive with color and texture: bright yellow, red, and white flowers bursting into bloom and lush green, blue, and golden foliage. Now imagine it in winter. By learning a bit about plants that exhibit interesting winter features, you can create a garden that will stand out in every season.

Believe it or not, there are a few plants that bloom in winter. The Christmas rose, the earliest-blooming hellebore, produces persistent white flowers with just a hint of pink in December and January. In the Far North, witch hazel hybrids flower in February and March with fragrant yellow, red, and orange blooms, along with many varieties of pussy willows.

Flowers actually play only a small role in making a winter garden sparkle. Rich green hemlocks and light wispy pines provide screens and backdrops, while weeping blue spruce, 'Old Gold' juniper, and the columnar 'Emerald Green' arborvitae provide pleasing shapes and colors. Broad-leaf evergreens like blue holly, 'Emerald Gold' euonymus, laurels, and small-leaf rhododendrons add



WITCH HAZEL



The silhouettes of trees, like the contorted filbert with its spiraling, corkscrew-like branches, become focal points.

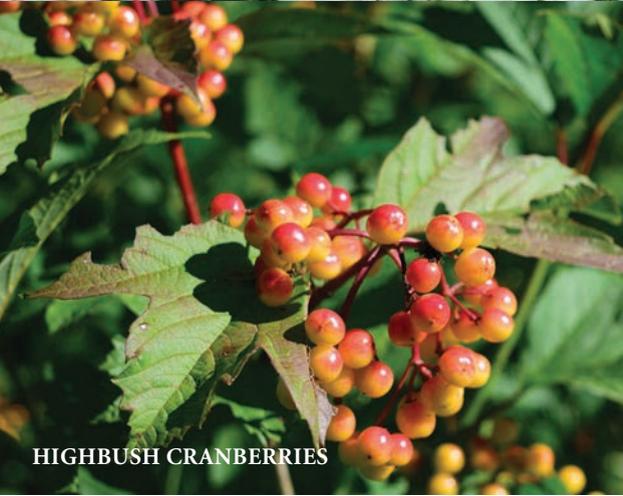
GARDENING



CRABAPPLES



CHRISTMAS ROSE



HIGHBUSH CRANBERRIES

still more color and texture. Many berries hang on long into winter. The red berries of highbush cranberries, hollies, and hawthorns; the red, yellow, purple, and bronze fruit of crabapples; and the variety of fruit and berries offered by cherries, viburnums, and roses can be considered the flowers of winter. Add to these the vividly colored stems of red osier and yellow-twig dogwoods.

WITHOUT THEIR leaves, trees and shrubs reveal an inner beauty. The exfoliating cinnamon-red bark of the paperbark maple and stark rough exterior of the black cherry now become dominant features. The silhouettes of trees, like the contorted filbert with its spiraling, corkscrew-like branches, become focal points, signing their signatures with shadows on the snow.

You can't really do much about planting a winter landscape now, but it is the time for planning and dreaming—and choosing a window to put your armchair by.

—George Lohmiller

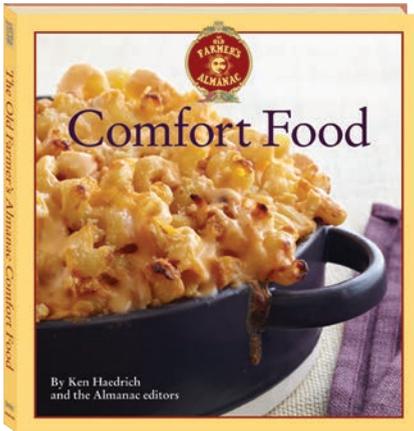
GARDENING



TAP FOR
MORE ABOUT
ORNAMENTAL
TREES.

*Without their leaves,
trees and shrubs, such
as this paperbark maple,
reveal an inner beauty.*

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FOOD

WARNING:
IT'S FRUITCAKE SEASON!

PHOTO: JAMES CLARKE/SHUTTERSTOCK

SOON THEY will be upon us—hundreds of them. Sodden with alcohol, their massive bodies bulging with strange green protuberances, they will attack us at our homes, at our friends' homes, at our offices. There is no escape! It is the hour of the fruitcake.

It seems incomprehensible that something so many people find unsavory should be so much a part of a season of celebration, of feasting and sharing. But sometimes, the inexplicable has its own logic. "It's not necessary for foods with a ceremonial significance to be palatable," explained George Armelagos, coauthor of *Consuming Passions: The Anthropology of Eating* (Houghton Mifflin, 1980). "The symbol is much more important than the taste itself."

We respectfully disagree and thus have gathered several recipes that are sure to change your ideas about fruitcake. Maybe next year, your guests will even request it!

—Deborah Papier

FOOD

BRAZIL NUT FRUITCAKE

+ TAP FOR
RECIPE

CHOCOLATE FRUITCAKE

+ TAP FOR
RECIPE

SPICED GINGER NUT FRUITCAKE

+ TAP FOR
RECIPE

BRAZIL NUT FRUITCAKE

This recipe was perfected by Mother Mary Clare in the monastery kitchen of the St. Scholastica Priory in Petersham, Massachusetts. Be forewarned: Brazil nuts are hard to find already shelled, so factor in about an hour for shelling a pound.

- 1 pound dried apricots, finely chopped**
- 1 pound dates, finely chopped**
- 1 cup fresh cranberries, rinsed and chopped**
- 1 pound shelled Brazil nuts, finely chopped**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 3/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder**
- 2 eggs**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 2 tablespoons sherry or brandy, divided**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 275°F. Thoroughly grease a 9x5-inch loaf pan.
- 2.** In a bowl, combine the fruit and nuts.
- 3.** In a separate bowl, combine all dry ingredients and whisk to blend. Add fruit and nuts and mix thoroughly.
- 4.** In another bowl, beat eggs until foamy. Add vanilla and 1 tablespoon of sherry and beat until blended. Stir into flour, fruit, and nut mixture until smooth.
- 5.** Pack firmly into prepared pan. Bake for 1 hour, or until gently browned and firm to the touch. When cool, brush on remaining sherry.

Makes 1 loaf.



SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

CHOCOLATE FRUITCAKE

More a cake than a fruitcake, this winning combination of chocolate and dried cherries will keep for up to a week stored in a tightly covered container.

CAKE:

1/2 cup dried cherries
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup cocoa powder
3 eggs, separated
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 cup chopped nuts

GLAZE:

4 ounces unsweetened chocolate

2/3 cup chocolate chips

1 cup (2 sticks) butter

2 tablespoons corn syrup

FOR CAKE:

1. Cover cherries and raisins in hot water and soak for 15 minutes.
2. Preheat oven to 325°F. Grease an 8- or 9-inch tube pan, line with wax paper, and grease wax paper.
3. In a bowl, add butter and sugar and beat until creamy. Add cocoa powder, egg yolks, and vanilla and beat until smooth.
4. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, and cinnamon and whisk to blend. Beat the flour mixture into the cocoa mixture alternately with 1/2 cup of water, until smooth.
5. Beat egg whites until stiff and gently fold into the batter.
6. Drain cherries and raisins and stir them, along with nuts, into the batter.
7. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake for 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool and frost with chocolate glaze.

FOR GLAZE:

Melt unsweetened chocolate and chocolate chips in a double boiler over hot water. Stir in butter, one tablespoon at a time. Add corn syrup, stirring mixture until it reaches spreading consistency.

SHARE
THIS
RECIPE



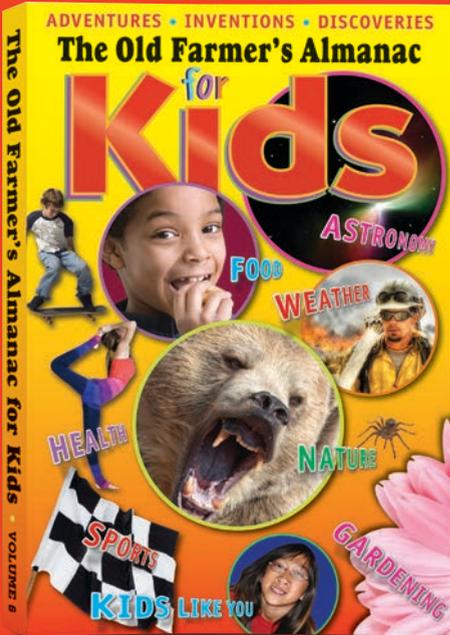
SPICED GINGER NUT FRUITCAKE

Wrapped in foil and stored in an airtight container, this cake will keep for 4 to 5 days. To double its storage life, pour 1/4 cup of sherry or bourbon over the top while it is cooling in the pan.

1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts	3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup chopped dried pineapple	2 eggs, separated
1/2 cup chopped dried cranberries	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 cup golden raisins	1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup finely chopped candied ginger	1 teaspoon baking powder
1 tablespoon lemon zest	1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened	1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
	1/2 cup apple cider
	1/4 cup apricot jam

SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

1. Preheat oven to 275°F. Grease an 8-1/2x4-1/2-inch loaf pan, line with wax paper, and grease wax paper.
 2. In a bowl, combine nuts, fruit, candied ginger, and lemon zest.
 3. In a separate bowl, add butter and sugar and beat until creamy. Beat in egg yolks, one at a time, and then vanilla.
 4. In another bowl, combine flour, baking powder, ground ginger, and cloves. Add to butter mixture alternately with cider and stir until smooth. Stir in fruit mixture.
 5. Beat egg whites until stiff, then gently fold into batter.
 6. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for 75 minutes, or until the top is golden and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool in the pan for 30 minutes, then turn out onto a cooling rack.
 7. In a pan over low heat, melt jam, then brush on top of cake.
- Makes 1 loaf.



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WEATHER



“IT WAS SO
COLD THAT...”

When **The Big Chill** hits Canada,
things can get downright scary.

Canadians know cold.

And when they talk about it, you pay attention. These reports caught our eye, not only because they made us shiver, but also because more often than not they were prefaced with “I swear this is true.” Some of these accounts may indeed be apocryphal, but taken together, they give new meaning to the phrase “It was so cold that . . .”

-43°F

Several children got stuck to their playground equipment and had to be thawed off; Moosomin, Saskatchewan; December 19, 1983.

-45°F

In Kapuskasing, Ontario, tires fell off the rims of cars, January 15, 1994.

-54°F

When a Winnipeg hotel caught fire, a person trapped by the flames simply poured a pitcher of water out the window and slid down the icicle; December 24, 1879.

-73°F

The snapping cold made sleds squeak so loudly that it scared the horses; Iroquois Falls, Ontario; January 23, 1935.

-51°F

Outside of town, you could hear the school bus creaking 10 to 15 minutes before it reached the driveway; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; January 1938.

-45°F

When cattle peed, they had to keep moving so that the icicles they made didn't freeze them to the ground; southern Saskatchewan; January 1938.

A hotel guest trapped by flames poured a pitcher of water out the window and slid down the icicle.

-46°F

Smoke froze in the chimney and choked out the fire, and ravens just nodded at each other rather than squawking; Rivers, Manitoba; 1948.

-22° TO -40°F

Lake Ontario froze hard enough for motorists to drive safely between Toronto, Ont., and Rochester, N.Y., over the lake—if the wheels on their cars would turn; February 1934. Lake Ontario has completely frozen over only twice in history: February 1934 and the winter of 1874–75.

FRIGID FACTOIDS

Seawater freezes at 29°F.

Because mercury freezes at -38°F, alcohol is used in thermometers in colder zones. It freezes at -173°F.

Fifty to 70 percent of body heat is lost through the top of your head, but only if the rest of your body is covered up.

(Your mother was right, as usual.)

*—David Phillips, senior climatologist,
Environment Canada*

-43°F

Winnipeg's old downtown Louise Bridge over the Red River shrank more than 5-1/2 inches; February 1, 1996.

AMUSEMENT

Why the Midwest Is Square

Ever wonder about all of
those right angles?

AMUSEMENT



Many towns, even before they were platted, were set aside as 1-mile squares.



CREDIT FOR THE squaring of the Midwest is often given to Thomas Hutchins, the first geographer of the United States. Due partially to his influence, in 1785, Congress passed a law stipulating that the Midwest would be surveyed in a grid pattern of 6-mile squares, each square (or township) to be further subdivided into 36 1-mile squares (sections) of 640 acres each. Surveying the first tract, Hutchins stuck his Jacob staff on the north bank of the Ohio River, square on the Pennsylvania border, and ran a line due west 42 miles. And so it went.

Many towns, even before they were platted, were set aside as 1-mile squares. Platting started with a public square, then little squares or blocks pushed out in all directions until they ran blindly into a river or lake. Thus began the pattern of land survey that was to persist throughout the rest of the country, with few exceptions. The pattern provided a way to locate precisely any piece of land within a tract to be surveyed.



AMUSEMENT

**Squaredom
is not nearly
as accurate
as the square
mind would
like it to be.**

BLAME FOR THE squaring of the Midwest goes to the road builders. A survey line is only a mark on a map, not visible on the land like a river or three oak trees growing from one root. In hill country, delineations of roadway by necessity followed the lines of least resistance. When the lines reached the flat land of Indiana and Illinois, it became possible to mark them physically. Roads were built on the section lines.

At least it is impossible to get lost: Heading west on a township road, you can count the perpendicular roads you pass and know how many miles you have gone. If the road you are on ends at a river, you just take a right angle and go until you find another east-west road that crosses the river.

UNFORTUNATELY, you can't lay down a straight line on a curved surface for very far. Furthermore, a magnetic compass will not keep to a consistently straight line over a great distance. For both of these reasons, Squaredom is not nearly as accurate as the square mind would like it to be. Many 640-acre sections of land actually contain a few more or a few less acres than 640. The extras may have been added on to all of the quarters of a section, or they may, as in Illinois, all have been thrown into the northwest quarter, so that three-fourths of the land possesses undefiled rectitude.

Another kind of inaccuracy is inherent in the rectitude of forcing imperfect Earth into perfect geometric squares: Deeply undulating terrain contains considerably more surface acreage than flat terrain of the same survey dimensions. And for that, many Midwesterners are grateful.

—adapted from an article by Gene Logsdon



“Everything you need to plan your vegetable garden”



Plan Your Garden the Easy Way

Draw your ideal garden layout

Access detailed growing advice for each plant

View your personalized planting calendar
& receive planting reminders by email





WEATHER FORECASTS

HOLLY BERRIES SHINING RED,
MEAN A LONG WINTER, 'TIS SAID.



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.

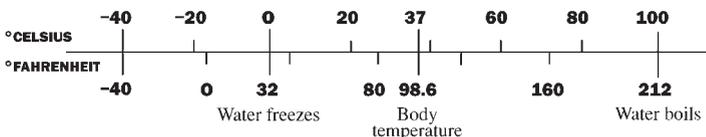


TAP TO FIND
OUT THE
WEATHER
HISTORY OF
THE DAY.



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

CELSIUS-FAHRENHEIT TABLE





WEATHER FORECASTS

MAP OF U.S. WEATHER REGIONS



MAP OF CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS





WEATHER FORECASTS

IF THE MILKY WAY IN DECEMBER SHOWS CLEAR,
YOU MAY SAFELY COUNT ON A FRUITFUL YEAR.

U.S. FORECASTS DECEMBER 2015

REGION 1: NORTHEAST

Temp. 24° (4° below avg.); precip. 4" (1" above avg.). 1–3 Snowstorm. 4–9 Snow south, sunny north; cold. 10–14 Snowstorm, then snow showers, cold. 15–17 Snow, cold. 18–24 Snow showers, cold. 25–31 Snowstorm, then rain and snow showers, mild.

REGION 2: ATLANTIC CORRIDOR

Temp. 37.5° (3° below avg. north, avg. south); precip. 4" (1" above avg.). 1–5 Snowy periods, cold north; showers, mild south. 6–9 Rain and snow showers, cold. 10–13 Rain to snow, then sunny, mild. 14–19 Heavy snow north, showers south. 20–23 Sunny, cold. 24–27 Snowstorm, then sunny, cold. 28–31 Rainy, mild.

REGION 3: APPALACHIANS

Temp. 35° (3° below avg. north, 1° above south); precip. 2.5" (0.5" below avg.). 1–3 Sunny, mild. 4–10 Periods of rain and snow north, showers south. 11–13 Sunny, mild. 14–19 Snow showers, cold. 20–23 Sunny, cold. 24–26 Snowstorm. 27–31 Rain, then sunny, cold.

REGION 4: SOUTHEAST

Temp. 48° (avg. north, 2° above south); precip. 4.5" (1" above avg.). 1–4 Sunny, turning mild. 5–11 Showers, then sunny, cold. 12–16 Rainy periods, mild. 17–21 Sunny, cool. 22–27 Rain to snow, then sunny, cold. 28–31 Rain, then sunny, cold.

REGION 5: FLORIDA

Temp. 66° (3° above avg.); precip. 2" (0.5" below avg.). 1–4 Sunny, warm. 5–10 Scattered showers, warm. 11–16 Sunny, warm. 17–26 A few showers north, sunny south; cool. 27–31 Showers, warm.



WEATHER FORECASTS

REGION 6: LOWER LAKES

Temp. 31.5° (3° below avg. east, 2° above west); precip. 2.5" (0.5" below avg.). 1–3 Rain and snow showers. 4–8 Snowstorm, then flurries cold. 9–13 Snow east, rain west, then rain and snow showers, mild. 14–22 Lake snows and snow showers, cold. 23–26 Flurries, cold east; sunny, mild west. 27–31 Snowstorm, then flurries, cold.

REGION 7: OHIO VALLEY

Temp. 36° (1° below avg.); precip. 4" (1" above avg.). 1–5 Sun, then rainy, mild. 6–12 Snow, then showers, mild. 13–16 Snow to rain. 17–23 Snow showers, cold. 24–25 Snowstorm. 26–31 Rain, then flurries, cold.

REGION 8: DEEP SOUTH

Temp. 49° (1° above avg.); precip. 5" (avg.). 1–3 Sunny, mild. 4–9 Rainy periods, cool. 10–15 Rainy periods north, sunny south; turning mild. 16–21 Rain, then sunny, cold. 22–24 Snow north, rain south. 25–31 Rain, then sunny, cold.

REGION 9: UPPER MIDWEST

Temp. 15.5° (1° above avg. east, 2° below west); precip. 1.5" (0.5" above avg.). 1–8 Snow showers, cold. 9–14 Snow showers; mild, then cold. 15–22 Lake snows east, flurries west; cold. 23–26 Snow showers, mild. 27–31 Lake snows east, flurries west; very cold.

REGION 10: HEARTLAND

Temp. 34° (2° above avg.); precip. 1.5" (1" above avg. north, 0.5" below south). 1–2 Sunny, mild. 3–7 Rain to snow, then sunny. 8–11 Rain to snow, then sunny, mild. 12–21 Rain and snow, then sunny, cold. 22–26 Rain and snow showers, turning mild. 27–31 Heavy snow north, rain south, then sunny, very cold.

REGION 11: TEXAS-OKLAHOMA

Temp. 56° (3° above avg.); precip. 1" (1.5" below avg.). 1–5 Sunny, turning cold. 6–11 Showers, then sunny, warm. 12–18 Showers, then sunny, warm. 19–27 Scattered t-storms, turning warm. 28–31 Flurries north, sprinkles south; cold.



WEATHER FORECASTS

REGION 12: HIGH PLAINS

Temp. 25° (3° below avg.); precip. 0.5" (avg.). 1–4 Snowy periods, cold. 5–10 Snow showers north; sunny, mild south. 11–17 Snow showers, cold north; sunny, mild south. 18–23 Sunny, turning mild. 24–31 Snowy periods, turning very cold.

REGION 13: INTERMOUNTAIN

Temp. 31.5° (avg. north, 3° below south); precip. 1.5" (avg.). 1–5 Rain and snow showers north, snowstorm south. 6–10 Rain and snow showers, mild north; snowstorm central; sunny, cold south. 11–15 Snow showers, cold. 16–19 Sunny, cold. 20–24 Snow showers, mild. 25–31 Snow, then flurries, very cold.

REGION 14: DESERT SOUTHWEST

Temp. 45° (3° below avg.); precip. 0.2" (0.3" below avg.). 1–2 A shower, warm. 3–6 Sunny, cool. 7–15 Scattered showers, cool. 16–24 Sunny, cold. 25–31 Rain and snow showers, then sunny, quite cold.

REGION 15: PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Temp. 41° (2° below); precip. 6" (0.5" below avg.). 1–5 Periods of rain, cool. 6–9 Rainy, mild. 10–11 Sunny, cool. 12–18 Rain and snow, then sunny, cold. 19–23 Snow to heavy rain, turning mild. 24–29 Flurries, cold. 30–31 Rainy, cool.

REGION 16: PACIFIC SOUTHWEST

Temp. 52° (2° below avg.); precip. 3" (1" above avg.). 1–5 Showers, then sunny, cool. 6–14 Rain, some heavy, cool. 15–17 Sunny, cool. 18–22 Rainy periods north, sunny south; cool. 23–24 Sunny. 25–31 Showers, then sunny, cold.

REGION 17: ALASKA

Temp. -1° N, 37° S (6° above avg.); precip. 0.2" N, 5" S (avg.). 1–8 Flurries, cold N+C; snowy periods, mild S. 9–19 Snow showers, quite mild N+WC; snow, some heavy, mild EC; rain and snow, quite mild SC; clear, then rain and snow, mild P+A. 20–25 Snow showers N+C, snowy periods S; cold.



WEATHER FORECASTS

26–31 Snow showers, cold N; snow, then flurries, cold C; rain and snow, mild S.

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

REGION 18: HAWAII

Temp. 75° (avg.); precip. 10.3" (7" above avg.). 1–4 T-storms, warm. 5–9 T-storms C, scattered showers E+W; warm. 10–24 Rainy with heavy t-storms C, scattered t-storms E+W; warm, then cool. 25–28 Sunny C+E, showers; cool. 29–31 T-storms, cool. **KEY:** central (C), east (E), west (W)

CANADIAN FORECASTS NOVEMBER 2015

REGION 1: ATLANTIC CANADA

Temp. -4°C (1°C below avg.); precip. 110mm (20mm below avg.). 1–7 Snowstorm, then flurries, cold. 8–10 Snowy periods. 11–17 Heavy rain to snow, then snowy periods, cold. 18–22 Stormy; heavy rain, mild north; heavy snow south. 23–31 Rain and snow showers, turning mild.

REGION 2: SOUTHERN QUEBEC

Temp. -9°C (2°C below avg.); precip. 95mm (50mm above avg. east, 20mm below west). 1–4 Flurries east, snowstorm west and central; cold. 5–10 Snow showers, cold. 11–15 Snowstorm, then flurries, very cold. 16–20 Snowy periods, cold. 21–28 Snow showers, turning mild. 29–31 Blizzard east, rain to snow west.

RÉGION 2: QUÉBEC DU SUD

Temp. -9°C (2°C en-dessous de la moy.); précip. 95mm (50mm au-dessus de la moy. à l'est, 20mm en-dessous à l'ouest). 1–4 Rafales à l'est, tempête de neige à l'ouest et au centre; froid. 5–10 Chutes de neige, froid. 11–15 Tempête de neige, puis rafales, très froid. 16–20 Périodes de neige, froid. 21–28 Chutes de neige, avec radoucissement. 29–31 Blizzard à l'est, pluie à l'ouest.



CANADIAN WEATHER FORECASTS

REGION 3: SOUTHERN ONTARIO

Temp. -5°C (1°C below avg.); precip. 20mm (20mm below avg.). 1–3 Rain east, snowstorm central and west. 4–10 Snowy periods; cold east, turning mild west. 11–21 Snowy periods, cold. 22–26 Sunny, cold east; snow showers, mild west. 27–31 Snow showers; mild, then cold.

REGION 4: THE PRAIRIES

Temp. -12°C (3°C below avg.); precip. 15mm (5mm below avg.). 1–3 Sunny, cold. 4–9 Flurries; mild, then cold. 10–16 Snow, then snow showers, very cold. 17–25 Sunny, turning mild. 26–31 Snow showers; cold, then mild.

REGION 5: SOUTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Temp. 0°C (1°C below avg.); precip. 150mm (10mm below avg.). 1–7 Rainy periods coast, snow showers inland; mild. 8–12 Rainy coast, snowy periods inland; turning cold. 13–17 Snow, then flurries; cold. 18–24 Rainy periods coast, snow showers inland; turning mild. 25–31 Flurries, turning cold.

REGION 6: YUKON

Temp. -18°C (5°C above avg.); precip. 30mm (5mm above avg.). 1–10 Snow showers, turning mild. 11–20 Snowy periods; cold, then mild. 21–27 Snow showers, turning very cold. 28–31 Flurries, mild.

REGION 7: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Temp. -26°C (avg.); precip. 12mm (avg.). 1–10 Snow showers, mild. 11–14 Flurries, frigid. 15–19 Snow showers, cold. 20–31 Flurries, mild.



WEATHER UPDATE



TAP TO
WATCH A
LIVE REPORT
FROM
BUFFALO, N.Y.,
DECEMBER
2001



DECEMBERS TO REMEMBER

A strong El Niño in November and December should bring abundant precipitation to southern California, cool and wet weather to the Southeast, and mild temperatures to the northern part of the United States and most of Canada.

We continue to expect a change to conditions more like last winter from January into March, with above-normal snowfall and colder temperatures in the Northeast, and the possibility of near- or below-normal precipitation in much of California.

As we enter December, let's take a look at the other Decembers of the current millennium.

2001, DEC. 26-28

Buffalo, New York, had 65.2 inches of snow over a 48-hour period, which buried cars, shrubs, trash cans, and mailboxes; reached windowsills; and swallowed up Christmas lawn displays.

2002, DEC. 4

An early-season winter storm brought 4 to 8 inches of snow and ice to much of the eastern United States, from the lower Ohio Valley, southern Appalachians and into



the Northeast, with an ice storm in the Carolinas described by electric utilities provider Duke Power as “the worst in the company’s history,” with 1.2 million homes losing power.

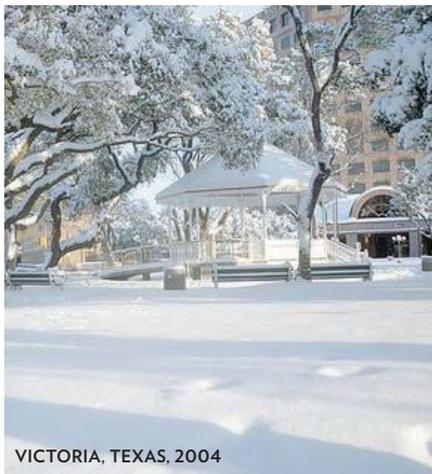
2003, DEC. 25

Heavy rains produced flash flooding and mud slides in areas of southern California that had been ravaged by wildfires in October, killing 16 people at San Bernardino area campgrounds.



2005, DEC. 15

Up to an inch of freezing rain caused nearly 700,000 customers to lose power from northern Georgia northward through the western Carolinas.



2006, DEC. 14

Heavy rain and hurricane-force wind gusts caused more than \$220 million in damages in Washington and Oregon.

2007, DEC. 1-3

Heavy rain and damaging winds occurred in much of Washington and Oregon, including a gust of 129 mph at Bay City, Oregon.

2004, DEC. 25

Snow fell in deep South Texas, including 12.5 inches in Victoria and 4.4 inches in Corpus Christi, making it their first and second white Christmases, respectively.

2008, DEC. 11-12

Up to 8 inches of snow fell in Louisiana and Mississippi on Dec. 11. The next day, the storm brought ice to much of New York and New England, leaving over 1 million homes and businesses without power.



WEATHER UPDATE



NATIONAL GUARD RESPONDING IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA, 2010

2009, DEC. 18

Heavy snow closed major airports, interstate highways, and rail systems from North Carolina to Massachusetts.

2010, DEC. 25-27

A state of emergency was declared in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Maine, with up to 32 inches of snow and widespread blizzard conditions. In New York City, 24.5 inches of snow fell.

2011, DEC. 1

Wind speeds as high as 102 mph were measured in Centerville, Utah, and surrounding cities, with damage reported from South Ogden down to Bountiful.

2012, DEC. 25

Up to 40 tornadoes hit the Gulf Coast region (including two of EF-3

intensity), the largest Christmas Day tornado outbreak on record.

2013, DEC. 20-23

Freezing rain and snow from the central Great Plains into the northeastern United States and in south-central and eastern Canada caused massive damage to power lines, 27 deaths, and over \$200 million in damages.

2014, DEC. 9-11

A slow-moving storm brought heavy precipitation from the mid-Atlantic states through New England, with 27 inches of snow in upstate New York and Vermont, up to 1/4 inch of ice in the mid-Atlantic, and 6 inches of rain in coastal Maine and Massachusetts.

2015

We shall see!

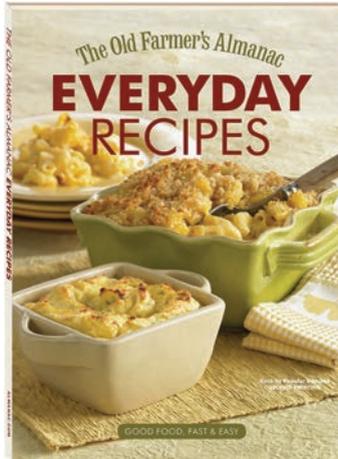
—Michael Steinberg, *Old Farmer's Almanac*
meteorologist

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Strata



Stuffed Red Peppers



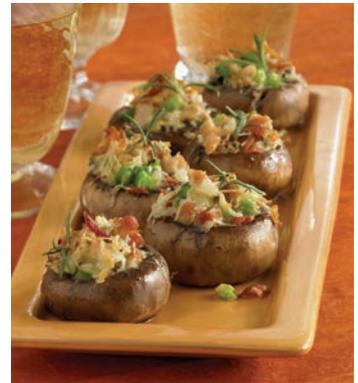
Peachy Almond Cake



Perfect Macaroni and Cheese



Mild and Meaty Lasagna



Clam-Stuffed Mushrooms



HUMOR ME

GRINS AND GROANS FROM THE ALMANAC



Do You Swear to Tell the Whole Truth?

THESE ACTUAL COURT TRANSCRIPTIONS RAISE THE QUESTION OF JUST WHAT THE "WHOLE TRUTH" IS . . .

Q: You say you're innocent, yet five people swore they saw you steal a watch.

A: *Your Honor, I can produce 500 people who didn't see me steal it.*

Q: Did you stay all night with this man in New York?

A: *I refuse to answer that question.*

Q: Did you stay all night with this man in Chicago?

A: *I refuse to answer that question.*

Q: Did you stay all night with this man in Miami?

A: *No.*

Q: And lastly, Gary, all your responses must be oral, OK?

A: *Oral?*

Q: How old are you?

A: *Oral.*

Q: Do you know how far pregnant you are right now?

A: *I will be 3 months on November 8.*

Q: Apparently, then, the date of conception was August 8?

A: *Yes.*

Q: What were you and your husband doing at that time?



WHY DID KAMIKAZE PILOTS WEAR HELMETS?

*Need to lose some sleep?
Ponder these ...*

1. Why are there interstate highways in Hawaii?
2. If nothing ever sticks to Teflon, how do they make Teflon stick to the pan?
3. Why do we drive on parkways and park in driveways?
4. If you're in a vehicle going the speed of light, what happens when you turn on the headlights?
5. Have you ever imagined a world with no hypothetical situations?
6. Why do "fat chance" and "slim chance" mean the same thing?
7. Why isn't "phonetic" spelled the way it sounds?
8. If your nose runs and your feet smell, are you built upside down?
9. What is another word for "thesaurus"?
10. If "pro" is the opposite of "con," is "progress" the opposite of "Congress"?



CORNERED

Bill Jones, the local athletic "champion," was bragging about his physical prowess at the local bar. None of the regulars challenged him, but a visitor piped up, "I'll bet you 20 dollars that I can wheel something in a wheelbarrow for one block and you can't wheel it back." Bill looked the visitor over and decided that whatever the stranger could do, he could do better. "I'll take you on," he said.

The visitor, Bill, and a number of the regulars borrowed a wheelbarrow and took it to the corner.

The challenger smiled smugly, rubbed his hands, picked up the handles, and turned to Bill.

"OK, Bill," he said. "Get in."

WHAT'S NEXT



LIVING NATURALLY

Winter Stress Remedies



CALENDAR

The Full Wolf Moon •
Monthly Happenings •
Folklore Fun •
January's Birth Flower



GARDENING

How to Grow Mint



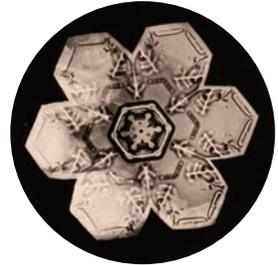
ASTROLOGY

The Best Days to Do Things •
Gardening by the Moon's Sign



FOOD

Yummy Cheese Recipes!



WEATHER

First Snowflake Photographer Wilson Bentley

PLUS: Weather Update • U.S. and Canadian weather forecasts • Sky Map • Humor • and much more in the January 2016 *EXTRA!*