

EXTRA!

FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

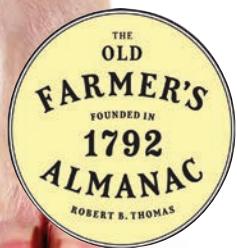
**LOVE TALK
FOR PIGS**

**THE BEAUTY
OF GLEANING**

**LET THERE BE
(GROW)LIGHT**

**ONE-DISH
DINNER RECIPES**

OCTOBER 2019





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FOLLOW US:





CALENDAR

OCTOBER

Holidays, Fun Facts, and More



EYE ON THE SKY

MOON PHASES

First Quarter:

Oct. 5, at 12:47 P.M.
EDT

Full Hunter's

Moon: Oct. 13,
at 5:08 P.M. EDT

Last Quarter:

Oct. 21, at 8:39 A.M.
EDT

New Moon:

Oct. 27, at 11:38
P.M. EDT



TAP FOR MORE ABOUT
MOON PHASES



TAP FOR MORE ABOUT
OCTOBER'S FULL
MOON



OPAL



TOURMALINE



CALENDULA



COSMOS

ABOUT THIS MONTH

This month's name came from the Latin *octo*, "eight," because this was the eighth month of the early Roman calendar.

Birthstones: Opal and Tourmaline



CALENDAR

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

- Oct. 7:** Child Health Day
Oct. 8: Yom Kippur begins at sundown
Oct. 9: Leif Eriksson Day
Oct. 14: Columbus Day, observed
Oct. 14: Indigenous Peoples' Day
Oct. 14: Thanksgiving Day (Canada)
Oct. 24: United Nations Day
Oct. 31: Halloween



WACKY TIMES

- Oct. 4:** International Ships-in-Bottles Day
Oct. 6: National Noodle Day
Oct. 16: National Fossil Day
Oct. 24–Nov. 11: World Origami Days
Oct. 25: Frankenstein Friday



RHYME TIME

*October glows on every cheek,
October shines in every eye,
While up the hill and down the dale*

Her crimson banners fly.

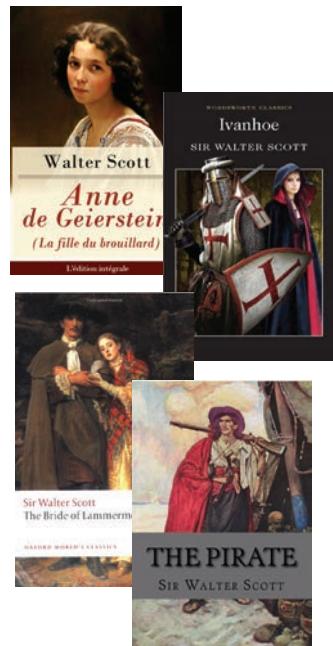
—Elaine Goodale Eastman, American poet (1863–1953)

Answer: A.

OCTOBER'S QUIZ

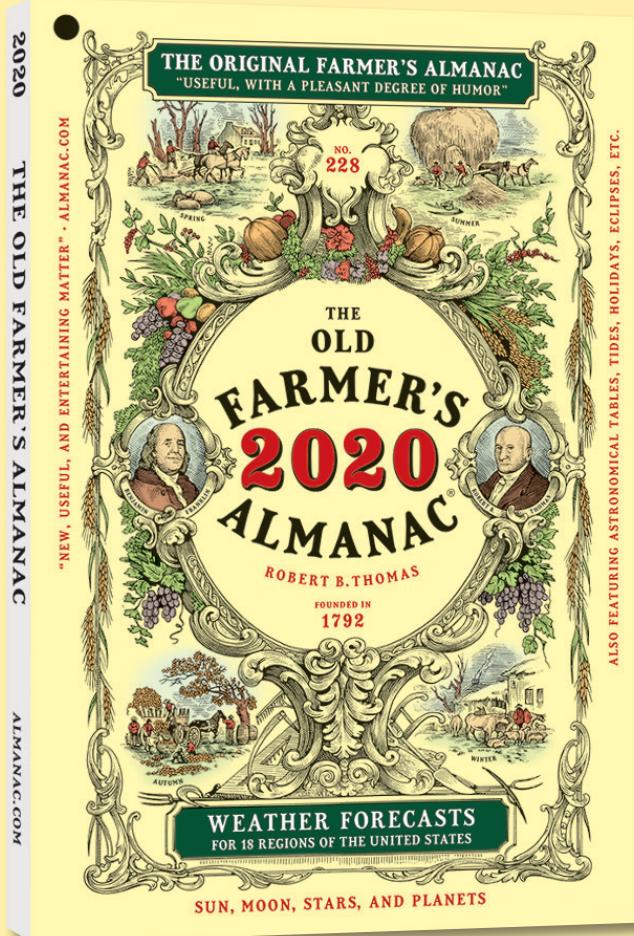
In honor of one of October's birthstones, which tale by Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott was thought by some to be responsible for the 1800s belief that opals brought bad luck?

- A. *Anne of Geierstein*
B. *Ivanhoe*
C. *The Bride of Lammermoor*
D. *The Pirate*



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THE 2020 OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC



LEARN MORE



BEST DAYS TO DO THINGS

These October 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*

ON THE FARM

- Breed animals: 1, 28, 29
- Castrate animals: 7, 8
- Cut hay: 12, 13
- Purchase animals: 19, 20
- Set eggs: 7, 8, 16, 17
- Slaughter livestock: 1, 28, 29
- Wean animals: 16, 25

PERSONAL

- Advertise to sell: 1, 28, 29
- Ask for a loan: 14–16
- Begin diet to lose weight: 16, 25
- Begin diet to gain weight: 1, 11
- Buy a home: 1, 29
- Color hair: 14–16
- Cut hair to discourage growth: 26



- Cut hair to encourage growth: 9–11
- Get married: 26, 27
- Have dental care: 24, 25
- Move (house/household): 17, 18
- Perm hair: 7, 8
- Quit smoking: 16, 25
- Straighten hair: 2, 3, 30, 31
- Travel for pleasure: 22, 23
- Wean children: 16, 25

AROUND THE HOUSE

- Bake: 19, 20
- Brew: 1, 28, 29
- Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut: 19, 20
- Demolish: 1, 28, 29
- Dry fruit/vegetables/meat: 22, 23
- End projects: 26
- Lay shingles: 21–23
- Make jams/jellies: 9–11
- Paint: 14–16
- Start projects: 29
- Wash floors: 9–11
- Wash windows: 12, 13

OUTDOORS

- Begin logging: 4–6
- Go camping: 2, 3
- Go fishing: 1–13, 27–31
- Set posts or pour concrete: 4–6

IN THE GARDEN

- Destroy pests and weeds: 12, 13
- Graft or pollinate: 19, 20
- Harvest aboveground crops: 4–6
- Harvest belowground crops: 14–16
- Mow to decrease growth: 19, 20
- Mow to increase growth: 12
- Pick fruit: 24, 25
- Plant aboveground crops: 1, 9, 10
- Plant belowground crops: 19, 20
- Prune to discourage growth: 21, 22
- Prune to encourage growth: 2, 3



**TAP FOR
MERCURY IN
RETROGRADE
DATES**



**TAP FOR
OCTOBER
MOON PHASES**



GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN

Use the October 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, Pisces, or Taurus

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 OCTOBER

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

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*.

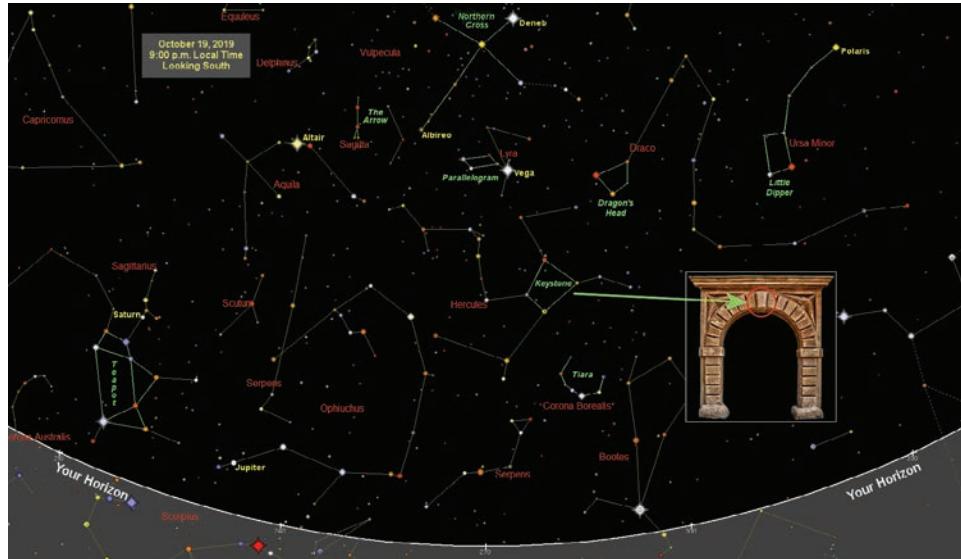
Mercury's retrograde periods can cause our plans to go awry. However, this is an excellent time to reflect on the past. Intuition is high during these periods, and coincidences can be extraordinary.

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.

In the remainder of 2019, Mercury will be retrograde during **October 31–November 20**.

—Celeste Longacre

ASTRONOMY



BEHOLD THE ASTERISM LIGHT SHOW!

Any night under the stars is a light show that's hard to beat. To maximize your stargazing enjoyment, try learning to recognize the many unofficial star patterns—asterisms—and using them to navigate around the night sky.

Asterisms differ from constellations. Constellations are the 88 “official” regions of the sky. Most of them are large and intricate, containing dozens of stars. In contrast, asterisms are completely unofficial, typically comprising just a few of the brighter stars within a constellation. Asterisms have simple shapes, making them easy to find and ideal for getting your bearings. And if you spot a star pattern that you really like, feel free to give it a name!

In October, the western sky contains eight well-known asterisms visible in the early evening.



TAP TO GET
A PRINTABLE
OCTOBER
SKY MAP



TAP TO
FOLLOW
OHIOAN JEFF
DETRAY'S SKY
ADVENTURES



Start your tour by looking high in the sky to find the magnificent **Northern Cross**. It's part of the large constellation Cygnus, the Swan. The bright star Deneb represents the tail of the Swan, and the star Albireo marks its beak. The arms of the cross are part of Cygnus's wings.

Right below the Northern Cross is the **Parallelogram**, a delicate four-sided asterism just to the left of Vega, the brightest star in the constellation Lyra, the Lyre. Science fiction fans will remember Vega as the source of the first message from extraterrestrials in the book and film *Contact*.

Halfway between Albireo and the much brighter star Altair lies the charming constellation Sagitta, the Arrow. The **Arrow** asterism contains nearly all of the brightest stars in Sagitta, and it really does look like an arrow!

Now star-hop back to Vega, then beyond it to the **Dragon's Head**, a lopsided quadrangle representing the head of Draco, the Dragon. The rest of Draco's snakelike body forms a distorted reverse S-shape as it winds first upward and then loops down and around our next asterism, the Little Dipper.

Part of the constellation Ursa Minor, the Lesser Bear, the **Little Dipper** is famous as the home of Polaris, the North Star. Polaris stands at the end of the Little Dipper's handle.

Below and slightly to the left of the Dragon's Head is the **Keystone**, in the constellation Hercules, the Roman Hero. As shown in the inset photo, the Keystone is a nearly perfect representation of the keystone that forms the central piece of a masonry arch.

The **Tiara** is a lovely asterism just below Hercules in the Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown.

Finally, jump all the way to the left of our map to find the **Teapot**, an asterism in Sagittarius, the Archer. The Teapot is at an angle at this time of year, as if pouring out its contents. The planet Saturn is currently visiting Sagittarius, just above the handle of the Teapot. Not far away, near the bottom of the map, is the glow of the planet Jupiter, about to slip below the horizon.

Whether professional astronomers or casual stargazers, we can all agree that the beauty of the stars really is indeed the best light show in town!

-Jeff DeTray

HUSBANDRY



Love Talk for Pigs

Occasionally, while perusing past editions of the Almanac, we find timeless advice that bears—or begs for—repeating, such as this from 1987.



In an experiment last winter, it was found that the pigs on Doug Johnson's farm in Fairfield, Iowa, were much happier and calmer when they were subjected to a gentle male voice coming from a computer set up near the pigpen.

Here are the four statements broadcast at the pigs that they particularly liked:

1. "My mind and heart are always crowded by visions of your coy elbow." (Mr. Johnson's 13- and 14-year-old pigs scampered around the pen in an orgy of good-humored playfulness

when they heard the voice saying that).

2. "The blood rushes to my head when we play bridge at your mother's every Friday night." (Two of the older pigs liked this one best.)

3. "I like to fondle your sleeveless fur coat." (Some reaction, but nothing special.)

4. "I think I'd swoon if you allowed me to kiss your limpid umbrella." (This one sent them hog wild.)

A sociologist who was on a panel charged with gauging the pigs' reaction to the computer voice said that it didn't matter what was said. Instead, it was simply that the

sound "may have had a calming effect." (There's always somebody around like that.)

While we're on the subject of what pigs like and don't like, we ought to report that Dr. Paul Helmsworth, leader of an Australian research team that spent 5 years studying pigs, says that pigs do not like someone "standing upright" near them, do not like being patted, and, finally, do not like being touched by someone wearing a pair of gloves.

If you have supporting experiences or evidence to the contrary, please let us know.

—Almanac editors



One-Dish Dinner Recipes

Cooking can be an enjoyable pastime, and eating a home-cooked meal is usually a delightful experience. But when it comes to cleaning up the mess, we often find ourselves yearning for household staff. With this in mind, we rounded up a selection of tasty one-pot dishes for your cooking and eating—and less cleaning—enjoyment.

 TAP FOR
RECIPE

Roasted Chicken With Root Vegetables

PHOTO: SAM JONES/QUINN BREIN

ROASTED CHICKEN WITH ROOT VEGETABLES

- 1 3-pound chicken**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided**
- kosher or sea salt, to taste**
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary**
- 1 small orange, quartered**
- 1 turnip, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces**
- 4 to 6 beets, peeled and halved if small, quartered if large**
- 2 onions, quartered**
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced**
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Rub outside of chicken with 1 tablespoon oil and season with salt.

Place rosemary in cavity. Lightly squeeze orange pieces to release juices and place in cavity.

Scatter vegetables in a roasting pan. Toss with remaining oil and season with salt and pepper. Place chicken on top of vegetables breast side up.

Cook for 30 minutes, then lower oven temperature to 350°F and cook for 30 to 45 minutes longer, or until a meat thermometer inserted into the thigh reads 165°F.

Remove from oven and let rest for 20 minutes before slicing.

Makes 4 servings.

SHARE
THIS
RECIPE



TAP FOR
RECIPE



Cincinnati Chili

CINCINNATI CHILI

- | | |
|--|---|
| 2 pounds ground chuck | 1 teaspoon ground cumin |
| 1 onion, finely chopped | 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander |
| 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce | 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves |
| 1/2 cup thick barbecue sauce | freshly ground black pepper, to taste |
| 3 tablespoons chili powder | 8 ounces cooked spaghetti |
| 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder | 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese, for topping |
| 1-1/2 tablespoons tomato paste | 1 cup finely chopped red onion, for topping |
| 1 tablespoon brown sugar | 1 can (15 ounces) red kidney beans, drained and rinsed, for topping |
| 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar | |
| 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce | |
| 1-1/2 teaspoons salt | |

In a large enameled pot or Dutch oven, combine 5 cups of water with ground chuck. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 30 to 40 minutes, skimming off any scum or fat that floats to the top.

Add remaining ingredients, except spaghetti and toppings, and continue to simmer for 45 minutes to 1 hour, stirring often, until the liquid is full-bodied and saucy. Taste and adjust seasonings, if desired.

Serve over spaghetti, passing the toppings at the table.
Makes 6 to 8 servings.



SHARE
THIS
RECIPE



TAP FOR
RECIPE



Cream of Brussels Sprouts Soup

 SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

CREAM OF BRUSSELS SPROUTS SOUP

- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter**
- 2 shallots, chopped**
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup cream**
- 1/2 cup milk**
- 5 cups chicken stock**
- 5 cups brussels sprouts, finely chopped**
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- crumbled cooked bacon or bacon bits, for garnish**

In a soup pot over medium heat, melt butter. Add shallots and cook until soft. Sprinkle in flour and stir until blended. Slowly add cream and milk and stir until smooth. Add stock and brussels sprouts. Simmer for 10 minutes, uncovered. Do not boil. Taste, then season with salt and pepper. Garnish individual portions with bacon.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.



Let There Be Light

... and a harvest will follow

Just because the days are growing shorter and, in general, cooling down, that's no reason to consider the growing season over and done. Greens and some herbs will flourish indoors, under grow lights! Here's what to consider when buying light bulbs.

The grow-light options are wide-ranging, from fluorescent to HID (high-intensity discharge) to LED (light-emitting diode). Each type has an array of power requirements, brightness levels, and color temperatures.

Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) lights, aka common household fluorescents, are an effective supplement to natural (window) light. When starting seeds, use a "full-spectrum" fluorescent bulb made specifically for fruiting or flowering plants. For best results, place the bulb in a directional lamp 3 to 6 inches above the plant(s).

High-Intensity Discharge (HID) lights

are ideal for growing maturing edible plants. However, HIDs are expensive, use electricity inefficiently, and give off heat. Despite this, they are widely used in plant nurseries and large-scale grow houses because of their raw power.

Light-Emitting Diode (LED) lights: For efficiently growing large numbers of plants, full-spectrum LEDs provide the best results. They use significantly less power to produce more light than traditional CFLs, and they produce very little heat. Although LEDs are more expensive than fluorescent bulbs, the LED lifetime is far longer.

Before you purchase grow lights, decide how many plants you want to illuminate and how much area they will occupy under the light(s). This will enable you to calculate how many bulbs you'll need.

Think about how to position the light(s) over the plants so that you can easily alter the distance between the lights and

the plants as they grow. Common options include suspending the lights from chains above your plants (e.g., on the ceiling or a sawhorse) and adjusting the chains as the plants grow. Or, stabilizing the light(s) and setting the planters on a stack of books, removing volumes as needed to lower the maturing plants.

Remember, too, that each type of grow light provides a different amount of light. To be most effective, each light should be a specific distance from the plants: Fluorescent lights should be 3 to 12 inches above the tops of the plants; HIDs, 24 to 60 inches; and LEDs, 12 to 24 inches.

Plants grown under lights indoors need more hours of light than the same plants do outdoors. Grow lights should be on for at least 14 but no more than 18 hours per day; even indoor plants need a minimum of 6 hours of darkness each day.

—Benjamin Kilbride

LIVING NATURALLY



The Beauty of Gleaning

PHOTO: MOISSEYEV/GETTY IMAGES

As the days get short and the nighttime temperatures plunge, the frenzy of harvesting and food preservation abates and we home gardeners focus on preparing for winter.

But most gardeners also collect and treasure the last stragglers, the tiny zucchini struggling, a tomato and a couple of small peppers that lie among the blackened wreckage of the first killing frost, the malformed carrot that won't pass muster for the storage bin, two onions whose necks didn't seal (hence they won't keep), a handful of young green beans that popped forth from a few still-green plants.

We transition from reapers to gleaners. Toss those gleanings into a savory broth with a handful of fresh herbs and a cup or two of lentils, and they often

add up to a tasty soup or stir-fry.

GLEANING

"To glean" means "to gather what was left by the reapers." We think of reapers as the primary economic, political, and social actors. They plan, plant, tend, and harvest the main crops. Gleaners follow behind or skirt the edges and gather what the reapers left or didn't want.

To cite a common cliche, we live in disruptive times. The institutions that we've been conditioned to trust and believe in seem to be crumbling, losing credibility, and changing at a such a breath-sucking pace that we can't keep up.

Bring on the gleaning skills!

A METAPHOR FOR LIFE

The society in which I grew up taught me that a well-integrated

life requires a relatively smooth linear passage from the seeds of a stable, two-parent childhood and some level of formal, institutional learning ("education," and the more, the better) to the harvest of long-term, secure-but-challenging employment that includes health insurance and the promise of a fat retirement account.

Along the way, I also learned that I'd be expected to exercise a level of consumption (of purchased goods and paid-for services) to match my knowledge, income, and social status.

But I gradually came to understand that lives that appear to follow that expected trajectory have actually been assembled from a small measure of reaping and a large, continuously growing collection of gleanings.

Most of us experience

"To glean" means "to gather what was left by the reapers."

life as a dynamic, chaotic flow. Yet at any moment, some seemingly random encounter can link into our network of experiences to produce or to promise a result we could never have planned or expected.

These seemingly random moments emerge from events never intended to affect our lives and that couldn't yield much on

creatively repurposing it to suit our own lives—the recycled and refurbished clothing, the tools and appliances, the cardboard and newspaper that mulch the vegetable patch, the works of art crafted from items salvaged from the scrap metal pile.

However, most of what builds a life isn't physical, but

EDIT YOUR LIFE! (GLEANING IS NOT HOARDING)

The gleaned life requires disciplined editing. Don't be afraid to reject or let stuff go. Gleaning is not about hoarding; it's about discovering and combining aspects of experience that actually create opportunities and nourish you. Consign the rest to the compost pile or the trash bag.

Reach out and grab the fragments with which you connect.

their own—fragments of an overheard conversation, a scene from a TV show, a classified ad, a chance meeting with someone at a checkout counter. Yet they connect to produce a nourishing, life-sustaining, psychological soup.

Yes, gleaning can involve the physical side of life: collecting and treasuring stuff that others no longer want or never wanted, often

psychological, internal, and invisible: ideas, hopes, feelings, thoughts, questions.

The most important rule for a gleaned life: Put yourself in the path of a wide diversity of planters/reapers who produce their crops in fertile soil. Then pay close attention to what they either fail to harvest or don't have any use for. Reach out and grab the fragments with which you connect.

And finally: Among both reapers and gleaners, the smartest intentionally select a few sorry-looking plants to leave behind, knowing that the seeds they carry will sprout in spring and yield an unintended harvest that both planters and gleaners can reap.

—Margaret Boyles

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



WEATHER FORECASTS



WARM OCTOBER, COLD FEBRUARY.

HOW WE MAKE OUR PREDICTIONS

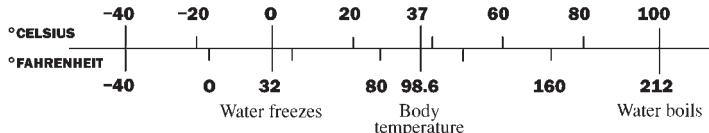
We derive our weather forecasts from a secret formula that was devised by the founder of this Almanac, Robert B. Thomas, in 1792. Thomas believed that weather on Earth was influenced by sunspots, which are magnetic storms on the surface of the Sun.

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.

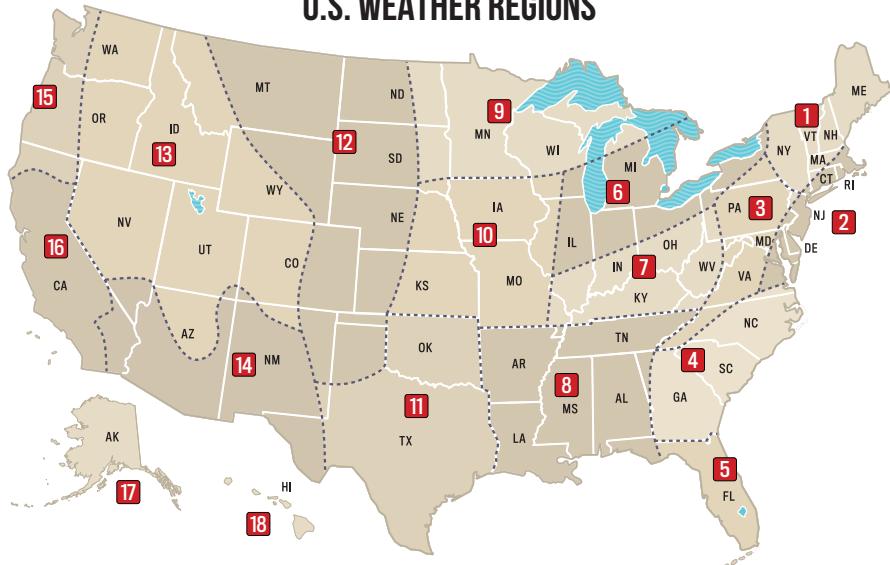
CELSIUS-FAHRENHEIT TABLE



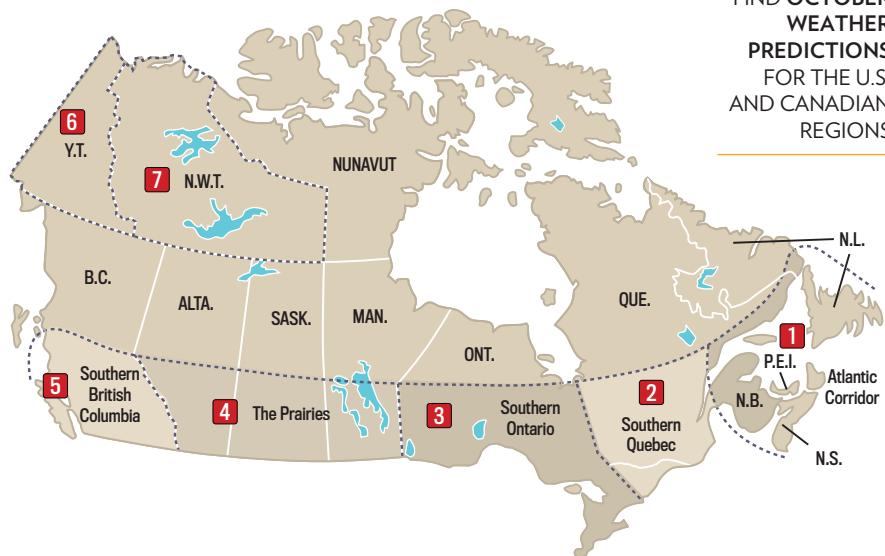


WEATHER FORECASTS

U.S. WEATHER REGIONS



CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS



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WEATHER
PREDICTIONS
FOR THE U.S.
AND CANADIAN
REGIONS



WEATHER UPDATE

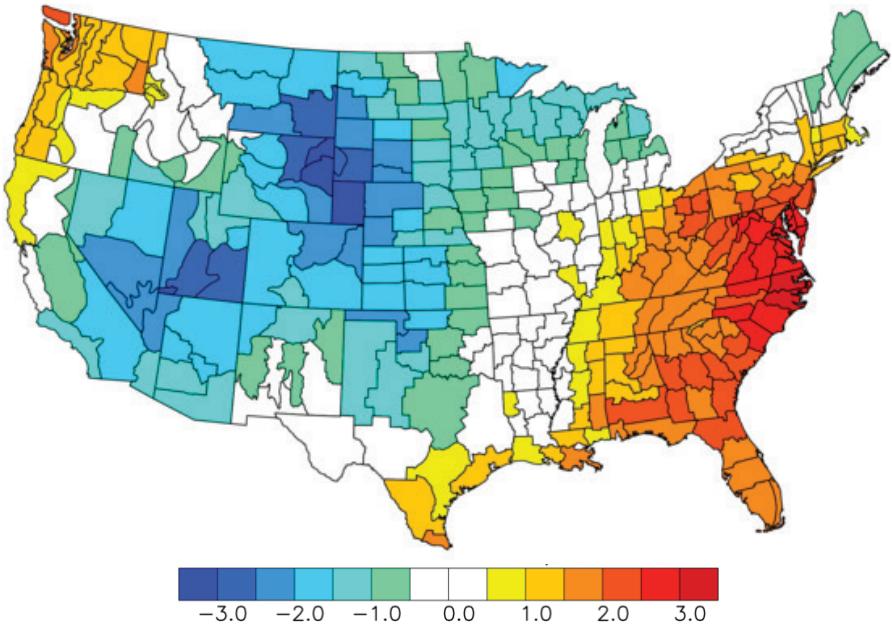


Figure 1. U.S. temperature variances, May–July 2019.

HOT NEWS!

A number of weather and climatological events have recently been in the news. Some of them have affected us directly, while others have had major impacts elsewhere.

There were notable record-setting heat waves in Europe and Alaska this past summer, as the World Meteorological Organization found June 2019 to be the hottest June ever recorded based upon average global temperatures and July 2019 at least tied for the hottest month ever recorded.

Europe experienced two major heat waves. The first, in late June, was caused by high pressure that brought air from the Sahara Desert to southwestern and central Europe, resulting in the hottest June ever recorded in Europe. The worst of the heat occurred on June 28, when the French town of Gallargues-le-Montueux had the highest temperature ever reported in that country



WEATHER UPDATE

when the mercury soared to 115°F. On July 24–25, several other countries in Europe reported their highest temperatures ever recorded, including 107.2°F in Begijnendijk, Belgium; 108.7°F in Lingen, Germany; 105.4°F in Steinsel, Luxembourg; 105.3°F in Gilze en Rijen, Netherlands; 101.7°F at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden in the United Kingdom; and 96.1°F in Mosjøen, Norway. Meanwhile, monthly or daily record highs were set in several other European nations.

North America featured baked Alaska, as the 49th state experienced its hottest day ever recorded, on July 6—only to exceed that record the next day. Anchorage hit 90°F on July 4, shattering its previous all-time record high of 85°F. Other cities that crushed their all-time record highs in the period from June 30 to July 7 included Kena, King Salmon, and Northway, with many other locales posting their hottest July temperatures on record.

In the contiguous states, temperatures from May through July have also been hotter than normal from the Gulf of Mexico northward through the Midwest and northeastward to southern New England. Temperatures have also been above normal in the Pacific Northwest, and below normal elsewhere, especially in the Rockies and High Plains (*see Figure 1*).

In some parts of the U.S., corn prices are higher than usual due to heavy spring rains that delayed the planting of corn and soybeans in the Heartland and Ohio Valley. While the weather since then has been mostly favorable for these crops, delays in planting have led to smaller crops and rising prices. Our best wishes certainly go out to all of the farmers and ranchers who are having a tough time.

Another thing: If, like me, you like avocados in your salads and sandwiches, you will have to pay more in the coming months, as a heat wave this past July in California has reduced this year's state avocado harvest from more than 300 million pounds to only about 175 million.

What's up with all of the warmth and wetness? Our weather patterns have been dominated by an upper atmospheric ridge in the east, which has allowed for heat to build up, while a persistent upper atmospheric trough has brought cooler Canadian air into the Plains and Rockies. In between, the clash of air masses created a battle zone from Missouri through Ohio, bringing storminess, heavy rains, and flooding.

Elsewhere around the world, fires have been in the news, as the Brazilian



WEATHER UPDATE



Figure 2. Smoke plumes from Brazilian forest fires.

rain forest has had the most fires since at least 2013 (up 85 percent since last year), causing the Brazilian government to declare a state of emergency. July and August are typically the driest months in the Amazon rain forest, and fires are often set to clear out the land for ranching or farming. A satellite image of Brazil (see *Figure 2*) clearly shows the smoke plumes from the fires, which may have dire consequences for Earth's atmosphere.

The early stages of the California wildfire season were relatively mild, although the period from now through December is expected to have the greatest risk as seasonal Santa Ana winds pick up. Meanwhile, wildfires in British Columbia have been more numerous and destructive than usual, sparked largely by lightning strikes.

Finally, although melting ice caps in the Arctic hold the promise of allowing shorter ice-free routes for shipping, there was still enough ice for a female blue fox, just short of her first birthday, to travel more than 2,700 miles from Spitsbergen, Norway, to Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, Canada, last year. It seems that foxes must be more advanced than humans—none of my children could even walk at that age. —*Michael Steinberg, Old Farmer's Almanac meteorologist*

HUMOR ME

GRINS AND GROANS FROM THE ALMANAC



A GUARDED RESPONSE

During the unhappy division preceding the American Revolution, the Rev. Dr. Mather Byles, who was favorable to the mother country, was sentenced to be confined to his own house in Boston, with a guard placed over him.

On one occasion, he managed to persuade his sentinel to go on an errand for him by promising to take the

sentinel's place himself.

This he did very faithfully, and to the great amusement of all who passed, the doctor was seen marching very gravely before his door, musket on shoulder, keeping guard over himself.

A short time later, it was thus thought that he no longer needed a sentinel, but this opinion then changed and a guard was reinstated.

For some reason, he

was soon freed and no further attention was paid to him. Speaking of these transactions, he observed that he had been guarded, regarded, and disregarded.

DEFINITION OF RIGGING

"Permit me to pick up a piece of your rigging, Miss," said a polite sea captain to a young lady whose pretty hair ribbon had fallen out.

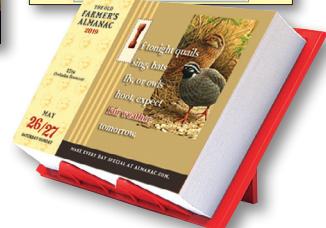
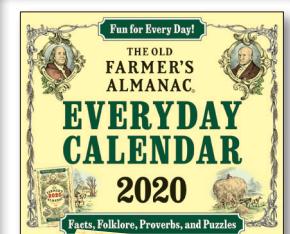
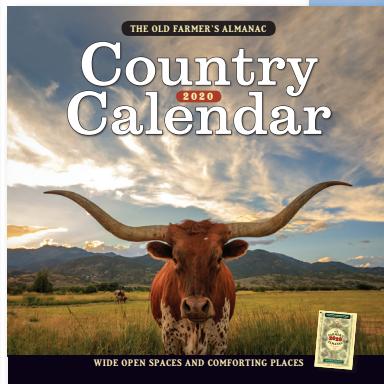
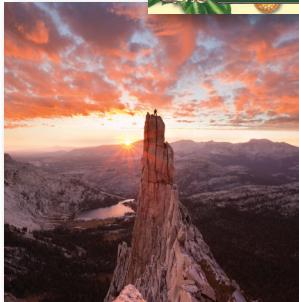
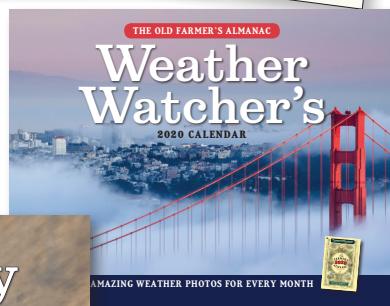
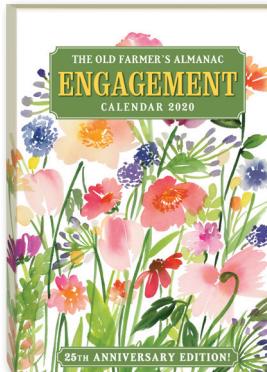
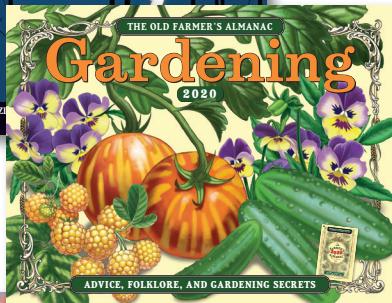
"'Rigging,' captain? How can you call it that?" replied the girl.

"Well," said the captain, "rigging is what we put on our graceful vessels to make them more beautiful and more sailable" [meaning salable, or attractive to beaus].

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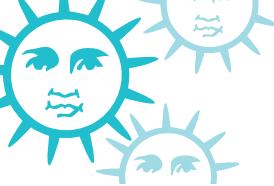
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