

# The Artist's Almanac

September 2004

*And the days dwindle down  
To a precious few...*

All good things come to an end, even summer.

Now there are fogs in the morning, and spiders weave webs across our walking paths. The hackberries shed their tacky dresses and the early dews mimic frosts. Slanting afternoon light hampers the golfer's search for his lost ball, and even the longest drivers agree the leaf rule makes for a good lie.

We search for last tomatoes amidst yellowing vines and fry the green ones for breakfast. Cornstalks are yellow and must be plowed under, else they harden like steel, and must be pulled by hand – a backbreaking task.

Our cherished roses stage a last flourishing rally. Though fewer, they are bigger and more colorful. Or is it that we pay them closer attention than we did in June, when profligate abundance spewed forth more than we could gather?

September offers the artist a bonus month. Summer's boring green gives way and the trees begin to distinguish themselves, one from the other, with shadings of yellow, red, citron, russet, cream and orange. The grasses develop the textures of an oriental carpet, and distant hills peek blue beyond denuded groves as the searchlight sun picks out views we were unable to appreciate in summer.

This is a month of transition and of contrasts. September has the hottest days versus the coolest nights, as the earth's stored sunlight vies with the night's sunless void. My grandfather's Uncle Dan told of nearly freezing the night he lay bleeding at Chickamauga, looking up at the bright stars from the dark woods, where they found him, just in time, next morning, to save him for Resaca. The equinox on the 21<sup>st</sup> marks the point on our calendars when the dark gains the ascendancy.

For the pioneer mother in the articles alongside, these were days of fear. The Indians could travel far in a dry season and did, harvesting horses, scalps and prisoners from a land they considered theirs.

For today's mother, the children are back in school and the house is quiet for a time, awaiting the return of the family. For grandparents and others wintering in Florida or Arizona, it is time for the making of plans and reservations.

Later this month we attend a dispersal sale of my grandmother's old house and furnishings in a small town in Kentucky. In a morning a hundred years of a family's gatherings will fly away to strangers, with only the memories not for sale.

September reminds us we are not home yet. We are in a moving vehicle and entitled to enjoy the view. Perhaps the artist can help. The question is, where shall we go this winter?