

Editor's notes:

September 2011, Volume 26-1

This month is named after the Latin word "septem," meaning "seven." September was the seventh month until 700 B.C.E when Roman king Numa Pompilius switched from a 304-day calendar to a 355-day lunar calendar.

Clear days and cool nights set the stage for the beautiful autumn colours that will appear on trees in many parts of the country in just a few weeks.

Leaves are green during the summer because of the presence of chlorophyll, the substance in plant cells that uses sunlight to produce food for the tree. Shorter days and cooler nights prompt trees to prepare themselves for winter dormancy by withdrawing sugar and minerals from their leaves. As the food making process slows, the chlorophyll breaks down and reveals other colours previously masked by its green pigment.

An early frost will weaken the colours. Drought can kill the leaves before they have a chance to turn.

Here are some interesting dates for this month:

Days of Marathon Anniversary, September 2-9, 490 B.C.

This week celebrates an ancient messenger's run that inspired present day marathons. The word comes from the Greek town, Marathon, from which the messenger, Phidippides, ran 26 miles nonstop to Sparta to seek help in repelling the Persian army attacking Athens. The Athenians defeated the Persian army, and Phidippides ran back to Marathon and died as he spoke the words, "Rejoice, we are victorious."

Labour Day, September 5 -- The first Monday in September in Canada and the United States celebrates the accomplishments of working people and labour organizations.

September 11 -- A date that needs no explaining. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks that killed more than 3,000 Americans. Memorials to commemorate the victims are planned at the site of the World Trade Center in New York City, at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where passengers crashed a hijacked plane to prevent an attack on America's capital.

First Day of Autumn, September 23 -- The autumnal equinox arrives on this date, ushering in the fall. The word "Fall" was first used by the early settlers in North America. They borrowed the term from some of the native peoples who spoke of the time of the "Fall of the Leaf." The season's other name, autumn, comes from the Latin word "autumnus" meaning to turn or change and increase or harvest.

Harvest Moon, September 27 -- This is the full moon that is nearest the autumnal equinox, which falls on September 23

this year. This moon is unique in that it rises for several days near sunset and is often a brilliant orange colour when on the horizon.

Jewish New Year, September 29-October 1 -- Rosh Hashanah -- Hebrew for "head of the year" -- begins at sunset on this day. Jews begin 10 days of repentance and spiritual renewal.

Third grade may be vital for cognitive development

If you're a parent, you know how quickly children can grow and change. Neuroscientists studying brain development in children believe they've identified major changes occurring between the second and third grade, especially when arithmetic is involved.

As reported on the Science News website, two neuroscientists worked with about 90 children in the 7-9 age range, scanning the kids' brains as they worked on math problems of varying levels of difficulty. Specifically, they found that second-graders approached both easy problems (1+2=3) and more complex equations (8+4=12) using the same part of the brain. But third-graders used more of their brain related to working memory when addressing the harder problems, a strategy that may reflect their greater confidence with simple problems and may also be linked to brain development.

The research could help teachers with math instruction and could provide scientists with important new clues regarding how and when the human brain develops as it grows.

Don't Shout it Out!

How you use your voice goes a long way to determine how others perceive and deal with you. No matter what you have to say, if your message is delivered in a mumble -- or a shout -- it may go unheard.

Do people ask you to repeat yourself? This could indicate that you aren't speaking clearly. Take a deep breath and concentrate on pacing your words at a level others can hear.

If you notice people getting bored when you're speaking, it may be due to a slow delivery. Pick up the pace to keep your audience -- and to keep it from losing your message. To hone your performance, read something aloud and time yourself; you should be speaking about 120 words a minute.

This test will also tell you whether you talk too fast. Don't worry that you won't have enough time to get your message across. Your message may also be lost because your audience doesn't have time to process the information you offer.

One rule for living -- don't over-specialize

The Science fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein once wrote: "A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects."

If that's not enough, here's a short list of skills that everyone should master to survive and prosper in today's world:

Operate a computer. You should be able to go beyond locating the "on" switch.

Search the Internet. Understand how to use Google and other search functions to gather and confirm information.

Perform CPR (and the Heimlich maneuver). You can always be prepared to save a life.

Cook. Everyone should know the basics of preparing a meal that isn't just microwaved.

Tell a story. You can persuade and inspire people by telling stories that move them.

Change a tire. Because you can't always wait for CAA.

Take good notes. You can't remember everything. Develop a system for documenting what you need to know in the future.

Do what you love? Love what you do? Consider all the angles.

The familiar saying, "Do what you love, and the money will follow," may remind us of the importance of having dreams and pursuing your desires, but is it really practical career advice? After all, you may love lying on the beach, but there's not much money in that. Here's how to approach the whole "Do what you love" notion:

Decide what you want. What you choose to do for a living should be based on what kind of life you want. If you dream of a life of wealth and luxury, a career as an artist (however much you love to draw) probably won't be very satisfying. Look for a strategy that will incorporate your interests without sacrificing other legitimate goals.

Learn your strengths. You may love playing the piano, but are you really good enough to make a living at it? Be honest and realistic with yourself before committing yourself to a career that could be filled with frustration.

Understand secondary requirements. Every job and career includes some tasks that are less enjoyable than others. Movie stars have to deal with intrusive paparazzi; CEOs have to make tough decisions about layoffs and ethical dilemmas. Be sure you're ready for the downside when you choose to follow your dream.

Remember that work is still work. Your career has to carry you through days and weeks when you don't really want to go to the office, or the studio, or wherever your job takes you. This is part of being realistic about your goals.: Even the best jobs can seem like drudgery at times, and you'll have to stick with it even when the initial enjoyment fades.

Don't define yourself by your job. Your career choice doesn't have to restrict other life choices. Instead of seeking the perfect job, concentrate on finding satisfying work that allows you to enjoy your life as a whole. Remember that other old saying "No one ever died wishing they'd spent more time at the office."

Have a safe and pleasant Labour Day holiday!

Where to 'send' sweet nothings

When you decide to declare your true love, make sure you whisper those three magic words in your lover's left ear.

Researchers have found that we're more likely to remember statements that express emotion if they're spoken into our left ear.

Why? The left ear is controlled by the right side of the brain, and the right side of the brain is where emotional stimuli are processed.

So pick your spot before declaring your feelings.

Quotable Quotes

He ended the job as he began it: fired with enthusiasm. -- Don O'Shaughnessy

I have only one superstition. I touch all the bases when I hit a home run. -- Babe Ruth

When one finds oneself in a hole of one's own making, it is a good time to examine the quality of the workmanship. -- John Rennerde

Not being able to govern events, I govern myself. -- Michel de Montaigne

Hook a man with his nose

According to The Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation, men find the following 10 aromas and aroma combinations sexually enticing:

1. Lavender & pumpkin pie
2. Doughnut & black licorice
3. Pumpkin pie & doughnut
4. Orange
5. Lavender & doughnut
6. Black licorice & cola
7. Black licorice
8. Doughnut & cola
9. Lily of the valley
10. Buttered popcorn