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## Changing Season

I am wondering why it has taken me so long to get used to the idea of it not being summer any more here in the UK. We have had the benefit of a late but prolonged summer, after the very wet and miserable start to the year with its persistent heavy rain and flooding. Once the better weather arrived, it seemed to settle in quite agreeably, and the warm days just kept coming. At first this led to some complacency and eventually I realised that, even at the beginning of warm weather, it is prudent to remember that there is a limited supply of such days, and we should get out and about as much as possible.

Last week, however, I had to admit the inevitable. Even though it was still mild, whilst walking towards the bus stop I noticed that I was kicking through rather more yellow tree leaves than usual. One or two would have gone unnoticed, but a few gusts of wind had brought these colourful reminders of autumn fluttering down, swirling on the path but held immobile on the grass verges. My first thought was, "Oh well, I suppose it had to come some time." I quickly adjusted my attitude, from one of expecting endless summery weather to one where I was a bit more determined to make the most of the remaining warm days, after this sudden reminder that they were unlikely to last much longer.

The word "season" comes from the Latin word "to sow" as in sowing seed, as that moment in the year is obviously the most important one to identify accurately. We all know that the seasons progress in a steady manner without fixed boundaries, with the likely weather, temperature and plant growth changing slightly each day. However, I find that my idea of where we

are in that gradual progression seems to be influenced by which of the four words I have decided to call it - spring, summer, autumn (or you may say fall) and winter. Even this can be ambiguous, as officially each season starts on the 21st of its month, with spring starting on the 21st of March. If there is snow on the ground at the end of March, I feel that these convenient and fixed descriptions are not quite good enough and I insist that we are still in winter. With the first change of wind direction, bringing mild air and warmth, then to me it is spring and any cold periods are called "cold snaps" in the expectation that they will take the hint and not last longer than a few days.

Until about a week ago, our warm and sunny weather had extended into the "official autumn", which began on the 21st of September, but in the last week the early mornings have been cold and wet, with everything outside soaked and dripping from the overnight mist and fog. The remains of a few roses and fuchsias in the garden are holding out and providing red and pink dots of colour, and the nasturtiums are glowing like jewels around the pond, although they will be the first to collapse when the first frost comes. After a certain amount of resistance, at last the word "summer" has, like a lacy straw sun hat, been dusted off, cleaned up and stored away for when it is needed again. Likewise I have put off the summer cardigan and brought out the zipped fleeces, and will be checking over the supply of wrist warmers, thin for cool breezy days, and thick for freezing days. I am not fond of successfully wrapping up against the cold only to find the ends of my sleeves exhaling warm air and sucking in cold, thus breaching my defences!

## Changing Season

Before long I will be rummaging through the winter socks to see what needs replacing, and looking for an excuse to knit some of the lovely sock patterns in the new knitting book. I will look over the range of gloves and mittens which suit every degree of damp and cold that might occur, like a squirrel counting the acorns and hazelnuts in his store - although I suspect the squirrel has only two concepts in his mind to describe them - "enough" and "not enough"! The thin jackets have been cleaned and corralled at one end of the wardrobe where they will stay undisturbed

throughout the winter months, and the padded coats brought to the front and all the zips and buttons checked. The ankle boots have swapped places with the sandals at the front of the shelf, a mutual journey of about eight inches. I am now confident that I will not be taken by surprise, and it only remains for me to gloat over the success of these essential preparations against frozen fingers and toes. The only other thing that I have to do is resist the temptation to stay indoors and hug the radiator, as exercise is really the most efficient way of keeping warm. (836 words)