

I came across this article from a local paper in Spencer, Mass. The author goes by the name Charles and nothing else. When I see that name, I know something is worth reading.

The Chair That Knows Summer Is Over

(Lanterns along Main Street by Charles, Spencer New Leader, 25 September 2026)

There is a chair sitting in my backyard that knows something I have been refusing to admit. Summer is over.

Technically, I suppose there are arguments to be made about calendars and equinoxes. I am not interested in them. The chair has rendered its verdict.

It is one of those outdoor chairs that spent most of June, July and August getting dragged around the yard. Sometimes it was on the patio. Sometimes it migrated under a tree. Occasionally it wound up near the grill, where I would sit with a cold drink and offer completely unnecessary supervision to whatever was cooking.

For three months, that chair had a purpose. Now it sits there alone. I walked past it the other morning and realized nobody had occupied it in at least two weeks.

This is how September works in New England. Summer does not really end. We simply stop using summer things. Nobody holds a ceremony for the garden hose. One day, it is stretched across the lawn because the tomatoes need water. A few weeks later, it is still lying there, except now you step over it and think, "I really ought to put that away." You do not put it away. You simply continue thinking about putting it away until sometime in October, when the weather forecast contains a word such as "freeze," and suddenly the garden hose becomes an emergency.

The same thing happens with the citronella candle. Back in July, that candle was essential equipment. It sat proudly on the table, bravely defending civilization from mosquitoes. Now it contains three drowned moths, two leaves and approximately half an inch of rainwater.

Still, I cannot throw it away. There is wax left. That is how they get you.

My wife has begun making subtle observations about the collection of summer equipment lingering around the house

“Are you going to put those chairs away?”

Eventually.

“What about the fan in the bedroom?”

Still warm occasionally.

“The cooler?”

Could need it.

“For what?”

You never know.

This is not procrastination. It is seasonal caution.

Anyone who has lived in Massachusetts long enough knows that September cannot be trusted. It will give you a 48-degree morning, convince you to locate a sweatshirt, then produce an afternoon warm enough to make you regret every decision you have made since breakfast.

So we hesitate. The window fan stays upstairs. The rake comes out, but the lawn mower remains ready. There might be a pumpkin on the front steps while a beach towel is still hanging in the garage. This is the only time of year when the household inventory makes absolutely no sense

Eventually, of course, autumn wins. The chairs get folded. The hose gets drained. The grill gets used less often. That forgotten bottle of sunscreen gets moved somewhere mysterious, where nobody will be able to find it next Memorial Day. But I am not quite ready yet. The chair can stay out another week.

Maybe we'll get one of those unexpectedly warm September afternoons. Maybe I'll sit outside for a while with a cup of coffee and enjoy the yard before the leaves really start coming down. Or maybe I won't. Either way, putting the chair away feels a little too much like admitting something. And around here, summer deserves at least a decent argument before we let it go.