

# In Farmers' Almanac, folksy meets the future

September 1 2011, By DAVID SHARP , Associated Press

---



A copy of the 2012 Farmers' Almanac is seen Thursday, August 24, 2011, in Freeport, Maine. The Almanac's publishers still continue the tradition started in 1910 of pre-drilling holes in the corner for hanging on an outhouse hook. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)

(AP) -- The Farmers' Almanac has a hole punched in the corner, made for hanging it on a hook in the outhouse "library" in the olden days. These days, though, there are some higher-tech options, including social networks, cell phones and e-readers.

Known for forecasts that use an old-fashioned formula, the almanac now has a mobile website for smart phones and nearly 6,000 followers on Twitter. More than 30,000 people "like" the publication's Facebook

page. By year's end there'll be software applications for Kindle, Nook and [iPad](#).

Karen Shackles, of Dillon, Colo., follows the almanac on Twitter and Facebook, checks its website and receives its email newsletter. She likes the folksy style of the almanac and appreciates its embrace of technology. She and her husband use the information for their snow-plowing business.

"We try to reach out to see who is giving some long-range forecasts and then we go through them all and put them together and come up with what we might expect for the winter," she said. "The Farmers' Almanac is one of the best sources for long-range forecasts."

The latest version of the annually updated almanac, released this week, is predicting stormier-than-usual weather this winter from the Middle Atlantic to New England. Its reclusive weather prognosticator, who works under the pseudonym Caleb Weatherbee, sums it up as a winter of "Clime and Punishment."

"This one is definitely wet, and definitely stormy," said Editor Peter Geiger. "Depending upon where you are, it's going to be either snow or rain."

Elsewhere, the weather formula dating to the 1800s suggests it'll be colder than usual in the Upper Midwest and wetter than usual in the [Pacific Northwest](#).

Conventional [forecasters](#) don't put much stock in the almanac formula that uses sunspots, planetary alignment and tidal action, nor do they for its main competitor, the New Hampshire-based Old Farmer's Almanac, which will be released later this month.

Kathy Vreeland, with the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University, suggests the almanac takes "artistic license" with its long-term forecasts.

"It's tradition. It's folklore. And it's fun," Vreeland said. "That's the whole thing. You don't base your vacation on their forecast. You have fun with it."

The almanac has a mixed track record. In the last volume it called for a "fair, cold Christmas holiday" in the Northeast for Dec. 24-27, 2010. That's when the region got clobbered by a blizzard that dumped more than two feet of snow and crippled cities for days.

On the other hand, it called for a hurricane threat to the Southeast between Aug. 28 and 31 this year. Hurricane Irene made landfall in North Carolina on Aug. 27 - though critics may note that predicting a hurricane in August is like shooting fish in a barrel.

Geiger said people shouldn't be surprised that the almanac's website gets 21 million page views each year, has 32,000 fans on [Facebook](#) and a large [Twitter](#) following.

But the print version isn't going away. The almanac has a circulation of 4 million, including retail editions and promotional versions given away by businesses.

The forecast, along with recipes, brainteasers, trivia and tips for resourceful living, comprise a formula that's largely unchanged from the first publication in 1818.

Editors of the Farmers' Almanac said a theme of self-reliance and simplicity espoused by the almanac is resonating with younger readers because of the sour economy.

"Nowadays people want to get back to the basics again. They want to live a more affordable, smart kind of life," said Sandi Duncan, the publication's managing editor. "Let's face it - the economy has forced people to get back to the basics, to live within their means."

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: In Farmers' Almanac, folksy meets the future (2011, September 1) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-09-farmers-almanac-folksy-future.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--