

Country Notes for October 2026

This is the first full month of autumn and I am certain that many will be pleased that the cooler days are upon us, although perhaps somewhat sad that the nights are drawing in and daylight is becoming less and less with each passing day.

Autumn is considered to be the harvest month, when harvest festivals are held in our churches. This year I imagine that it will not be just people who are celebrating, as fruit and berries become more widespread, thus feeding our wildlife. Many suffered during the long hot days and will now be celebrating the bounty laid before them in our fields, woods and hedgerows.

Blackberries were some of the first and by October those that are still on the brambles will be shrivelled and inedible. However, there are many more that are at their best in early autumn.

The wayfaring tree is in full fruit this month with its red berries slowly turning from red to purple. The birds love them and they provide a welcome splash of colour in our hedgerows. The small black bunched berries of the elder will also attract the birds, in addition to enthusiastic country wine makers! Rowan trees are also loaded with red berries to the delight of many of the thrush family. Blackbirds, song thrushes and mistle thrushes love them, as do the early arriving redwings and fieldfares, visiting our islands to escape the harsh northern winter. The haws on hawthorn bushes and the small plum like fruits on sloes also provide food for our birds and are eagerly foraged. Sloes are also enjoyed very much by makers of sloe gin!

Some birds, such as nuthatches and hawfinches, will be enjoying taking away hazel nuts and the larger Kentish cobnuts. Rose hips, growing on the dog roses, which looked so beautiful in our hedgerows in early summer, also provide food for some members of our wildlife. Holly, which is chiefly associated with Christmas, also has red berries by October and will often be stripped bare before the festive season.

Towards the end of the month horse chestnuts will provide conkers for the children and young at heart to enjoy, and the first of the sweet chestnuts will fall to the ground to the delight of humans and wildlife, squirrels in particular.

This is the season when nature really does provide bounty for all!

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