

'Autumn' and 'Fall'

Autumn and fall are used interchangeably as words for the season between summer and winter. Both are used in American and British English, but fall occurs more often in American English. Autumn is considered the more formal name for the season.

In the spring, a layer of cells called the *abscission layer* is formed where a leaf grows out from a branch. During the growing season, the tree hormones and chemicals are fairly steady, and this layer allows energy from the leaves to be passed into the branch and trunk to be stored. In autumn, with the cooler temperatures and shorter days, the production of one hormone called *auxin* reduces. This in turn puts a strain on the *abscission layer* and causes the bond between leaf and branch to weaken. Eventually, the strength of the join is weakened enough that the wind will blow the leaf away.

There are several reasons why deciduous trees lose their leaves:

- It means the tree spends less energy through the harsh winter
- It conserves moisture within the trunk and keeps it from drying out
- It allows wind to blow through the branches, putting less strain on the tree – a serious concern in winter storms and gales

