

Blog #9: When Do Seasons Start?

It is important that our lives reflect the place where we live, so that we may fully live in the Herenow.

The seasons of the year express two kinds of time. One kind is the conventional division of the twelve months into four equal calendrical segments, each three months long. These four seasons are keyed to what the sun is doing: It stands still at the Solstices (on about 21 June and 21 December), and it provides equal hours of day and night on the Equinoxes (on about 21 March and 21 September). Thus, we have Spring from about 21 March to 21 June, Summer from about 21 June to 21 September, Autumn from about 21 September to about 21 December, and Winter from about 21 December to about 21 March. (Of course, all this is shifted by six months if you live in the Southern Hemisphere.)

The other kind of seasonal time is defined by nature: by what the weather and plants and animals are doing. These events depend on where you live. If you live in regions near the earth's equator—where the sun doesn't do much moving around in the sky, other than its daily rising, crossing over, and setting—you may effectively have only one season: the year itself. Or, you may have two seasons: a rainy season and a dry season. But if you live at mid-latitudes, as I do and like much of Europe, Asia, and North America, you may indeed have four distinct seasons. These are marked by definite and distinctive weathers and biological events. Thus, here in Southern Oregon, we have the warming weather and bursting greenery of Spring, the heat and drought of Summer, the cooling air and colorful leaves of Autumn, and the darker, danker, dormant months of Winter.

The two kinds of our seasons may not actually have the same number of days. Thus, although the calendrical, sun-defined seasons are each three months long, by contrast the nature-defined seasons vary somewhat, depending on what the atmosphere happens to be doing where we live. Where I live, we sometimes get a too-short Spring or a long, lazy Autumn. Even so, for convenience, I accept that nature and the sun both follow approximately the three-month convention.

I do, however, shift the starting dates for the seasons. For, it seems that waiting to start the seasons until the 21st days of March, June,

September, and December is—for the place where I live—about three weeks too late. So (and I am not breaking any law here, other than tradition!), I have chosen to begin Spring on 1 March, Summer on 1 June, Autumn on 1 September, and Winter on 1 December. I heed the facts of nature around me, and I thereby reflect my place on the planet.

You can try keeping an eye on your own place and its nature-defined seasons. Do they match well the sun-defined seasons? Or might you do better to start your seasons on a different schedule? In a few days I shall place a sign in my living room, just for one day, that announces: “Spring the 1st.” The first day of Spring, 1 March. With luck, the Season Police will not seize my sign and lock me up until the 21st day of March!

In any event, enjoy the Spring, and all the seasons, wherever you live and by whatever dates you define them!

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