

## THOSE OTHER FALL COLORS

Fall in Montana is not fall in, say, Wisconsin or New England, where gaudy sugar maples and ancient oaks light up entire counties in brilliant reds, oranges, and yellows. Yet this is without question the Treasure State's prettiest season. And not just from quaking aspen stands shouting yellow from forest ravines, golden tamaracks transforming mountainsides, or cottonwoods glowing along the upper Yellowstone River. Those gift shop calendar images are certainly lovely, but Montana's autumn is also awash in quieter, subtle colors.

Lichens, for instance. These mysterious fungus-algae combos come in pigmentations—grays, yellows, oranges,

and even fluorescent greens—that become more intense in the wet, cool conditions of fall. Lichen pigmentation is a by-product of complex tissue chemistry that blocks harmful ultraviolet rays, allows the organisms to absorb light and heat, and protects them from being eaten.

But enough of the science. Across Montana, lichens are painting prairies and forests with their quiet hues, as are shrubs, grasses, forbs, algae, mosses, and ferns. Next time you're outdoors, try to look past the gaudy aspens and larches to find these other fall colors. They may not grace a calendar cover, but they still add vivid accents that illuminate this wonderful time of year. —*Editor*

*Above:* Fireweed in late fall  
**RICK CLARK**

*Opposite page:* Red osier dogwood against Cataract Falls near Augusta  
**KEVIN LEAGUE**





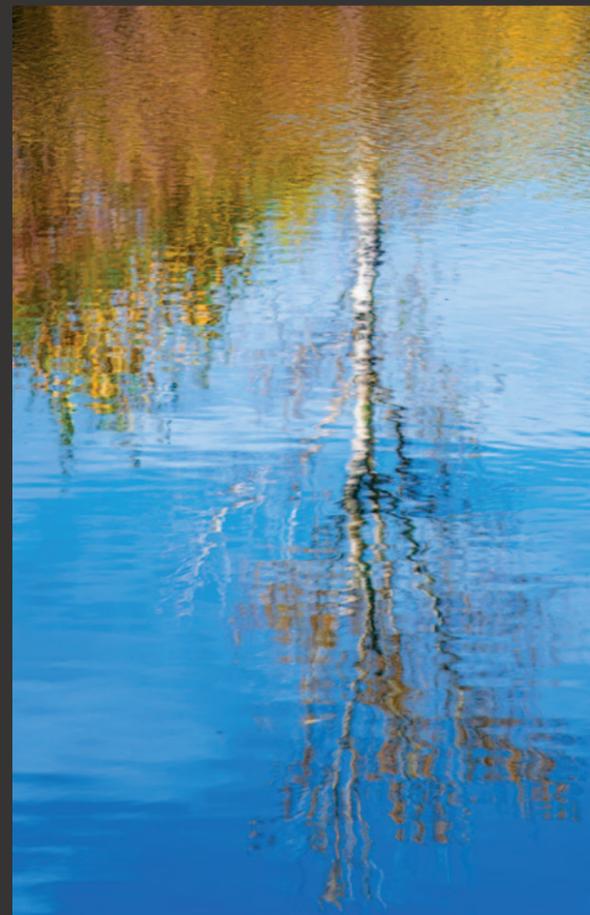
*Above:* Illuminated slopes below the snowcapped Garden Wall, Glacier National Park  
**JOHN LAMBING**

*Right:* Decaying leaves near Missoula  
**PAUL QUENEAU**



*Above:* Autumn willows along Prickly Pear Creek near Helena  
**STEVE McMORRAN**

*Left:* Black-capped chickadee on fallen maple leaves and moss  
**DONALD M. JONES**



*Opposite page:* A dog runs along the banks of Fleshman Creek near Livingston  
**ALLEN RUSSELL**

*Left:* Fall foliage reflection  
**ROSS PETER NELSON**

*Top:* A mallard drake takes flight at Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge  
**KEN ARCHER**

*Above:* Bull elk in shadow behind illuminated grasses  
**JOEL MAES**



*Top left:* Seedling emerging from a crack in a fallen tree along the Clark Fork River  
**TOM PATRICK**

*Top right:* Jelly fungus on a spruce log, Flathead Valley  
**DEE LINNELL BLANK**

*Middle left:* Lichen layers on a boulder  
**STEVE LUFT**

*Middle right:* Dried coneflower heads  
**JULIE BETTS**

*Bottom left:* Frosty leaves in the Flathead National Forest  
**LAURA VERHAEGHE**

*Bottom right:* Underside of a rosy larch bolete mushroom, near Victor  
**STEVEN AKRE**

*Opposite page:* Old-growth forest floor along Pete Creek in the Purcell Mountains  
**RANDY BEACHAM**



*Above:* Autumn light over Skalkaho Creek, Bitterroot Valley

**ESTELLE SHUTTLEWORTH**

*Right:* Pronghorn buck in prairie foliage during the rut

**LON LAUBER**

