

VINEYARD



GAZE

COMMENTARY

Moods of Autumn

By Michael McAuliffe

October 2, 2026 Updated October 3, 2026



- Tim Johnson

Beyond the kitchen window, my line of sight sets an up-Island scene to ponder. The massive maple, a treasured resident of the yard, remains full, nothing yet shed from its jade plumage. But high up on the tree, a broken branch, with a tight cluster of curled leaves, totters back and forth. It clings to the mother trunk as if afraid to separate.

Is the injured issue waiting for a storm's sustained gust to force its descent? Or for the dark of night to mask its final demise? Or is it buying time so the multitude can join in the journey? I do not know the reasoning, only that its presence is precarious.

Summer's adornments soon will wrestle fate. Daylight will hug the horizon and disappear without excuse or delay, sidelined by the flattening celestial slope of the new season. Creatures huddle and conserve before scarcity determines what survives and what struggles.

The gravity of life will pull against hope and comfort, exposing a nakedness, one that's severe in relief and cold to the touch. The elements will expose the unexpected for scrutiny and the unaddressed for judgment.

Autumn is the disquiet of coming change tempered by the solace of reprise.

Michael McAuliffe lives in Chilmark and Washington, D.C.

This article appears in October 2 2026.

Madison

October 4, 2026 at 8:13 pm

So beautiful!