**Seasons**

There are four seasons in a year: spring, summer, autumn and winter. In the United States autumn is called Fall. Each season lasts three months. In most countries of the world the new year begins on the 1st of January. This day is a holiday in Russia.

Every season is beautiful in its own way. Winter in Russia is cold, especially in the northern regions. The sun sets early and rises late. The rivers and lakes are frozen over. Everything is covered with snow. Sometimes it is very cold, and the temperature can drop to thirty below zero. Going out in weather like this isn't very pleasant. Winter is a good time for sports. People go in for skating and skiing. Tobogganing is also popular, not as a kind of sport, but rather as fun. Winter in St.Petersburg is worse than in Central Russia because it is damp and clouds often cover the sun.

In March it gets warmer and warmer. The sun becomes hotter and brighter. The days grow longer, the snow and ice gradually melt away. Spring comes, and nature awakens to new life after its winter sleep. The air is fresh, the sky is blue and cloudless. All kinds of plants and flowers appear. The ground is covered with bright-green grass, and the first flowers; the trees are in full blossom. Birds return to the North from their winter stay in the South and start building their nests. Farmers get ready to plough their fields. The days are warm, and everything is full of life and joy.

Spring is followed by summer. The weather is usually fine in summer, but it can be very hot, especially in July. Sometimes there are storms with thunder and lightning, but they do not last long. They freshen the air and help the plants fight the heat. In summer people try to get away from the city noise and spend more time in the open air. They pick mushrooms and berries in the forest, swim in the rivers and lakes, go fishing and boating. Most people prefer to have their holidays in summer. In St.Petersburg in June the sun does not set at all. This period is known as the White Nights.

Autumn begins in September. The days become shorter and the nights become longer. The leaves turn yellow, red and brown and fall to the ground. Most birds fly away to warm countries. There is a short spell of dry sunny weather in September which is called Indian Summer. It is a beautiful time when the sky is cloudless, the trees around are golden, the air is transparent and it is still warm. September is also rich in fruit and all kinds of vegetables grown round St.Petersburg and also brought from Central Russia. It gets colder towards the end of September, and mists and drizzle begin. In October we have some really chilly days. In St.Petersburg November often brings snow with it.