Seasonal Letters

Configurable decorative stationery for LaTeX

aqsa
aqsa.umar3505@gmail.com

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Abstract

Seasonal Letters places decorative stationery behind ordinary LaTeX text. Four seasonal palettes and botanical motifs can be combined with seven weekday emblems. The package distinguishes first and continuation pages, supports custom artwork, and provides a white-paper print mode. All built-in decoration is original vector artwork; no external images, proprietary fonts, or shell escape are required. The optional `seasonalletter` class provides a simple personal-letter layout.

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1 What this package does

The package handles page decoration. It does not replace address management, postal standards, or the letter structures in existing classes. Use the optional class for informal correspondence, or load the package with an existing class and keep that class's letter commands.

The writing area is kept visually quiet. Page backgrounds are independent of paragraphs, and decoration does not require a fixed-height text box. Text can flow naturally over several pages. Seasonal and weekday choices are explicit: the package does not infer a season from the date, location, or hemisphere.

This release draws clean antique-inspired line art. It does not include the painterly artwork or photographic paper textures shown in early concept images. A user-supplied texture can be added as described below.

2 Requirements and installation

A LaTeX format dated 2020-10-01 or later is required for the shipout hook. Runtime dependencies are TikZ/PGF, `graphicx`, and `etoolbox`. The optional class also loads `geometry`, `fontenc`, and `mathpazo`. The manual uses `listings`, `booktabs`, `longtable`, and `hyperref`. These are standard TeX distribution packages. No system font installation is needed.

For a local project, copy `seasonalletters.sty` and, if needed, `seasonalletter.cls` beside your document. For a personal installation, put both files in `TEXMFHOME/tex/latex/seasonalletters/` and refresh the file database if your distribution requires it. The files can also be uploaded alongside the example to an Overleaf project; there is no special Overleaf API.

Compile with pdfLaTeX, XeLaTeX, or LuaLaTeX. TikZ page anchors may require a second run. For example:

```
pdflatex seasonalletters-example.tex
pdflatex seasonalletters-example.tex
```

3 A first letter

```
\documentclass[a4paper]{seasonalletter}
\SeasonalSetup{season=autumn,weekday=wednesday,
  paper=grid,label={From the reading room}}
\begin{document}
\begin{SeasonalLetter}
\SeasonalHeading{A quiet afternoon}
\SeasonalOpening{Dear friend,}
The words of the letter go here. Paragraphs and page
breaks work as in an ordinary LaTeX document.
\SeasonalClosing{With warm wishes,}{Alex}
\end{SeasonalLetter}
\end{document}
```

The class uses 30 mm side margins, a 45 mm top margin, and a 35 mm bottom margin. It sets Palatino text, an empty page style, no paragraph indentation, and modest paragraph spacing.

Standard `article` options, including `a4paper`, `a5paper`, and `letterpaper`, are passed through. The default paper size follows the base class/distribution setting, so specify one explicitly for reproducible output.

4 Commands and page boundaries

`\SeasonalSetup{keys}` Sets package options. In the document body it first calls `\clearpage`, so new settings cannot change the decoration of an unfinished page. In the preamble it does not ship a page. Keys can also be passed directly to `\usepackage`.

`SeasonalLetter` environment Begins on a fresh page, enables decoration, applies its optional keys locally, and resets its own page count. Its end ships remaining pages before the local settings are restored. It may contain any number of paragraphs and pages. It does not collect the body into a box. Do not nest these environments.

`\SeasonalReset` Ships an unfinished page and resets the stationery page count. Use it before each new letter when working with another class. It does not change LaTeX's `page` counter.

`\SeasonalHeading{text}` Typesets an accent-colour, large small-cap heading.

`\SeasonalOpening{greeting}` Typesets a greeting followed by a small gap.

`\SeasonalClosing{closing}{signature}` Typesets a closing and signature with space between them.

5 Options

Keys are processed from left to right. A `season` sets the palette; place colour overrides after it.

Key	Values and behaviour
`season`	`spring` (default), `summer`, `autumn`, `winter`. Sets colours and botanical corner motif.
`weekday`	`monday` (default) through `sunday`, in lower case. Selects an emblem. No automatic date calculation.
`paper`	`plain` (default), `ruled`, `grid`. Lines are clipped to the declared writing rectangle.
`spacing`	Positive TeX dimension; default `8mm`. Distance between rule or grid lines. Lines do not snap to text baselines.
`border`	`double` (default), `single`, `none`. Changes the border, not the motifs.
`continuation`	`light` (default): border, small emblem, page count. `full`: full decoration on every page. `none`: no decoration or stationery page count after the first page. Paper colour and ruling remain.
`output`	`screen` (default), `print`. Print uses white paper and grey built-in decoration; omits background images and ruling. User artwork remains the user's responsibility. Body text is not recoloured.

Key	Values and behaviour
`enabled`	`true` (default), `false`. Disabled pages have no package background and do not advance its page count.
`label`	Optional text beneath the first-page emblem; empty by default. Keep it short. Full continuation repeats it.
`accent`, `muted`	Valid xcolor expressions for ornament colours.
`paper-color`, `ink`	Valid xcolor expressions. Ink affects the provided environment and heading commands; the package does not globally recolour existing-class text.
`left`, `right`	Guide/ruling insets, default `30mm`. These do not change document margins.
`top`, `bottom`	Guide/ruling insets, defaults `45mm` and `35mm`. These do not change document margins.
`debug`	`true` draws a red guide rectangle; `false` (default) hides it.
`background-image`	Image filename, empty by default. Stretched to the page, so use artwork with the same aspect ratio. Omitted in print mode.
`background-opacity`	Number between 0 and 1; default `0.12`. Applies only to the background image.
`corner-image`	Image filename, empty by default. Placed 16 mm from the bottom and right paper edges, on fully decorated pages.
`corner-width`	Positive width for that image; default `18mm`. Keep the artwork outside the writing area.
`theme`	Name previously declared with `\SeasonalDeclareTheme`.

6 The visual system

Season	Palette	Motif
Spring	Ivory, dusty rose, sage	Flowering sprig
Summer	Cream, ochre, olive	Meadow flowers
Autumn	Warm beige, rust, muted olive	Stylised leaves
Winter	Cool ivory, blue-grey	Bare branches and small stars

Monday has a crescent; Tuesday a diamond; Wednesday a grid; Thursday a sprig; Friday a star; Saturday a compass; Sunday a sun. These are design choices, not claims of historical or cultural meaning. The weekday is independent of the season. All 28 combinations use the same text layout.

7 Defining themes and adding artwork

A theme stores a sequence of existing settings:

```
\SeasonalDeclareTheme{reading-room}{
  season=autumn,weekday=wednesday,paper=grid,
  border=single,accent=brown!70!black}
\SeasonalSetup{theme=reading-room}
```

A photographic paper texture can be supplied separately:

```
\SeasonalSetup{background-image=my-paper.jpg,
  background-opacity=.18}
```

There is no bundled image file. Use assets that you are entitled to distribute if you share your theme, and include their licence and source information. PDF, PNG, and JPEG work with normal PDF-producing engines. Convert SVG artwork to PDF first if you want a vector image without a shell-escape conversion.

For more control, `\SeasonalSetArtwork{TikZ code}` sets an additional layer on fully decorated pages. It replaces the previous custom layer and does not replace the built-in motifs. Pass an empty argument to clear it. The code runs inside the background TikZ picture; the ordinary TikZ page anchors are available. For example:

```
\SeasonalSetArtwork{
  \node[anchor=south east,inner sep=0pt]
    at ([xshift=-17mm,yshift=17mm]
        current page.south east)
    {\includegraphics[width=16mm]{my-ornament.pdf}};
}
```

The command ships an unfinished page before changing its definition. Do not start another `tikzpicture` inside this code. User-supplied artwork is not automatically clipped, desaturated, or checked for overlap. Keep it small, confine it to the margins, and review the final PDF.

8 Using another letter class

For postal letters, keep the address, fold-mark, and opening commands of your chosen class. The package does not change their positions. This example uses the standard `letter` class:

```
\documentclass[a4paper]{letter}
\usepackage[left=30mm,right=30mm,
  top=45mm,bottom=35mm]{geometry}
\usepackage[season=winter,weekday=friday]{seasonalletters}
\signature{Alex}
\begin{document}
\SeasonalReset
\begin{letter}{Morgan\\12 Example Street}
\opening{Dear Morgan,}
The body of the letter goes here.
\closing{Best wishes,}
\end{letter}
\end{document}
```

For KOMA-Script or another class, make sufficient room for its own address and heading areas and inspect the result. The package intentionally does not reconfigure another class's geometry. The `left`, `right`, `top`, and `bottom` keys describe the ruling/guide rectangle only. If you change the optional class's geometry, update those guide keys to match it.

The package uses physical page edges for decoration. It does not mirror inner and outer margins for duplex binding or support crop/bleed production. This release is intended for A4, A5, and US Letter portrait sheets. Other sizes and landscape pages require visual review.

9 Printing, accessibility, and limitations

Choose `output=print` when printing on actual textured stock or when a full-page colour fill is unwanted. Thin borders are inset 11 mm from the paper edge, but printer capabilities vary. Use `border=none` to suppress them. Print mode is a visual setting, not a separate PDF print layer.

Body text remains selectable and searchable. This release has not been validated for tagged PDF or PDF/UA; selectable text alone is not an accessibility certification. Decorative content is inserted in the LaTeX `shipout/background` hook. Avoid combining this package with another opaque full-page background unless you have checked hook ordering.

No automatic font changes are made by the package itself. The optional class uses Palatino. Users who need other scripts should choose an appropriate font and engine in their own document; multilingual typography is not configured by this package.

10 Building and reporting problems

Build the manual twice with a PDF-producing LaTeX engine. Build the gallery, example, print example, and standard-letter example the same way. The repository includes a Python build/verification script and GitHub Actions configuration. See `README.md` for commands and `VALIDATION.md` for the actual release checks.

Report the engine and LaTeX format version, package version, full error message, and a minimal example to the maintainer. The submission metadata is a separate release-preparation document; it does not imply that CTAN has accepted the package or that a distribution already includes it.

11 Licence and file manifest

Copyright (c) 2026 aqsa. The package, class, original vector motifs, examples, manual source, build scripts, and repository documentation are distributed under the MIT License in `LICENSE`. Dependencies keep their own licences. No third-party artwork or fonts are bundled.

The runtime consists of `seasonalletters.sty` and `seasonalletter.cls`. Each example includes its editable source and a compiled PDF supplied as documentation.

The complete file inventory is in `MANIFEST.md`. Development scripts and tests are supplied in the source repository; files not needed by package users are excluded from the CTAN archive.