

Gardening by the Moon

By Jackie Johnson BS, ND, MH



Culpepper knew. Pliny knew. Old time farmers knew and would say “plant potatoes by the dark of the moon.” Many of our noted herbalists associated plants with both the moon and astrological signs, and still do.

“Gardening by the Moon” deals with lunar influences. If the moon can affect our oceans, thereby causing the tides, is it not logical to assume other water can be affected as well? How is this done? Does it affect us as well?

It has to do with the laws of gravity and the gravitational pull of the moon. Sir Isaac Newton gave credibility to the theory that although the sun is many times larger than the moon, the moon is much closer to the earth, which allows its gravitational pull to be stronger and affect us more. Remember your school textbooks had pictures of the globe with a bulge in the oceans, denoting the tides?

It was accepted, but continues to be researched and established that during the full and new moons, the pull of the moon is strongest and not only pulls on the oceans, but also pulls ground water closer to the surface, this in turn, helps seeds to germinate and grow.


Researcher Dr. Frank Brown of Northwestern University conducted research which found that even plants that did not “see” the moon, absorbed more water during the full moon.

In his book How to Grow More Vegetables, author/researcher, John Jeavons reveals his research whereby he concludes that an “increasing amount of moonlight stimulates leaf growth,” and “as the moon light decreases, the above ground leaf growth slows down.”

Yet another author/researcher, Ute York in her book Living by the Moon states:

“The old time gardeners say “with the waxing of the moon, the earth exhales. When the sap in the plants rises, the force first goes into the growth above ground. Thus, you should do all activities with plants that bear fruit above the ground during a waxing moon. With the

waning of the moon, the earth inhales. Then, the sap primarily goes down towards the roots. Thus, the waning moon is a good time for pruning, multiplying, fertilizing, watering, harvesting and controlling parasites and weeds.”

Through the ages, those in tune with the earth have lived their lives in natural cycles. The following items are the cycles of the moon and ageless observations and suggestions: 

PHASES OF THE MOON

First Quarter ~ New Moon

Begins where sun and moon appear to be in the same place. The moon rises with the sun and is hardly visible.

The lunar gravity pulls water up; together with increasing moonlight, creating balanced root and leaf growth.

It is a time for new beginnings - growth and germination.

Plant annual plants that produce their seeds outside the fruit or that yield above the ground, i.e. cabbage, lettuce, celery, parsley, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, cereals, and grains.

Second Quarter ~ Halfway between the New Moon and the Full Moon

The moon rises around noon, sets around midnight, and is seen in the western sky before midnight.

The gravitational pull is less, but the moonlight is increasing which creates strong leaf growth.

The two days before the full moon are especially good for planting.

Plant annuals producing yields that are harvested above the ground, viney plants and those that produce seed inside the fruit, i.e. beans, peas, pepper, pumpkins, melons, squash, and tomatoes

For increased lawn growth, it is a good time to mow.

First and second quarter plantings are considered almost interchangeable with plants doing nearly equally well.

Third Quarter ~ Full Moon

The sun and moon are on opposite sides of the earth. The moon rises in the east around sunset, rising a little later each evening.

The gravitational pull is high during this time creating additional moisture in the soil. After the full moon, moonlight decreases putting energy down into the roots.

Plant biennials, perennials, bulbs and roots, trees, shrubs, berries, rhubarb (includes beets, carrots, strawberries, grapes, potatoes, onions, peanuts, and other plants to over-winter for an early spring harvest).

Plants are gaining more liquid around the full moon.

Because of this time of active root growth, it is a good time for transplanting, and pruning to come again.

Fourth Quarter ~ Halfway between Full Moon and New Moon

The moon rises at midnight (appearing overhead as the sun rises) and sets around noon.

During this phase, there is decreased gravitational pull, less moonlight, and minimal life forces flowing, the “dark side of the moon.” It is considered a quiet time; a time to draw back, reflect, and re-organize. It is also the time to cultivate, weed, mulch, and get rid of pests. Pruning and transplanting also can be done carefully. Harvesting, or breaking the plant’s energy force, is recommended during this time of the waning moon - when the moon’s influence is at its weakest. It is also the best time to harvest those things intended for long storage, i.e. roots (potatoes, turnips, etc.), fruits, squashes, and herbs. Old timers say it is the time to move beehives and castrate animals.

To decrease the growth of lawns, it is a good time to mow.

Sometimes for all our good intentions of planting, or mulching or transplanting, etc. on a particular day or weekend, when it comes time to actually accomplish the job, we just “don’t feel like it.” Could this possibly be our bodies that are more in-tuned with Mother Earth, telling us what to do, and not to do?

There are several good research articles and books relating to this subject; some of those were used in preparation of this article include:

**Lunar Organic Methods, Harry MacCormick
Llewellyn’s Moon Sign Book
Gardening by the Moon, Caren Catterall**



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