

EXTRA!

FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

HOLIDAY COOKIE RECIPES

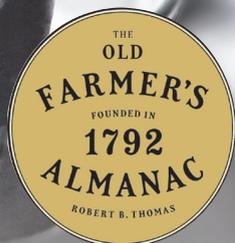
CELEBRATE THE "YEAR OF THE ROSE"

YEAR-END ENTERTAINMENT

BATTLE THE WINTER "DRYS"



DECEMBER 2017



*Fun wasn't in the forecast. But when snow fell and the electricity failed, confidence was **powering** us through. Instead of filling **your life** with worry during an outage, we say grab your mittens.*



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Humor Me
*Grins and groans
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January issue!



THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, AND FOLKLORE



DECEMBER'S BIRTHSTONES: TURQUOISE, ZIRCON OR TANZANITE

- Turquoise is the traditional December birthstone. Its color ranges from sky blue or greenish blue to pale green or greenish gray. Bluer stones are more valuable and contain more copper. If veins of the parent rock, called matrix, are present, the gem's value is reduced. Turquoise is fairly soft and porous and is often treated to add strength.

+ TAP FOR MORE ON
TURQUOISE

+ TAP TO LEARN ABOUT
ZIRCON AND TANZANITE

▶ TAP TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
DECEMBER'S BIRTHSTONES

Moon View

December's full Moon, the **Full Cold Moon**, occurs on the 3rd, at 10:47 A.M. EST.

SEASONAL NOTE

The December solstice occurs on December 21 at 11:28 A.M. EST. At this time, winter begins in the Northern Hemisphere and summer begins in the Southern Hemisphere.

▶ TAP FOR MORE
MOON PHASES

▶ TAP FOR MORE
ABOUT THE FULL
COLD MOON

Folklore Fun

Frost on the shortest day is said to indicate a severe winter.

ALMANAC 225TH ANNIVERSARY TIME CAPSULE

The following are excerpts from the December Right-Hand Calendar Page of The 1793 [Old] Farmer's Almanac:

*See, bursting from the northern skies,
November's fierce successor rise;
Lo! devastation makes his way,
Oaks with a bow confess his sway.*

• **Dec. 19–20:** *Now look for a storm of snow or rain.*

• See that your cellars are well stored with good cider, that wholesome and cheering liquor, which is the product of your own farms.



MORE ON TURQUOISE

- The ancient Egyptians used the gem in jewelry. Persians wore it for protection; a change in color was said to forebode danger. The gem was once attached to bridles to protect horses from illness if they drank cold water after hard exercise. Native Americans added it to jewelry, ceremonial masks, weapons, pottery, and other items.
- The gem symbolizes protection, friendship, and good fortune.

ZIRCON AND TANZANITE

- The substance “zircon” is often confused with synthetic “cubic zirconia,” but zircon is the oldest natural mineral on Earth, dating back 4.4 billion years. The gem is available in many colors, with blue the most popular and most often associated with December’s birthstone. The colorless variety is less valuable, but due to its brilliance, it is a popular substitute for a diamond. Zircon may contain traces of radioactive uranium or thorium; this and its age make it useful for radiometric dating. The gem was once believed to induce sleep, promote wealth, and protect from injury and evil.
- In 1967, tanzanite, a blue version of zoisite, officially was discovered by prospector Manuel de Sousa in Tanzania—hence its name. Because tanzanite is available only from a small area, it is likely to be depleted in the next few decades. Its blue color, similar to that of sapphire, can be pale to intense with hints of violet. Brownish tones lessen its value; deeper blues are more precious.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY



PROFESSOR
SILLIMAN
CONFIRMED
THE FIRST
OFFICIALLY
RECORDED
METEORITE
IN THE NEW
WORLD.



DECEMBER 14: **SPACE INVADER**

At 6:30 A.M. on this day in 1807, residents from Vermont to Connecticut looked up at the sky and saw a red fireball. About two-thirds the size of a full Moon, it raced across the heavens, broke apart, and fell to earth in at least six areas of Weston (now Easton), Trumbull, and Fairfield, Connecticut. Whizzing sounds were heard close to the impact sites, and three sonic booms were heard as far as 40 miles away. The entire event took about 30 seconds.

Upon hearing the news a few days later, Yale professor Benjamin Silliman, accompanied by his colleague, professor James Kingsley, traveled to the impact area to talk to witnesses, examine impact sites, and collect specimens (including some that enterprising townfolk were selling as souvenirs). Silliman confirmed that it had been a meteorite—the first officially recorded in the New World.



**“IT IS EASIER
TO BELIEVE
THAT TWO
YANKEE
PROFESSORS
COULD LIE
THAN TO
ADMIT THAT
STONES
COULD
FALL FROM
HEAVEN.”**

Meteorites, rocks that fell from space, were a concept slowly gaining acceptance in Europe, but their study was still a relatively new science. In an article in the *Connecticut Herald* published on December 29, Silliman and Kingsley described the Weston event. The news rapidly spread to other newspapers, and accounts were published in literary and philosophical journals. Later, Silliman performed a chemical analysis of the rocks and published a revised report. The findings were discussed by notable scientific organizations in Philadelphia, London, and Paris. Still, there were skeptics about the idea of meteorites, including U.S. president Thomas Jefferson, who was said to have remarked, “It is easier to believe that two Yankee professors could lie than to admit that stones could fall from heaven.”

Silliman’s and Kingsley’s Weston meteorite fragments were the first cataloged items in the Yale meteorite collection, which is the oldest in the United States.



BEST DAYS TO DO THINGS

These December dates, deemed to be propitious in astrology, are based on the astrological passage of the Moon. However, consider all indicators before making any major decisions. —*Celeste Longacre*

PERSONAL

Begin diet to lose weight: 9, 14
 Begin diet to gain weight: 1, 29
 Cut hair to encourage growth: 1, 23–25
 Cut hair to discourage growth: 11–13
 Have dental care: 9, 10
 Quit smoking: 9, 14
 Wean children: 9, 14

AROUND THE HOUSE

Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut: 13–15
 End projects: 17
 Start projects: 19

OUTDOORS

Begin logging: 18–20
 Go camping: 16, 17
 Go fishing: 1–3, 18–31
 Set posts or pour concrete: 18–20

IN THE GARDEN

Destroy pests and weeds: 26, 27
 Graft or pollinate: 5, 6
 Prune to encourage growth: 26, 27
 Prune to discourage growth: 7, 8
 Plant aboveground crops: 23–25
 Plant belowground crops: 13–15
 Harvest aboveground crops: 1, 2, 28, 29
 Harvest belowground crops: 9, 10

ON THE FARM

Breed animals: 13–15
 Castrate animals: 21, 22
 Cut hay: 26, 27
 Set eggs: 2–4, 11, 29–31
 Slaughter livestock: 13–15
 Wean animals: 9, 14



GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN

Use the December dates shown in the Moon's Astrological Place calendar below to find the best days for the following garden tasks:

PLANT, TRANSPLANT, AND GRAFT: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces, or Taurus

HARVEST: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius, Gemini, or Aquarius

BUILD/FIX FENCES OR GARDEN BEDS: Capricorn

CONTROL INSECT PESTS, PLOW, AND WEED: Aries, Gemini, Leo, Sagittarius, or Aquarius

PRUNE: Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius. During a waxing Moon, pruning encourages growth; during a waning Moon, it discourages growth.

THE MOON'S ASTROLOGICAL PLACE IN DECEMBER

1 Taurus	9 Virgo	17 Sagittarius	25 Pisces
2 Taurus	10 Virgo	18 Capricorn	26 Aries
3 Gemini	11 Libra	19 Capricorn	27 Aries
4 Gemini	12 Libra	20 Capricorn	28 Taurus
5 Cancer	13 Scorpio	21 Aquarius	29 Taurus
6 Cancer	14 Scorpio	22 Aquarius	30 Gemini
7 Leo	15 Scorpio	23 Pisces	31 Gemini
8 Leo	16 Sagittarius	24 Pisces	

+ TAP FOR
MERCURY IN
RETROGRADE
DATES

▶ **APP EXTRA!**
TAP FOR
DECEMBER
MOON PHASES

MERCURY IN RETROGRADE

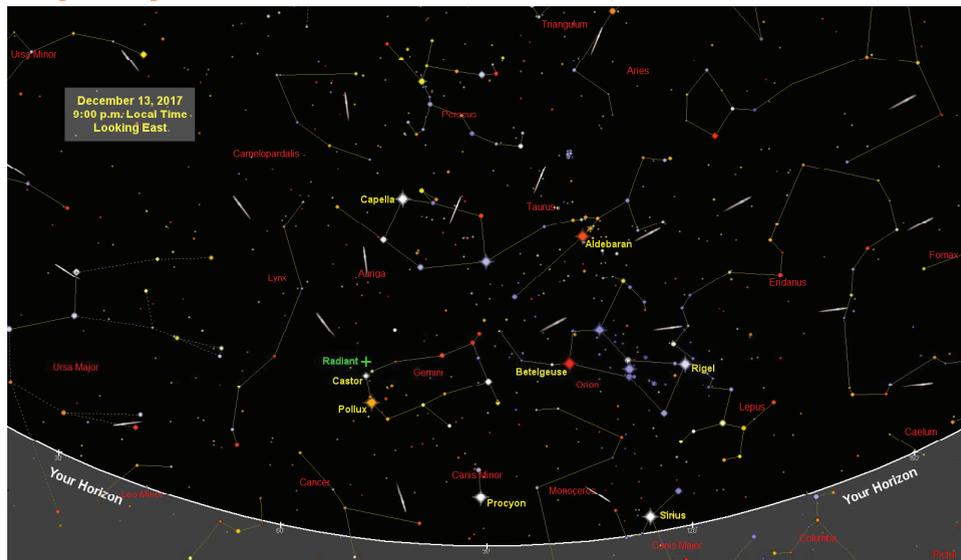
Sometimes the other planets appear to be traveling backward through the zodiac; this is an illusion. We call this illusion retrograde motion.

Mercury's retrograde periods can cause our plans to go awry. However, this is an excellent time to reflect on the past. Intuition is high during these periods, and coincidences can be extraordinary.

When Mercury is retrograde, remain flexible, allow extra time for travel, and avoid signing contracts. Review projects and plans at these times, but wait until Mercury is direct again to make any final decisions.

**Mercury will be retrograde
during December 3–23.**

—Celeste Longacre



A HOT SHOWER ON A CHILLY NIGHT

If you gaze at the sky long enough on any clear, dark night, you will eventually see a few meteors, popularly known as “shooting stars.” These are tiny particles of fast-moving cosmic debris that—purely by chance—encounter Earth’s upper atmosphere. The particles are moving so fast, relative to Earth, that friction with air molecules causes them to heat up to their melting point. Within a fraction of a second, they vaporize in a flash of light that we see as a thin, glowing streak: a meteor.

A meteor or two is a welcome bonus if you are already observing planets or constellations. However, if you want to see *lots* of shooting stars, you need to observe a meteor shower, an event that occurs just a few times a year. Now is one of those times: The best meteor shower of 2017 falls on the night of December 13–14.

The Geminid Meteor Shower (aka the Geminids) gets its name from the point in the sky (the radiant) from which the

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A PRINTABLE
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SKY MAP

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OHIOAN JEFF
DETRAY'S SKY
ADVENTURES



meteors appear to originate. The radiant for the Geminids lies (surprise!) in the constellation Gemini, the Twins. Although all of the Geminid meteors fly away from the radiant, the shooting stars may appear in any part of the sky. This month's Sky Map shows the radiant for the Geminids and illustrates how the meteors can appear anywhere.

Meteor showers occur when Earth encounters a particularly dense stream of cosmic debris. The size of the debris is on the order of that of dust particles or grains of sand. Most meteor shower debris streams are produced by comets. For example, debris left in the wake of Halley's Comet is responsible for two meteor showers, the Eta Aquarids in May and the Orionids in October.

The Geminids, however, do not have a cometary origin; in fact, the parent body responsible for the shower remained a mystery until 1983. In that year, the 3-mile-wide asteroid Phaethon was discovered. The source of the Geminids had been found! Ordinarily, asteroids don't produce much dust and debris, but something happened to Phaethon a few centuries ago that caused it to begin shedding copious quantities of dust. Every December, Earth plows into the stream of debris left behind by Phaethon, and the happy result is an excellent meteor shower.

You might think that the best way to observe the Geminids would be to look directly at the radiant. You would be wrong!

Although all of the Geminids will appear to be flying *away from* the radiant, they will *not necessarily* appear near the radiant. Again, the meteors can appear anywhere in the sky! The best strategy to maximize the number of meteors you see is to look toward the darkest and least obstructed part of the sky that is observable from your location. The darker your surroundings, the better. You can begin looking up at any time after it's truly dark, but the peak hours are usually after midnight.

With luck, you'll average about one meteor a minute from a good location. They will not arrive like clockwork, though. You might go several minutes without seeing anything and then be treated to a few meteors all at once. So dress warmly, bring a hot drink, and look for particles of asteroid Phaethon as they meet their fiery end high above Earth.

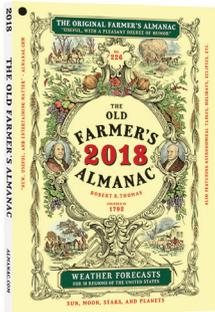
—Jeff DeTray

POPULAR PRESENTS!

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FOOD



Holiday Cookie Recipes

It's December, and this means that it's cookie swap season! Whether you're invited to join in a swap or plan to host one yourself, sharing cookies is delicious fun. Make these outstanding cookie recipes from our *Everyday Baking* cookbook and be a sought-after swapper!

PHOTO: AFRICA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Favorite Sugar Cookies

 TAP FOR RECIPE

FAVORITE SUGAR COOKIES

- 4-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1/3 cup vegetable shortening
- 1-1/2 cups sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- milk or light cream, for brushing
- colored or coarse sugar, for sprinkling

Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt into a bowl. Whisk well, to mix.

Combine butter and shortening in a separate bowl. Using an electric mixer, beat ingredients until smooth and creamy, gradually adding sugar. Beat in eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Blend in vanilla. Using a wooden spoon, stir dry ingredients into creamed mixture about 1 cup at a time.

When all flour has been added, the dough will be cohesive and semi-firm, but pliable. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Divide it into thirds. Place each third of the dough in the center of a 1 gallon plastic storage bag and flatten with your palm to about a 3/4-inch thickness. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours, or overnight.

Remove each portion from the fridge about an hour before baking and roll dough right in the bag to about a 1/2-inch thickness.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease two large baking sheets or line with parchment paper.

Remove a section of dough from its bag and, on a sheet of lightly floured wax or parchment paper, roll it to a little less than 1/4 inch thick. Cut dough into shapes. Place cookies on prepared baking sheets. Brush lightly with milk and sprinkle with sugar. Bake on center oven rack for 12 to 13 minutes, one sheet at a time, until cookies start to turn golden around the edges. Using a spatula, immediately transfer cookies to a cooling rack and cool thoroughly.

Makes 24 or more cookies, depending on size.



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TAP FOR
RECIPE



Chocolate Chunk- Peanut Butter Cookies

CHOCOLATE CHUNK-PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES

6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, divided	1 egg, at room temperature
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened	1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2/3 cup smooth peanut butter	2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup packed brown sugar	1 teaspoon baking soda
	1/2 teaspoon salt
	1/2 cup finely chopped roasted and salted peanuts

Coarsely chop 2 ounces of chocolate and melt it in the top of a double boiler over not-quite-simmering water. Remove pan from the heat. Whisk chocolate to smooth. Set aside.

Using a handheld or stand electric mixer, cream butter, peanut butter, and brown sugar. Add egg, beating until smooth, then blend in vanilla.

Sift flour, baking soda, and salt into a bowl. Set aside.

Blend melted chocolate into creamed mixture until evenly combined. Stir in dry ingredients, a third at a time, until evenly mixed. Coarsely chop remaining 4 ounces of chocolate and stir into dough along with peanuts. Cover and refrigerate dough for 15 to 20 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease two large baking sheets or line with parchment paper.

Using floured hands, roll dough into 1-1/2-inch-diameter balls and place on baking sheets. Bake on center oven rack for 14 to 15 minutes, one sheet at a time. When done, the tops of the cookies will be cracked, and they'll still feel soft when pressed gently. Do not overbake. Cool cookies for 2 to 3 minutes on the baking sheet, then transfer to a rack to cool completely.

Makes about 24 cookies.

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FOOD

Oatmeal Pecan Lace Cookies

 TAP FOR
RECIPE



OATMEAL PECAN LACE COOKIES

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened	1/2 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
3/4 cup packed brown sugar	1/8 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour	1-1/4 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
2 tablespoons milk	1/4 cup very finely chopped pecans
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract	

Preheat oven to 350°F. Use a large, heavy, shiny baking sheet. (These cookies are likely to burn on a dark one.) Cut four sheets of parchment paper to fit baking sheet. Line baking sheet with one of them and set others aside.

Using a handheld or stand electric mixer, beat butter and brown sugar on high speed for 2 minutes. Beat in flour, milk, vanilla, orange zest, and salt, until evenly blended. Using a wooden spoon, stir in oats and pecans until evenly mixed.

With lightly floured hands, shape dough into 1-inch-diameter balls. Place balls on prepared baking sheet, leaving 3 inches in between. (Expect to get nine on the sheet.) Bake on center oven rack for 11 to 13 minutes, until cookies are flat, bubbly, and just starting to turn golden brown around the edges. Cool cookies on baking sheet for 1 minute. Carefully lift sides of parchment paper and place cookies on the counter. Wait 2 to 3 minutes, then slide a thin-blade spatula under cookies and transfer them to a cooling rack. (If the cookies are still too soft, wait a minute or two more.) Cool cookies completely.

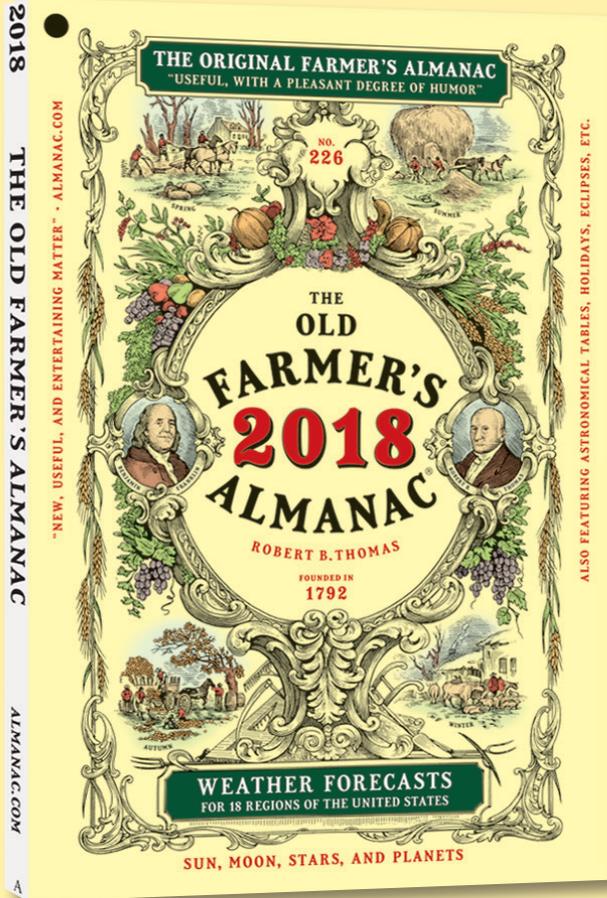
Allow baking sheet to cool completely or use a second baking sheet and line it with a fresh sheet of parchment paper before baking the next batch. (If you don't use a fresh sheet of parchment paper, the cookies won't be flat on the bottom.)

Makes about 32 cookies.

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Shipping Now!

THE 2018 OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC



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GARDENING

JULIA CHILD

Celebrate the “Year of the Rose”

New, easy-care varieties have never been
so numerous—or magnificent!

PHOTO: DOREEN WYNJA/MONROVIA



'PEACE'

In honor of the rose's long and colorful history, as well as its place in gardens, the National Garden Bureau named 2017 the "Year of the Rose." In celebration of the close of this rosaceous annum, let's take a closer look at "the queen of flowers."

Today, roses are enjoying new popularity. During the past 20 years, rose breeders, including Weeks Roses in Wasco, California, have been developing and introducing roses that require less maintenance and are more disease-resistant and fragrant.

"Modern rosebushes are both beautiful and tough in a wide range of growing conditions, so they are easier to grow than ever before," says Christian Bédard, research director for Weeks Roses.

One of the biggest challenges for gardeners can be knowing how to use roses, based on their growing habit. An understanding of the types of roses eliminates any woes.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ROSE

It is believed that the cultivation of roses began about 5,000 years ago

in China. During the Roman Empire, rose gardens were established in the Middle East. In the 17th century, kings and queens considered roses legal tender for purchases.

The era of the modern rose began in 1867, when French breeder Jean-Baptiste André Guillot introduced the first hybrid tea rose. The elegantly shaped buds soon became the standard look for a proper rose flower—a tradition that continues today.

TYPES OF ROSES

When most people think of roses, a **hybrid tea rose** comes to mind. Known



GARDENING

for their long stems, these are ideal cut flowers. Hybrid tea rosebushes have a generally upright shape, and the plants reach 3 to 6 feet tall. Popular varieties of hybrid tea roses include 'Pretty Lady Rose', 'Mr. Lincoln', 'Peace', 'Neil Diamond', and 'Marilyn Monroe'. New in 2017 from Weeks Roses was a variety of hybrid tea rose called 'All My Loving', developed in England by Gareth Fryer. The 4- to 5-inch dark pink flowers sit atop long cutting stems and have 30 to 40 petals. 'All My Loving' performs particularly well in hot, sunny climates.

The **floribunda rose**, by contrast, generally blooms in clusters of smaller flowers. Popular floribunda varieties include 'Iceberg', 'Julia Child', 'Ketchup & Mustard', and 'Angel Face'. A new variety of floribunda rose called 'Easy to Please' brings the added benefit of increased disease resistance. This variety, part of the Easy-to-Love collection from Weeks Roses, grows well in a wide range of climates and conditions.

Climbing roses are the largest of the rosebushes. The canes of a full-size climbing rose can rise 10 to 12 feet tall. These plants do well when grown on a trellis, fence, or wall; regular pruning may be required. Some popular varieties of climbing roses include 'Fourth of July', 'Above All', and 'Stormy

[+](#) TAP TO LEARN HOW TO GROW ROSES

[+](#) TAP FOR THE BEST ROSE VARIETIES

HOW TO GROW ROSES

Rosebushes—whether new varieties or heirloom varieties that have been available for decades—grow best in full sun with moist, well-drained soil that is rich in organic matter.

For the best show of flowers and healthiest plants, rosebushes need to receive 6 to 8 hours of sunlight daily. In especially hot climates, roses do best when they are protected from the hot afternoon sun. In colder climates, planting a rosebush next to a south- or west-facing fence or wall can help to minimize winter freeze damage.

Select a sunny spot that will allow enough room for a mature plant. If planting several rosebushes together, space them at least 3 feet apart. Dig a hole deep and wide enough to accommodate the plant's roots.

Roses thrive best in soils that retain water without becoming waterlogged. Amend the soil as needed: If your soil is heavy clay, mix in compost, peat moss, and other organic matter to improve drainage. Adding compost to lean, sandy soils helps to retain moisture near the plant's roots.

Water thoroughly. Then mound up loose soil around the canes to protect the rose while it acclimates to its new site. For best results, plant rosebushes on a calm, cloudy day. Planting on a hot, sunny day can stress a rose (or any type of plant).

Give the rose the equivalent of 1 inch of rainfall per week during the growing season. Water at the soil level to avoid getting the foliage wet; wet leaves can encourage diseases such as black spot and downy mildew.

BEST ROSE VARIETIES BY CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Hot and dry climates (U.S. Southern California and the Southwest):
'Pretty Lady Rose', 'Neil Diamond', 'Doris Day', 'Tropical Lightning',
'Coretta Scott King'

Cool and wet climates (Pacific Northwest): 'Violet's Pride', 'Sparkle &
Shine', 'Pretty Lady Rose', 'Oh My!'

Hot and humid climates (U.S. Southeast): 'Watercolors Home Run',
'Home Run', 'Julia Child', 'Take It Easy', 'Easy to Please'

Cold-winter climates (Northeast and U.S. Midwest): 'Watercolors
Home Run', 'Cape Diamond', 'Party Hardy', 'Julia Child', 'Children's
Hope', 'Easy to Please'

RAINBOW HAPPY TRAILS'

Weather'. 'Tropical Lightning', also new from Weeks Roses, features blooms that mix sunset orange and smoky purple, with cream-color stripes. 'Tropical Lightning' also has improved disease resistance that makes it lower-maintenance.

Shrub roses are good choices for large landscapes or gardens. Their rounded growth habit can result in roses that are 3 to 5 feet tall and 3 feet wide. Shrub roses are vigorous, with large clusters of blooms. Popular varieties include 'Home Run', 'Edith's Darling', and 'Children's Hope'. A new shrub rose variety called 'Watercolors Home Run'

does not set seeds; all of the plant's energy goes into producing flowers—its clusters of pink flowers with bright yellow centers just keep coming! 'Watercolors Home Run' is highly disease-free and has self-cleaning petals (meaning no deadheading required), making it a nearly maintenance-free plant.

Shrub roses that have low-growing and wide-spreading habits are called **ground cover roses**. Two new ground cover roses are 'Rainbow Happy Trails', which flowers with pink outer petals and golden centers, and 'Sunshine Happy

Trails', with a profusion of sunny yellow flowers.

CAREFREE CARE

Roses have a reputation for requiring complicated care, but this needn't be so, according to Christian Bédard. "You don't need to do much to get the best new roses to grow well," he says. "Newer varieties of roses are much more vigorous and disease resistant than older varieties. New roses such as 'Watercolors Home Run' and 'All My Loving' can thrive in most climates with no spraying and basic pruning at the beginning of the growing season."

LIVING NATURALLY



Battle the Winter “Drys”

Flaky skin, peeling lips, flyaway hair, cracked fingertips,
crumbling fingernails, bloody noses, dry eyes.

PHOTO: MARTIN NOVAK/SHUTTERSTOCK



If you suffer from any of these winter conditions, you probably live in the frozen north. Maybe (like me) you also heat your home with wood.

Fortunately, most of us can manage these conditions with cheap, safe, and readily available household ingredients.

MOISTURIZE FROM THE OUTSIDE; THEN KEEP THAT MOISTURE IN.

First, forget the idea that drinking plenty of water will keep your skin (eyes,

nasal passages, nails) moist and your hair well behaved.

Dermatologists say that while drinking water is important for overall health, as far as moisturizing skin, hair, and nails are concerned, you need to add winter moisture from the outside and prevent it from escaping into the drier surrounding air.

Humidifying dry indoor air helps to provide that indoor moisture. It's especially important if you suffer bloody noses and lots of respiratory infections. You could run an

electric humidifier, but passive solutions may do the trick for you. We maintain a lot of well-watered houseplants that transpire water into the indoor air. We keep steamers going on each of our stoves that pump moisture into the air whenever the stove is running.

Hanging your laundry on bars indoors is another great strategy. It doesn't take much longer to dry near the woodstove than it would in an electric dryer, and while it dries, your laundry humidifies the air around it.



EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT MOISTURIZING DRY, FLAKY SKIN.

You could use a commercial moisturizer or simply apply a thin coat of olive oil immediately after showering or bathing.

Dermatologists also suggest taking shorter baths or showers in warm (not hot) water. Use a mild, glycerin-based soap. And stay away from hair or skin-care products that contain any forms of alcohol, which are drying agents.

If you have itchy skin, try a soothing oatmeal bath.

OTHER AIDS MAY BE SIMPLER THAN YOU THINK.

To tame flyaway hair, try a weekly deep-conditioning. For a rich conditioning treatment that you'd pay \$30 to \$100 for at a salon, mix a couple of tablespoons of olive, coconut, or castor oil with ½ cup of full-fat mayonnaise (alternatively: a ripe, mashed avocado), and massage into your hair and scalp. Then wrap your hair in a large plastic grocery bag and top it off with a warm, dry towel for about 30 minutes. Wash and rinse as usual (but sometimes

twice is needed, to remove the oil).

To make a light and moisturizing leave-in conditioner, mix two parts water, one part witch hazel, two parts vegetable glycerin (a natural moisturizer available online or in health/natural food stores), and a tablespoon of olive or other cooking oil per cup of liquid in a spray bottle. If you have aloe vera gel on hand, add one part of that to the mixture. A few drops

TAP FOR HOW TO MAKE AN OATMEAL BATH

TAP FOR HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN LIP BALM



of essential oil will give you a scented product. Spritz on wet or dry hair before styling.

To prevent cracked lips, use a lip balm and apply it often. It's inexpensive and easy to make your own. If you make a big batch that's a bit heavier on the olive oil, you can use your homemade balm for hands, fingernails, facial moisturizer, and (just a dab) hair conditioner, too.

To prevent brittle nails and ragged cuticles, use your homemade balm or a commercial conditioning

agent after bathing or doing dishes. Some dermatologists suggest coating hands and nails with Vaseline or another moisturizing product and wearing cotton gloves overnight to treat dry nails and cuticles.

If you polish your nails, find an acetone-free polish remover, as acetone is a serious drying agent.

And make sure to wear gloves or mittens when you go outside to prevent the dry winter air from drawing moisture from your skin and nails.

If you suffer from dry, scratchy, itchy, eyes, try laying a warm, moist washcloth over your closed lids for a few minutes each day.

This simple, highly effective treatment helps to liquefy the lubricating oil in glands located along the eyelids. It may take a few days, but if you use the compresses faithfully, you should experience relief.

—Margaret Boyles



TAP TO READ MORE OF MARGARET BOYLES'S POSTS IN HER "LIVING NATURALLY" BLOG

ANNIVERSARY

YEAR-END ENTERTAINMENT

Puzzles, quizzes, and “rainy day amusements” have long been a part of the Almanac. As the days grow darker (astronomically) and the merriment of holidays and hospitality rolls on, take a break and test your knowledge about history and geography.



IMPROBABLE FACTS ABOUT OUR PRESIDENTS

Do you know . . .

1. Who were the shortest and tallest presidents?
2. Who used the White House lawn as a pasture?
3. Which president had false teeth made of animal parts?
4. Who was the only bachelor president?
5. How many presidents have been arrested while in office?
6. Which president set a record for handshaking?
7. Which president killed a man in a duel?
8. Which two presidents were embarrassed while in water?
9. Who was the only president to die while a member of Congress?
10. Which two presidents could take shorthand?
11. Which president's corpse was the victim of grave robbers?
12. Which president was married in the White House?
13. Who was the most ardent golfer to occupy the White House?

ANSWERS: 1. James Madison was 5 feet 4 inches short; Abraham Lincoln was 6 feet 4 inches tall. 2. During World War I, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson pastured 48 sheep on White House turf. During his term, Zachary Taylor's Army horse, "Old Whitey," had grazed there, and Mrs. William Howard Taft had found it a convenient meadow for her Jersey cow. 3. At the close of the Revolutionary War, a dentist crafted George Washington a pair of false teeth made from hippopotamus teeth. 4. James Buchanan. 5. Only two—Ulysses S. Grant and Franklin Pierce. Grant was fined \$20 for driving his carriage well over the Washington, D.C., speed limit. In 1853, Pierce was arrested after he ran down an old woman, but the case was dropped for insufficient evidence. 6. Theodore Roosevelt, who, on New Year's Day, 1907, shook hands 8,513 times. 7. Andrew Jackson killed young Nashville lawyer Charles Dickinson, who had disparaged Mrs. Jackson's marital reputation. 8. John Quincy Adams and William Howard Taft. Adams liked to swim in the Potomac on warm summer mornings. Once, he emerged from the river to find that his clothes had been stolen. Taft, our heaviest chief executive at 352 pounds, was said to have become firmly wedged in his bathtub (although the facts behind the story are doubtful). 9. John Quincy Adams returned to Washington in 1831 as a member of the House of Representatives 2 years after leaving the presidency. On February 21, 1848, he rose to speak but collapsed from a stroke and died 2 days later. 10. James Madison and Woodrow Wilson. 11. In 1876, two criminals managed to get Lincoln's casket halfway out of its tomb before they were arrested. 12. Grover Cleveland was the only chief executive to be wed in the White House. 13. Woodrow Wilson played during both summer and winter, using black golf balls when snow was on the ground.

ANNIVERSARY

SIMPLY STATED

Using only 13 letters of the alphabet, write the full names of 13 states of the Union.

ANSWER: There are at least six possible solutions. Using the 13 letters ADEHIKLMNOSTU, you can write the full names of 14 states: Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah.

Using the 13 letters ADEHIKLMNORST, you can make the full names of 14 states: Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee.

The other four solutions allow the writing of 13 states each: ADEHIKLMNOSTW, ACEHIKLMNOSTU, AEHIKLMNOSTUW, and AEHIKLMNORSTU.

RIVERS FLOWING INTO RIVERS

Each of the 20 rivers listed below flows into one of the following rivers: Arkansas, Colorado, Columbia, Hudson, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Potomac, Rio Grande, Snake.

Match each river above with the name(s) of the river(s) below flowing into it:

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Arkansas | 8. Missouri | 15. Shenandoah |
| 2. Canadian | 9. Mohawk | 16. Snake |
| 3. Cimarron | 10. Monongahela | 17. Tennessee |
| 4. Cumberland | 11. Ohio | 18. Wabash |
| 5. Des Moines | 12. Pecos | 19. Wisconsin |
| 6. Gila | 13. Platte | 20. Yellowstone |
| 7. Illinois | 14. Salmon | |

ANSWER: Arkansas: 2, 3; Colorado: 6; Columbia: 16; Hudson: 9; Mississippi: 1, 5, 7, 8, 11, 19; Missouri: 13, 20; Ohio: 4, 10, 17, 18; Potomac: 15; Rio Grande: 12; Snake: 14.



WEATHER FORECASTS

WHEN THE BUSHES ARE FULL OF BERRIES,
A HARD WINTER IS ON THE WAY.



TAP TO FIND
OUT THE
WEATHER
HISTORY OF
THE DAY



LOVE ALL
THINGS
WEATHER?
TAP FOR THE
WEATHER
FOLKLORE
OF THE DAY

HOW WE MAKE OUR PREDICTIONS

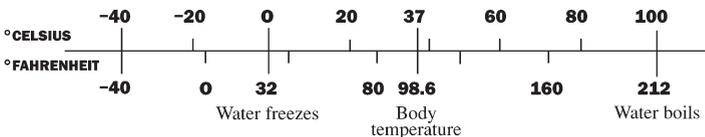
We derive our weather forecasts from a secret formula that was devised by the founder of this Almanac, Robert B. Thomas, in 1792. Thomas believed that weather on Earth was influenced by sunspots, which are magnetic storms on the surface of the Sun.

Over the years, we have refined and enhanced this formula with state-of-the-art technology and modern scientific calculations. We employ three scientific disciplines to make our long-range predictions: solar science, the study of sunspots and other solar activity; climatology, the study of prevailing weather patterns; and meteorology, the study of the atmosphere. We predict weather trends and events by comparing solar patterns and historical weather conditions with current solar activity.

Our forecasts emphasize temperature and precipitation deviations from averages, or normals. These are based on 30-year statistical averages prepared by government meteorological agencies and updated every 10 years. Most-recent tabulations span the period 1981 through 2010.

We believe that nothing in the universe happens haphazardly, that there is a cause-and-effect pattern to all phenomena. However, although neither we nor any other forecasters have as yet gained sufficient insight into the mysteries of the universe to predict the weather with total accuracy, our results are almost always very close to our traditional claim of 80 percent.

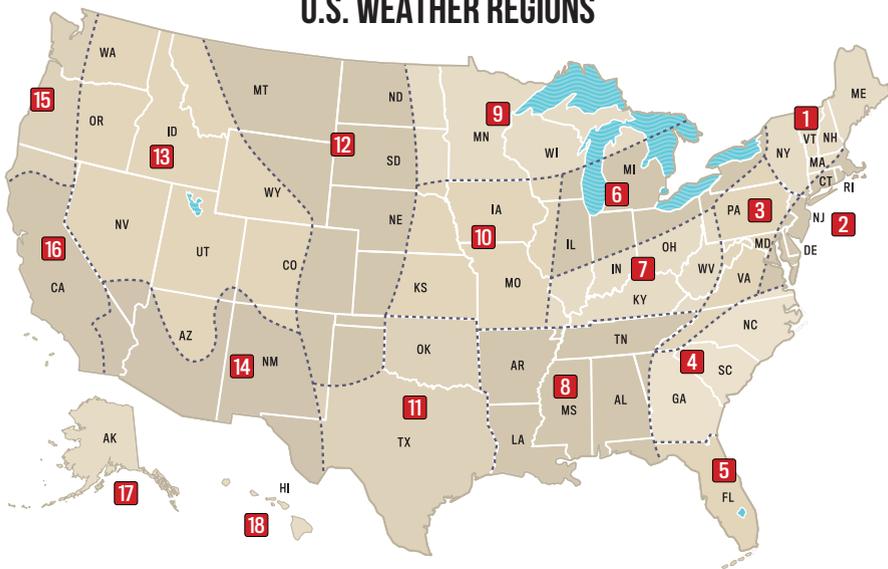
CELSIUS-FAHRENHEIT TABLE



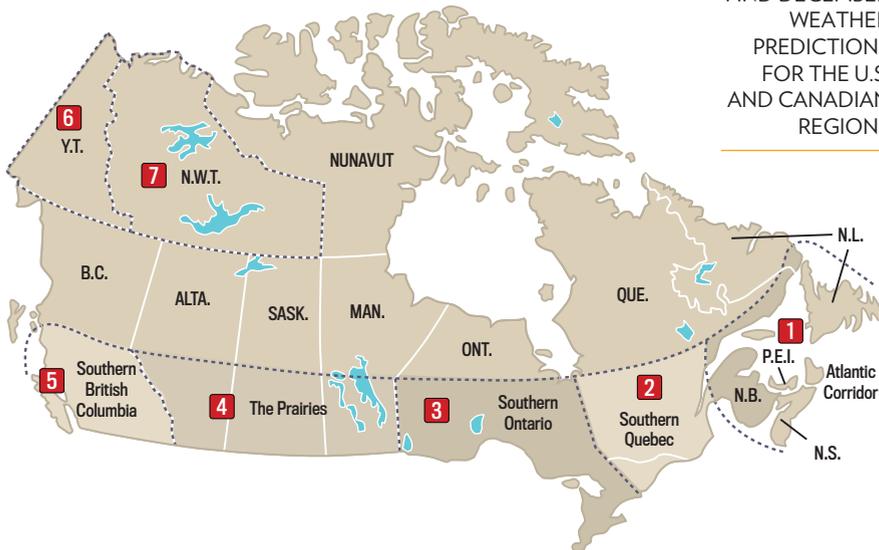


WEATHER FORECASTS

U.S. WEATHER REGIONS



CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS



CLICK HERE TO
FIND DECEMBER
WEATHER
PREDICTIONS
FOR THE U.S.
AND CANADIAN
REGIONS



PUERTO RICO AFTER
HURRICANE MARIA



A COSTLY YEAR

Weather-related damages in 2017 set a new record.

Overall, this year has been by far the costliest ever in the United States, with regard to weather events. The total cost of weather-related damages has likely exceeded \$350 billion, at least \$100 billion more than the previous mark. Of course, this figure does include the far more important loss of lives.

HURRICANES

This was the first year that the United States was hit by three category 4 or higher hurricanes, and it was one of the two highest-cost hurricane seasons, with only 2005 comparable. Estimates of the total damage and other costs of this year's hurricanes range from \$188 to \$250 billion (current U.S. dollars), compared with \$211 billion in 2005. This year also saw the greatest number of consecutive



HURRICANE NAMES CHANGE EVERY YEAR.
TAP TO LEARN HOW AND WHY.



WEATHER UPDATE

TABLE 1. TOP 10 COSTLIEST U.S. HURRICANES, 1900–PRESENT

RANK	YEAR	MAJOR HURRICANES	NO. OF DEATHS*	DAMAGE (\$B)*
1	2005	Cindy, Dennis, Katrina, Ophelia, Rita, Wilma	1,963	211.2
2	2017	Harvey, Irma, Jose, Maria	135	200
3	1926	Great Miami Hurricane, FL	373	169.4
4	1900	Galveston Hurricane, TX	8,000	104.3
5	1915	Galveston Hurricane, TX; New Orleans Hurricane, LA	675	74.3
6	2012	Tropical storm Alberto, TS Debby, Isaac, Sandy	120	73.2
7	1938	Great New England Hurricane, CT, MA, NH, NY, RI, VT	700	41.1
8	1954	Carol, Edna, Hazel	187	37.5
9	1928	Okeechobee (aka San Felipe) Hurricane, FL	2,500	35.3
10	1960	Donna, Ethel	51	31.5

named storms becoming hurricanes, with Franklin through Ophelia all reaching winds of hurricane strength.

DROUGHT

While the area covered by drought and the overall intensity of droughts has decreased over the past couple of years, parts of Montana and South Dakota are experiencing an “Exceptional Drought.”

WILDFIRES

According to the U.S. government National Interagency Fire Center,

2017 had less than the 10-year average number of fires, but they burned 150 percent of the average acreage. The Forest Service has spent more than \$1.75 billion fighting fires so far this fiscal year, and the Interior Department has spent more than \$391 million, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Although the drought conditions that dominated in California a couple of years ago have largely abated, the fire season has been particularly bad there, to the extent that it has threatened the crop of wine grapes



and destroyed or damaged at least 8,400 buildings. Greater-than-normal rainfall in California during the past couple of years has enabled forest growth that has actually increased the amount of underbrush available to stoke wildfire growth.

WEATHER-RELATED DISEASE

With the United States continuing to experience average temperatures that have been above historical normals, the areas inhabited by mosquitoes and ticks continues to expand northward, increasing the incidence of the Zika virus and Lyme disease. For example,

the average annual number of cases of Lyme disease has approximately doubled over the past 20 years.

In addition, there has been damage from winter storms, tornadoes and severe thunderstorms, and other weather events—although much less than for the events discussed above.

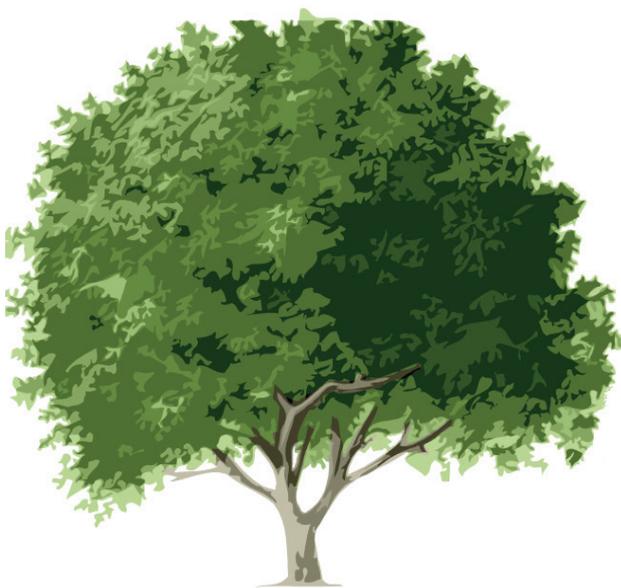
Led by what was likely the most expensive hurricane season ever recorded, the cost of weather damages in the United States set a new record in 2017.

—*Michael Steinberg, Old Farmer's Almanac meteorologist*



HUMOR ME

GRINS AND GROANS FROM THE ALMANAC: 19TH-CENTURY NONSENSE



Barking Up the Wrong Tree

’Twas Harry who the
silence broke:
“Miss Kate, why are
you like a tree?”
“Because . . . because

I’m board,” she spoke
“Oh, no, because you’re
woo’d,” said he.

“Why are you like a
tree?” she said.
“I have a . . . heart?” he
asked, so low,
The answer made the

young man red:
“Because you’re sappy,
don’t you know?”

“Once more,” she
asked, “why are you
now
A tree?” He couldn’t
quite perceive.
“Trees leave sometimes,
and make a bough,
And you may also bow
and leave.”

SADDLED

“I want to engage your
services,” said the man
to a lawyer.

“All right, sir, be
seated. What is the
case?”

“There’s a man in my
neighborhood. I want
you to prove that he
stole a saddle.”

“Did the saddle



belong to you?”

“No.”

“But you would be the prosecuting party?”

“No, I don’t propose to have anything to do with the case.”

“Then why do you want me to prove that he stole the saddle?”

“You see, I stole the saddle myself, and if I can prove that he stole it, I’m all set.”

“Ah, I see. But we can’t do that.”

Early Worker

A woman was testifying on behalf of her son and swore that “he had worked on a farm ever since he was born.”

Sensing an opening, the lawyer who cross-examined her said:

“You assert that your son has worked on a farm ever since he was born, then?”

“I do.”

Pouncing, the lawyer



responded: “Well, then what did he do the first year?”

“Well . . . well . . .,” responded the woman, “. . . he milked.”

RELIEVED

“If Your Honor please, I’d like to get off the jury,” said a prospective juror to a judge in New Hampshire.

“You can’t get off without a good cause,” said the judge.

“I have a good reason.”

“You must say it or serve.”

“But Your Honor, I don’t believe that the

other jurors would care to have me serve.”

“Why not? Out with it!”

“Well . . .”

“Go on!”

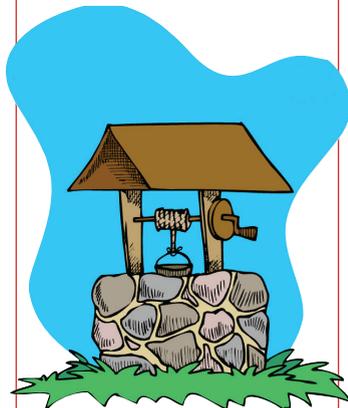
“I’ve got the itch.”

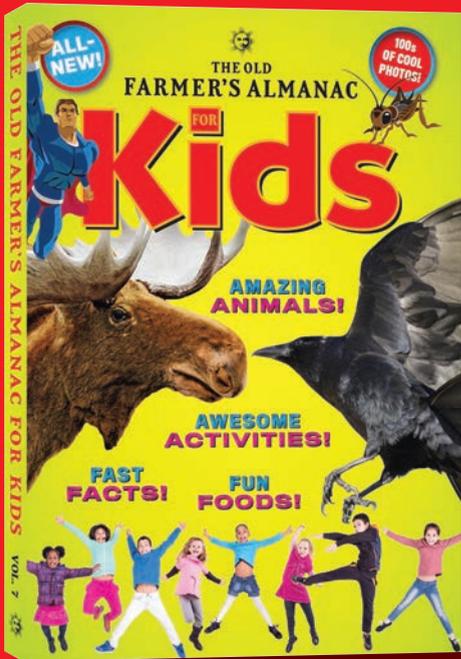
“Mr. Clerk,” said the judge, “scratch that man.”

Well, Well

A doctor apologized for being late one day by saying that he had had to stop to see a man who had fallen down a well.

Responded his friend: “Did he kick the bucket, then?”





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GARDENING

How to Grow
From Seed



CALENDAR

Full Wolf Moon, “blue”
Moon, January birthdays,
Hansel Monday, first
Antarctic explorer



LIVING NATURALLY

Reusing the
News(papers)



FOLKLORE

Whippoorwills,
Nighthawks, and
Goatsuckers



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Soups



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