

# EXTRA!

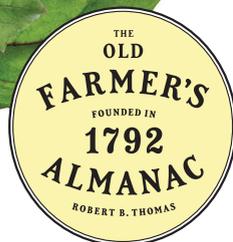
FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

EASY-TO-GROW VEGETABLES

THE BANK THAT BROKE THE MAILMAN'S BACK

HERBS FOR HEALTH? THINK SOUP!

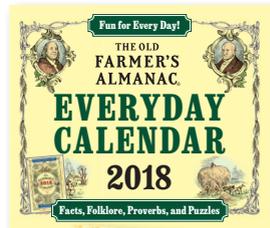
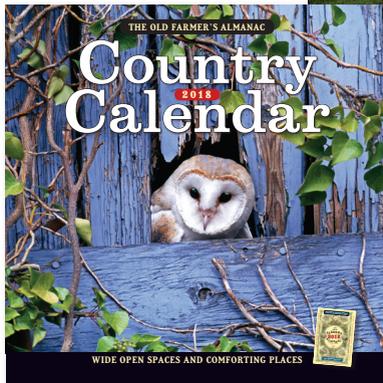
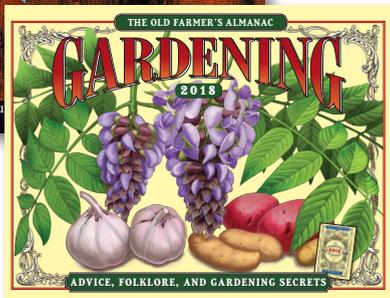
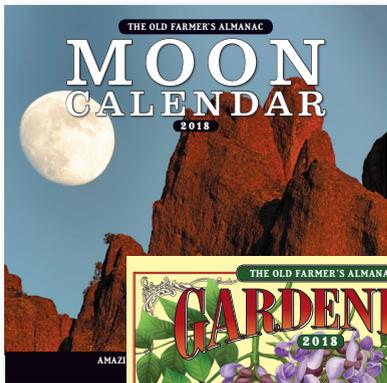
CHOCOLATE RECIPES



FEBRUARY 2018

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## 2018 Old Farmer's Almanac Calendars



**JANUARY 2018**

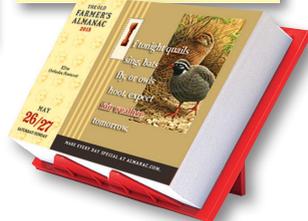
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

**Quick Notes**      **Birthdays**      **In The**      **Not to Be**

This is the preeminent source of information for the month of January. It includes the most interesting facts, folklore, and puzzles for the month. It also includes the most interesting facts, folklore, and puzzles for the month.

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## FEATURES

### GARDENING

Easy-to-Grow  
Vegetables for an  
Early Harvest

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(and Every Day!)

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Herbs for Health?  
Think Soup!

### AMUSEMENT

The Bank That  
Broke the Mailman's  
Back



### WEATHER FORECASTS

How We Make Our  
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and Canadian  
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Weather Update

## DEPARTMENTS

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Humor Me  
*Grins and groans  
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### WHAT'S NEXT

See what we have  
in store for our  
March issue!





# THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

## BIRTHDAYS, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, AND MORE



### HOLIDAY HAPPENING: SHROVE TUESDAY

For many Christians, Shrove Tuesday (February 13 this year) is a time to confess and receive penance and absolution in preparation for Lent. It is the last day to finish up the eggs, milk, and fat that are forbidden during the 40-day Lenten fast, which begins the next day (Ash Wednesday).

In England, where the event is also known as Pancake Tuesday, festivities include flapjack-related activities. The pancake race held by women in Olney, Buckinghamshire, dates

back to 1445. Legend says that the idea started when a woman cooking pancakes lost track of the time. When she heard the church bells ring, she rushed out the door to attend the shoving service while still wearing her apron and holding a skillet containing a pancake.

In 1950, Liberal, Kansas, having seen photos of the English pancake race, challenged Olney to a competition: The International Pancake Day Race has been held annually ever since. The two towns run their own race, after which the scores are compared and the international champion announced. Each contestant, wearing a head scarf and apron, holds a pancake in a skillet while running a 415-yard course. She must flip the pancake at the beginning and end of the race, without dropping it.

### MOON WATCH

**Last Quarter:**  
February 7, at  
10:54 A.M. EST

**New Moon:**  
February 15, at  
4:05 P.M. EST

**First Quarter:**  
February 23, at  
3:09 A.M. EST

*Note: This year,  
February has no  
full Moon.*



TAP FOR MORE  
MOON PHASES

### MONTHLY MUSE

*A winter day! The  
feather-silent snow  
Thickens the  
air with strange  
delight, and lays  
A fairy carpet on  
the barren lea.*

—David Gray, Scottish  
poet (1838–61)

## FASCINATING FIRSTS

On February 4 of which year did the Electoral College unanimously elect George Washington as the first U.S. president?

- a. 1777
- b. 1779
- c. 1782
- d. 1789



Answer: d, on February 4, 1789. Congress certified the vote on April 6. On April 30, Washington took the oath of office.

## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



### 25 YEARS AGO (1993)

**Jessica Korda** (American professional golfer)

**Tinashe** (American singer and songwriter)

### 50 YEARS AGO (1968)

**Kenny Albert** (American sportscaster)

**Gary Coleman** (American actor)

**Lisa Marie Presley** (American singer and songwriter)

**Mark Louis Recchi** (Canadian ice hockey player)

**Molly Ringwald** (American actress)

### 100 YEARS AGO (1918)

**Bobby Riggs** (American tennis player)

**Helen Stephens**

(American runner)

**Robert Wadlow**

(American who held world record for tallest man, at 8 feet 11.1 inches)

### 125 YEARS AGO (1893)

**Omar Bradley**

(American general)

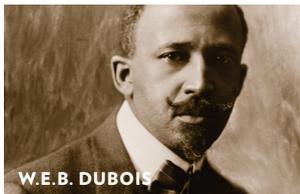
**Jimmy Durante**

(American comedian)

### 150 YEARS AGO (1868)

**Evangeline Adams**

(American astrologer)



**W.E.B. DuBois**

(American sociologist and civil rights activist)

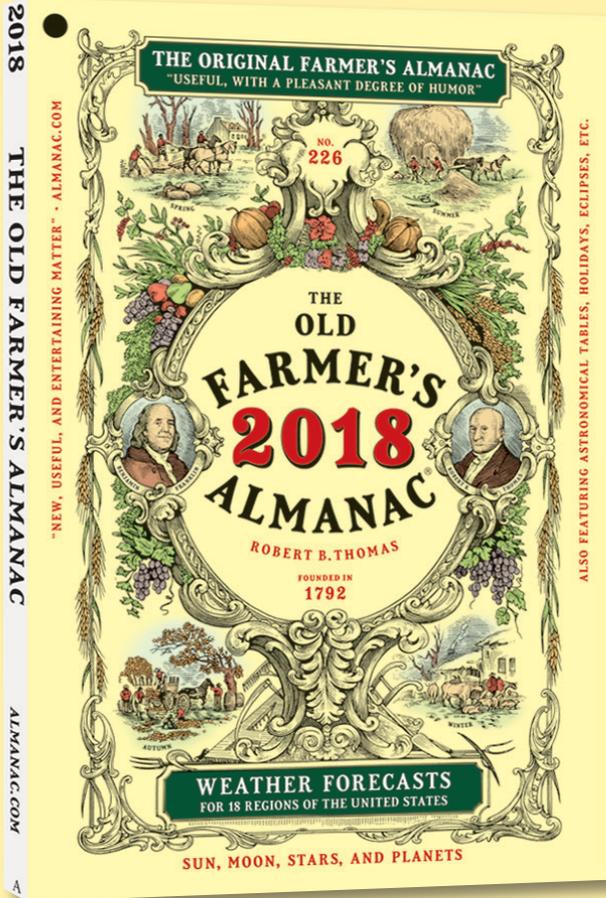
### 200 YEARS AGO (1818)

**Frederick Douglass**

(American abolitionist; birthdate unknown, but he celebrated Feb. 14)

# Shipping Now!

## THE 2018 OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC



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## BEST DAYS TO DO THINGS

These February 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

---

Advertise to sell: 6, 7

Ask for a loan: 3, 7

Begin diet to gain weight: 17, 26

Begin diet to lose weight: 3, 7

Buy a home: 17, 22

Color hair: 21, 22

Cut hair to discourage growth: 4, 5

Cut hair to encourage growth: 21, 22

Get married: 4, 5

Have dental care: 2, 3

Move (house/household): 23, 24

Perm hair: 13–15

Quit smoking: 3, 7



Straighten hair: 8–10

Travel for pleasure: 1, 27, 28

Wean children: 3, 7

### **AROUND THE HOUSE**

---

Bake: 25, 26

Brew: 6, 7

Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut: 6, 7

Demolish: 6, 7

Dry fruit/vegetables/meat: 8, 9

End projects: 14

Lay shingles: 1, 27, 28

Make jams/jellies: 16, 17

Paint: 4, 5, 21, 22

Start projects: 16

Wash floors: 16, 17

Wash windows: 18–20

### **OUTDOORS**

---

Begin logging: 11, 12

Go camping: 8–10

Go fishing: 15–28

Set posts or pour concrete: 11, 12

### **IN THE GARDEN**

---

Destroy pests and weeds: 18–20

Graft or pollinate: 25, 26

Harvest aboveground crops: 21, 22

Harvest belowground crops: 2, 3, 11, 12

Mow to decrease growth: 6, 7

Mow to increase growth: 18–20

Pick fruit: 2, 3

Plant aboveground crops: 16, 17, 25, 26

Plant belowground crops: 6, 7

Prune to discourage growth: 8–10

Prune to encourage growth: 18–20

### **ON THE FARM**

---

Breed animals: 6, 7

Castrate animals: 13–15

Cut hay: 18–20

Purchase animals: 25, 26

Set eggs: 4, 5, 24

Slaughter livestock: 6, 7

Wean animals: 3, 7



## GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN

Use the February 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 FEBRUARY

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

TAP FOR  
MERCURY IN  
RETROGRADE  
DATES



**APP EXTRA!**  
TAP FOR  
FEBRUARY  
MOON PHASES



## MERCURY IN RETROGRADE

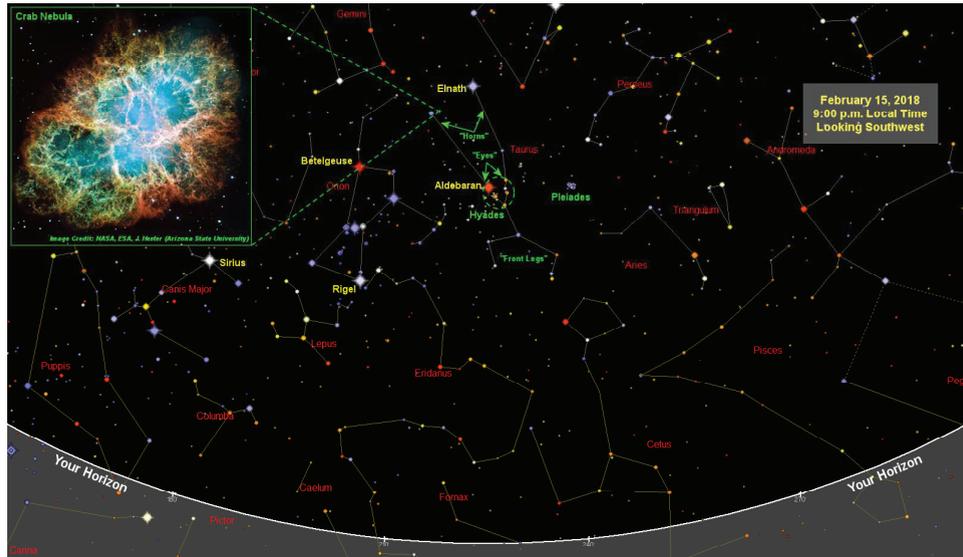
Sometimes the other planets appear to be traveling backward through the zodiac; this is an illusion. We call this illusion *retrograde motion*.

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.

**In 2018, Mercury will be retrograde during March 23–April 15, July 26–August 19, and November 17–December 6.**

—Celeste Longacre



## THE RAGING BULL AND ITS EXPLODING STAR

**APP EXTRA!**  
TAP TO GET  
A PRINTABLE  
FEBRUARY  
SKY MAP

**APP EXTRA!**  
TAP TO  
FOLLOW  
OHIOAN JEFF  
DETRAY'S SKY  
ADVENTURES

Some constellations look very much like their namesakes. Orion, for instance, clearly resembles the figure of a noble hunter. Many other constellations look nothing like the person, animal, or object that they represent. See Aries, the Ram, on this month's map.

Then there are a few “deceptive” constellations that do not look like anything at first glance but suddenly snap into a recognizable shape. So it is with Taurus, the Bull, located in the upper center of our sky map. Once you've identified its horns and eyes, you will always see this group of stars as a bull—and you'll be in good company.

This star pattern was identified as a bull by many cultures of antiquity, dating at least from ancient Babylon, where it was known as The Bull of Heaven. In one of the Greek myths, Taurus was associated with Zeus, who sometimes took the



form of a great white bull, the better to kidnap a Phoenician princess. Even the Druids paid homage to Taurus.

The brightest star in Taurus is Aldebaran, which represents one of the bull's eyes, looking down at us with a baleful red glare. At the tip of one of the bull's horns lies the appropriately named star Elnath, whose moniker means "the butting one" in Arabic.

The Hyades star cluster comprises the head of the bull, and a handful of stars beneath the Hyades form the front legs of Taurus. (An aside about star clusters: The famed Pleiades cluster is located within the boundaries of Taurus, just to the right of the Hyades. The Pleiades are known as the Seven Sisters, who, in Greek mythology, were half-sisters to the nearby Hyades.)

These features of Taurus are all easily observed with your unaided eyes. Taurus is also home to an extraordinary object that was once so bright that it was briefly visible in broad daylight but now can not be seen without optical aid.

On July 4, 1054, Chinese astronomers noted a "guest star" not far from one of the horns of Taurus. It was an exploding star, a supernova. The supernova was visible for a few weeks, even during the day, and it was visible at night for nearly 2 years before fading from view. Nearly 700 years passed before it was seen again.

In 1731, English astronomer John Bevis saw a dim glow in his telescope, noting its location in Taurus. Through the next two centuries, other observers saw the same faint smudge. One of them, the Earl of Rosse, made a sketch of the object and decided that it was shaped like a crab. The name stuck, and today we still refer to this object as the Crab Nebula. It was not until 1920s that researchers finally put 1 and 2 together and realized that the faint Crab Nebula is a supernova remnant—all that remains of the amazing "guest star" of 1054.

On the left of this month's map is a photo of the Crab Nebula made with the Hubble Space Telescope. It shows the still-expanding cloud of gas and dust produced by the exploding star. With good binoculars or a small telescope and a dark location, you can see the Crab Nebula as a faint white dot. It's difficult to imagine that it was once visible in the daytime sky!

—Jeff DeTray

# NEW ARRIVALS!

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GARDENING

# Easy-to-Grow Vegetables for an Early Harvest

PHOTO: DEYAN GEORGIEV/SHUTTERSTOCK



**T**he secret to a bountiful early harvest is choosing the right seeds. As you peruse catalogs or seed kiosks, keep this in mind: Choose cold-resistant vegetables to plant this spring and well begun, you'll be half done.

### **COLD SNAP PEAS**

Got a sweet tooth? Grow sugar snap peas (*Pisum sativum* var. *macrocarpon*) for a sweet and crunchy early crop. Snap peas have edible pods, so pick them right off the vine and eat them

#### **WHAT'S IN A PEA?**

Having a hard time remembering the difference between types of peas? Let's simplify things:

- Snow peas are tangy and crisp, growing thin peas in flat pods. Eat the pod and peas.
- Sugar snap peas are sweet and crisp, growing small peas in round pods. Eat the pod and peas.
- Shelling peas are sweet, growing full, round peas in bulging pods. Shell and eat the peas; discard the pods.

whole. These prolific legumes are best fresh, so make sure that you get out there and pick them while they're in season! Add snap peas to salads, throw them into stir-fries, or cook them on the grill for a sweet and satisfying crunch.

Plant seeds 1/2 to 1 inch deep and 2 inches apart in early spring. Snap peas are cold-resistant but not tolerant of heat, so get them into the ground 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost has passed. These vines grow up trellises easily, with



little training necessary. Start picking peas once they are bright green and plump (about 70 days after planting).

### **WITHOUT-A-HITCH SPINACH**

One of the most versatile and nutritious greens, spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*) is simple to manage and can be harvested multiple times in a season. Sauté spinach leaves, throw them into a salad, or scramble them into eggs for a vitamin-rich dish.

Spinach prefers an

area with morning sun and afternoon shade

#### **WHAT THE COOK TOOK**

Eat spinach and other leafy green vegetables raw or lightly prepared to retain the most nutrients. Water-soluble vitamins (e.g., vitamin C, all B vitamins) will boil off in water, so steam spinach or cook it with little to no water rather than boiling it. If you're left with liquid at the bottom of the pan, use it to make a sauce so that no nutrients go to waste!

and is best planted in early spring while temperatures are still cool, about 1 week after the last frost has passed. Plant seeds 1/2 inch deep every 2 inches, in rows 12 to 18 inches apart. Thin the sprouts when they are 1 to 2 inches tall to every 4 inches. Start harvesting tender baby spinach at 3 to 5 weeks or wait longer for bigger, heartier leaves (about 40 to 50 days after planting). Spinach will regrow several times during the season, providing a large and staggered crop.



## A VEGGIE THAT CAN'T BE BEET

As well as being an excellent source of puns, beets (*Beta vulgaris*) are rich in iron, vitamins C and B<sub>6</sub>, and fiber. Beets are a cold-hardy and frost-resistant root crop that flourishes in northern gardens. Slice, dice, or grate beets into salads or stir-fries, blend them into dressings or smoothies, or pickle them to be saved for a midwinter snack. Beets can also make an organic pink dye for tie-dyeing shirts or homemade Easter eggs.

Before planting, add aged manure to your soil; beets require a high level of phosphorus to grow well. Sow seeds in soil

### A HISTORY IN BLACK AND WHITE

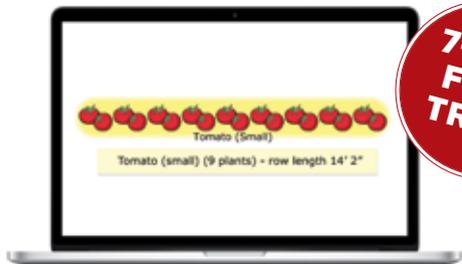
Ancient Greeks and Romans grew beets for the medicinal properties of their leaves and the food value of their roots. Early cultivars known as Roman beets were either black or white, unlike the common red or yellow varieties grown today.

with a temperature of 50° to 80°F for germination in 5 to 10 days. Plant seeds 1/2 inch deep and 1 to 2 inches apart, thinning to 3 to 4 inches between plants when they are about 2 inches tall. To thin, cut sprouts at soil level to keep from disturbing the roots of the other plants. Keep in mind that beets are extremely thirsty, so water them regularly and heavily during the growing season. Harvest a few early leaves to throw in stir-fries, leaving the root until later (about 50 to 70 days after planting).

# Plan Your BEST Garden

*Good luck is the result of good planning.*

And we've done the homework for you! Described as "the world's best garden planning software," the *Almanac Garden Planner* helps you create the best layout for your plant beds right on your computer!

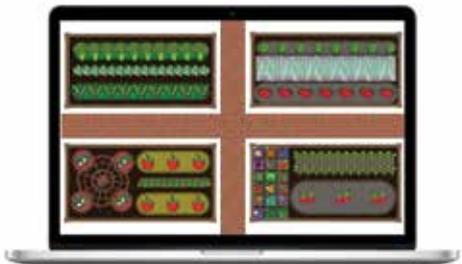


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- works for raised beds, square-foot gardens, and traditional rows



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## PLUS:

- keeps track of your planting to ensure proper rotation every year
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**PLAN TODAY AND PLANT TOMORROW! SIGN UP AT [ALMANAC.COM/GARDENPLANNER](https://www.almanac.com/gardenplanner)**



# Chocolate Recipes for Valentine's Day (and Every Day!)

It's unknown exactly why chocolate has become the food of choice for many people on Valentine's Day, February 14. At *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, we eat it all year long! Surprise your valentine with one of our delightful chocolate recipes and be prepared to hear those three little words . . . "I love chocolate!"

FOOD

# Chocolate Lava Cake



 TAP FOR  
RECIPE

PHOTO: BECKY LUGART-STAYNER

## CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKE

**10 tablespoons (1-1/4 sticks)**  
unsalted butter, cut into pieces

**6 ounces** bittersweet chocolate,  
broken into pieces

**1 teaspoon** vanilla extract

**2 tablespoons** sugar

**3 eggs plus 1 yolk**, at room  
temperature

**1-1/2 cups** confectioners' sugar

**1/2 cup** all-purpose flour

**big pinch** of salt

**vanilla ice cream**, for topping

Combine butter and chocolate in the top of a double boiler over not-quite-simmering water. When chocolate has melted, whisk to smooth. Set aside to cool for 15 minutes, then stir in vanilla.

Preheat oven to 450°F. Butter six 1-cup ceramic ramekins. Put 1 teaspoon of sugar into each ramekin. Turn and tilt the ramekins to coat them evenly with sugar. Set aside.

In a bowl, whisk eggs and yolk until blended. Add confectioners' sugar and whisk to combine. Add chocolate to egg mixture and whisk until evenly blended. Add flour and salt, then whisk to blend. Divide batter evenly among ramekins (about half-full).

Bake one as a trial to check the timing: Place it directly in the middle of the center oven rack. Immediately set your timer for 10 minutes and bake, expecting it to take 30 to 60 seconds more or less than 10 minutes.

When done, the cake will have doubled in height; the top will be almost flat, not sunken or knotted; and a "skin" will have formed around a soft, flowing center. Using a spatula and oven mitts, immediately remove the dish from the oven. Place a dessert plate over the ramekin and invert cake onto the plate. Wait about 10 seconds, then carefully lift the ramekin. The cake will be slightly sunken in the middle, with a soft, lavalike, but not overly runny center.

Bake remaining cakes and invert them as directed. Set cakes aside for several hours before serving or cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate on the plates. When ready to serve, remove plastic and reheat in the microwave to soften centers: 5 to 10 seconds for a room temperature cake; 10 to 15 seconds for a cold cake. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top.

**Makes 6 servings.**

SHARE  
THIS  
RECIPE

# Chocolate Peppermint Creams

 TAP FOR  
RECIPE

## CHOCOLATE PEPPERMINT CREAMS

### COOKIES:

3 cups all-purpose flour

1-1/4 teaspoons baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

3/4 cup (1-1/2 sticks) butter

1-1/2 cups brown sugar

12 ounces semisweet chocolate chips

2 large eggs

### FILLING:

3 cups confectioners' sugar

1/3 cup butter, softened

1/4 teaspoon peppermint extract, or to taste

1/4 cup milk

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

*For cookies:* In a bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, and salt.

Put butter, brown sugar, and 2 tablespoons of water into a large saucepan over low heat and stir as butter melts. Add chocolate chips and stir as chocolate melts. Remove pan from heat and set aside to cool slightly. Add eggs to chocolate mixture and, with an electric mixer, beat to blend. Add flour mixture and stir to combine.

Drop by heaping teaspoonfuls onto prepared baking sheets. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the edges are dry but the cookies are still soft in the middle. Transfer cookies to a rack to cool completely.

*For filling:* Combine confectioners' sugar, butter, peppermint extract, and milk and, using a hand electric mixer, mix until smooth.

Spread 1 teaspoon of filling on one cookie, then top with another cookie. Repeat.

**Makes about 3 dozen sandwich cookies.**

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 TAP FOR  
RECIPE

# Chocolate Mousse

## CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

4 ounces semisweet chocolate

1 pint heavy cream

1/2 tablespoon almond extract

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/4 cup sugar

3 egg whites

slivered almonds (optional)

Melt chocolate in the top of a double boiler over not-quite-simmering water.

Whip heavy cream to medium-hard peaks while adding almond extract, vanilla, and sugar.

Beat egg whites to stiff peaks.

Slowly add whipped cream to chocolate, being careful not to make lumps (go slowly). Fold in egg whites. Place in dessert cups and serve well chilled. Top with almonds, if desired.

**Makes 5 servings.**

SHARE  
THIS  
RECIPE

LIVING NATURALLY



# Herbs for Health? Think Soup!

## LIVING NATURALLY



**F**or millennia, our ancestors experimented with the leaves, roots, seeds, fungi, lichens, barks, and other natural substances around them for healing.

Modern medical science owes a lot to their discoveries. Somewhere between 25 and 50 percent of today's over-the-counter and prescription drugs originally derived from plants.

Much of the sophisticated plant wisdom of previous eras has been lost, and it's difficult for laypeople to know which modern

practitioners, products, and practices to trust, especially if we're looking for information about treating serious illnesses.

But a large and growing body of research demonstrates that eating a wide variety of plant foods—especially vegetables—promotes overall health and helps to prevent diseases of many sorts.

### **START WITH SOUP!**

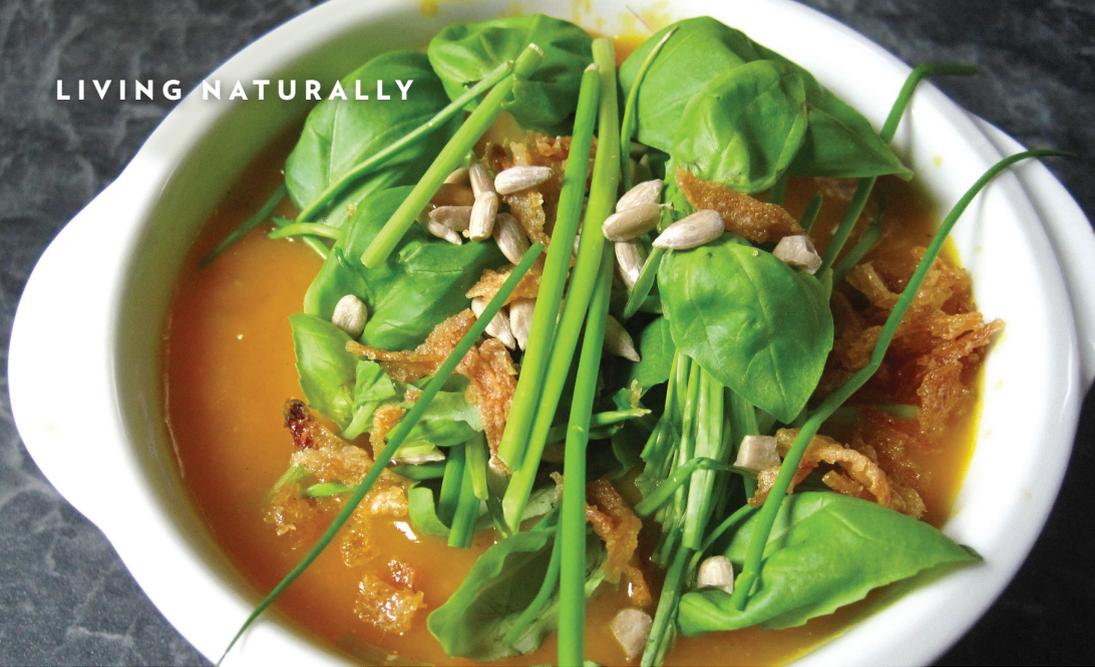
Homemade soup is inexpensive, comforting, and delicious. Made with care, what else is a good soup containing diverse leaves, roots,

legumes, and grains but a supercharged herbal health-booster?

I often think of my soups that way.

When you brew an herbal tea (an infusion) or simmer a root (into a decoction), you are using water to extract some of the substances' protective phytochemicals. (Phytochemicals are chemicals that plants manufacture to protect themselves from diseases, solar radiation, and other threats.)

But the instructions for brewing infusions and decoctions generally tell you to discard the herb once the



water has extracted some of its constituents—whereas with soup, you get the benefits of the whole product, with its many associated nutrients and fiber.

Last night I made a delicious black bean and barley soup that contained onions, garlic, celery, spinach, kale, mustard greens, cabbage, carrots, and red potatoes (skin included). I added a few skinned, frozen tomatoes and a good handful of chopped, fresh culinary herbs: parsley, basil, rosemary, oregano,

and thyme, along with a pinch of cayenne.

During the growing season, I usually add handfuls of the weeds abundant in and around my vegetable garden: lamb's quarters, dandelions, purslane, nettles, or amaranth.

If you checked online and learned to use a phytochemical database, you'd find dozens, maybe hundreds, of phytochemicals tucked into one of my delicious soups—compounds with known antibiotic, antioxidant,

anti-inflammatory, antihistamine, and anti-cancer properties.

I don't have to know just which diseases this or that compound helps me to ward off, but I do hold my herb-and-vegetable-rich soups (and salads, sauces, and casseroles) substantially responsible for my good health and emotional resiliency.

Soup it up and see for yourself! —Margaret Boyles



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

# Grow Better, Naturally!

New from *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, the 2018 digital *Garden Guide* to help you to grow greener, cleaner vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers, even scent-amentals!

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## GROW FOOD YOU LOVE!

- tomatoes, peas, peppers, eggplants, cucumbers, and more
- citrus for porch, patio, or playroom
- asparagus, ramps, onions, and more

## GROW QUICK AND EASY!

DIY in a weekend:

- make a plant tower
- pot up herbs for indoors
- start veggie seeds successfully

## GROW YOUR SENSES!

- electrify with color
- surround yourself with fragrance
- master your microclimate

## GROW YOUR SKILLS!

- test your soil 5 ways
- curtail critters kindly
- plan a pleasing pathway
- bring chickens home to roost

## FEAST ON FRESHNESS:

Recipes for dip, soup, salad, snacks, even dessert, using the harvest.

**PLUS:** the latest trends, time- and money-saving tips, gardening by the Moon, new products, and more! Grow with the 2018 *Garden Guide* and grow better!



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# The Bank That Broke the Mailman's Back

*How a small Utah town licked the Post Office*

In 1916, directors of the Bank of Vernal, Utah, decided that the community ought to have a modern, fireproof bank. They had a plan: A two-story building would be erected on West Main Street; it would measure 70 feet by 97 feet; and it would be made of pressed brick. The nearest source of such bricks was at Salt Lake City, about 125 miles away. This was not a great distance,

discovered that the bricks could be sent through the mail for less than half the quoted truck price.

The postal regulations had to be strictly followed. A single package could weigh no more than 50 pounds. Bank officials figured about 10 bricks to a parcel and hastily ordered 1,500 parcels.

The bricks, each wrapped carefully in paper and packed in

transferred to narrow-gauge rail. Then the bricks were transferred again—this time to a freight wagon—for the last 65 miles to Vernal.

As the bricks piled up, postal authorities decided that it wasn't the province of the Post Office Department to deliver bricks by mail. They ruled that a vendor could send no more than 200 pounds a day of anything to any one consignee.

### **The bankers calculated that the cost of hauling 15,000 bricks by truck would be \$2,250.**

but it was a difficult journey, especially for transporting goods, because the roads were treacherous.

The bankers calculated that the cost of hauling 15,000 bricks by truck would be \$2,250. This dimmed hopes for the new structure until a bank director, William Horace Coltharp (who later became president of the institution), started thumbing through postal regulations. He

50-pound crates, were transported from Salt Lake City by parcel post a total distance of about 390 miles, although Vernal itself was only less than a third of that distance away—an important consideration, as rates were based on 150-mile zones. The bricks' circuitous journey took them from Salt Lake City to Mack, Colorado, via the rails. Thence to Watson, Colorado, where their crates were

Not to be thwarted, bank officials countered by getting local farmers, ranchers, and townspeople to become consignees for the bricks. Upon receipt, these volunteers carted their crates from the post office to the bank site.

It took many months, but eventually there were enough bricks to build Vernal's first brick edifice, which still serves the community today—as a bank. —Harry Miller



# WEATHER FORECASTS

THERE IS ALWAYS ONE FINE WEEK IN FEBRUARY.

## HOW WE MAKE OUR PREDICTIONS

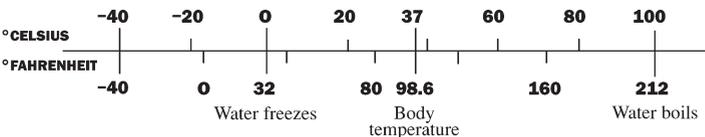
We derive our weather forecasts from a secret formula that was devised by the founder of this Almanac, Robert B. Thomas, in 1792. Thomas believed that weather on Earth was influenced by sunspots, which are magnetic storms on the surface of the Sun.

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



TAP TO FIND OUT THE WEATHER HISTORY OF THE DAY

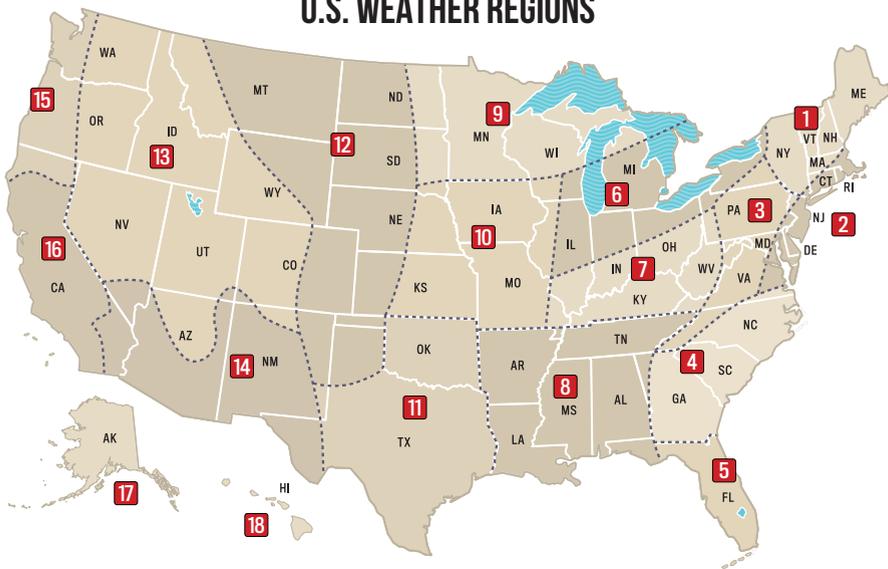


LOVE ALL THINGS WEATHER? TAP FOR THE WEATHER FOLKLORE OF THE DAY

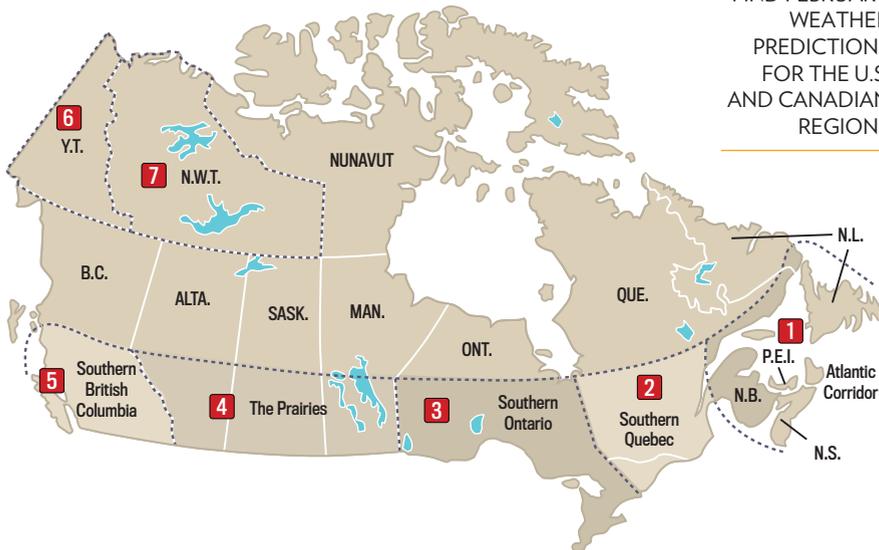


# WEATHER FORECASTS

## U.S. WEATHER REGIONS



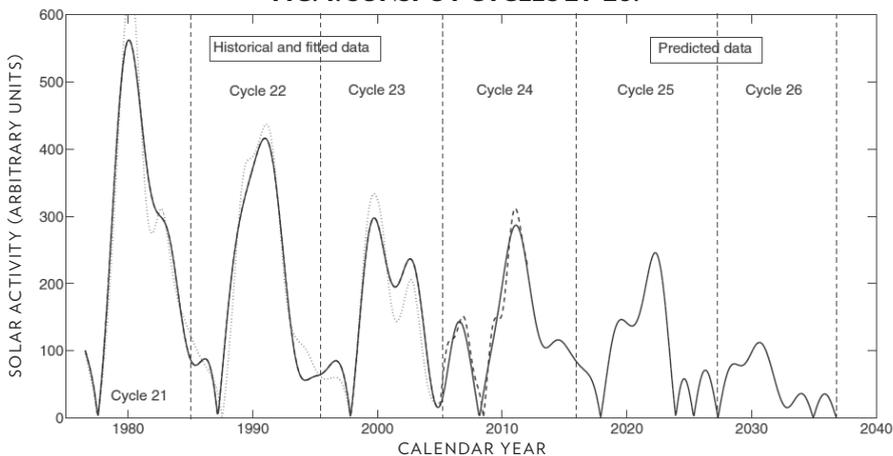
## CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS



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



**FIG. 1. SUNSPOT CYCLES 21-26.**



## WHY A WARMING WORLD COULD TURN COLD

A few months ago, I discussed the challenges that forced me to modify the methodology that I use in making the long-range weather forecasts for *The Old Farmer's Almanac*.

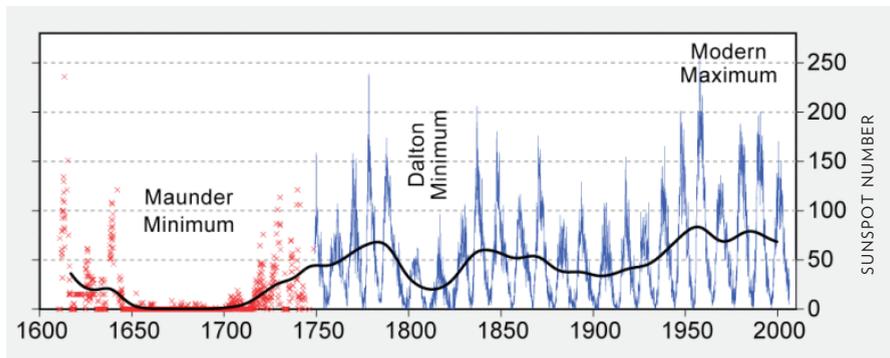
The two primary challenges were that (1) increasingly, over the past two decades, the actual weather has been warmer than that forecast by our traditional forecast methodology, and (2) we are in a period of low solar activity that is cooling Earth, thereby offsetting some of that warming.

I offered that the fact that solar activity (the driver of the Almanac's long-range forecasts) in recent years

has suggested that temperatures should have been relatively cool represents strong evidence that there is some other factor causing warming, which would most likely be the increase in greenhouse gasses caused by human activities.

Further, I cautioned that "I do expect that solar activity over the next 15 to perhaps 50 years will remain low. And if I am correct, this will keep Earth's temperatures cooler than they would otherwise be, although still continuing a general year-to-year warming trend. Then, once solar activity returns to near-normal levels, temperatures would

FIG. 2. 400 YEARS OF SUNSPOTS.



jump significantly higher—perhaps on the order of one to two degrees F.”

Since I wrote those words, solar researchers have raised similar concerns. Recent research, led by Valentina Zharkova at the UK’s Northumbria University, predicted rapidly decreasing magnetic waves for the three solar cycles from 2021 to about 2054. According to her model, solar activity as expressed by sunspots and solar flares will be reduced by as much as 60 percent during this period.

Leading solar researcher Javaraiah Javaraiah of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, in a paper published in the journal *Solar Physics* in November 2017, agreed, predicting that cycles 25 and 26 would be weaker than cycle 24, which was the weakest cycle in more than 100 years.

According to Zharkova: “In cycle

26, the two waves exactly mirror each other, peaking at the same time but in opposite hemispheres of the Sun. We predict that this will lead to the properties of a ‘Maunder Minimum.’”

The Maunder Minimum was the period from about 1645 to 1715, when sunspots and related solar activity were practically nonexistent and there was a time of unusually cold weather in much of the world.

Zharkova expressed the same concern that we did, when she stated, “I hope that global warming will be overridden by this effect, giving humankind and Earth 30 years to sort out our pollution. The downward impact on global warming will last until the 2050s, when the Sun’s two magnetic waves become active again.”

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



# HUMOR ME

## GRINS AND GROANS FROM THE ALMANAC ARCHIVES



### GOT YOUR GOAT

“As I understand it,” said the gentleman, “oleomargarine is made from beef fat.”

“You are undoubtedly right,” replied his friend, “but I should think that the manufacturers would

make it of goat fat.”

“Why?”

“Because the goat is a natural butter.”

### Out Like a Light

“Blast that lamp!” roared Johnson, who was heating some water for shaving.

“It reminds me of you at the theater,” said Mrs. Johnson, sweetly.

“Reminds you of me!” Johnson thundered. “In what way?”

“Why, this makes the fourth time it has gone out, and every time it goes out, it smells like alcohol.”

### SHORT A FOOT

The king of Prussia once held a grand review of his army, at which the prince of Holland was present as his guest. As one of the regiments was passing before their majesties, the king pointed to the men and said, “There is a regiment in which not a single man is less



than 6 feet tall.”

“A splendid regiment indeed,” said the prince, “but we can put Holland 7 feet under water.”

### A Focus on the Present

The Rubicon had been crossed, the die was cast. He had popped the question and the answer had been yes.

“Dearest,” he said, looking dreamily ahead but still keeping a lock-clutch on her hand, “what matters it what troubles, what sorrow, what perils

may be lurking in the unknown future? Now that I have won you, now that I am with you, I think of nothing but the present—the fair, beautiful present.”

“So do I, dear,” the practical maiden confessed coyly, “but will—would you mind?—will you take me with you when you buy it? Men have such funny taste in rings!”

### HEADED FOR TRIAL

A young doctor was a witness at a trial. In cross-examining him,

the opposing counsel made several sarcastic remarks doubting the ability of so young a man to understand the profession.

“Do you know the symptoms of a concussion of the brain?” asked the lawyer.

“I do.”

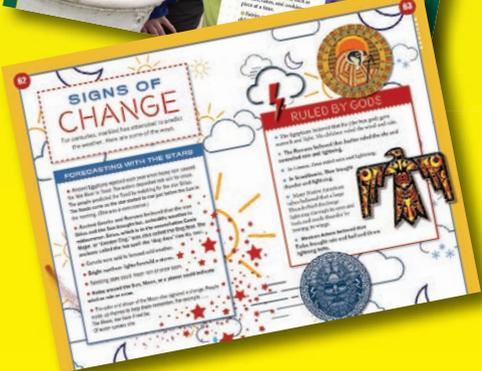
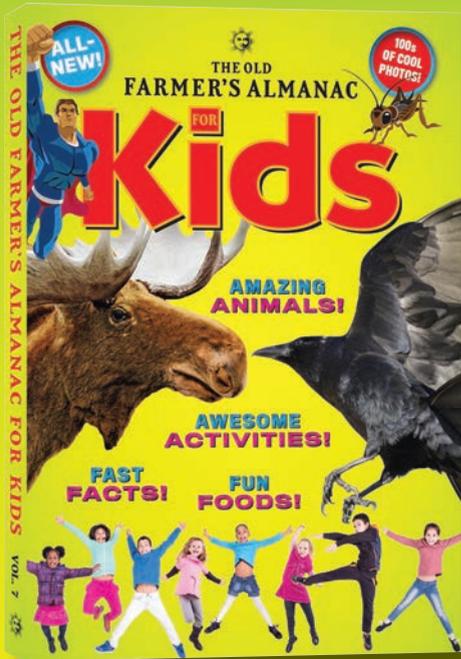
“Well,” continued the lawyer, “suppose my learned friend, Mr. Bagwell, and I were to bang our heads together. Would we get a concussion of the brain?”

Replied the doctor: “Your learned friend Mr. Bagwell might.”

### Mill Talk

“Poor Wentworth has nine mills running now, but they’re all losing money.”

“Well, he should have known that nine mills would never make a cent.”



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# WHAT'S NEXT



## GARDENING

A Thing or Two About Onions



## CALENDAR

Monthly Muse, March birthdays, Swallows Day, The Scarlet Letter

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
<small>% Daily Value*</small>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 6g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>

## LIVING NATURALLY

How to Decode Food Labels



## AMUSEMENT

What we can learn from America's oldest businesses



## FOOD

St. Patrick's Day Recipes



## ASTRONOMY

Explore with our Sky Map

Plus: Weather Update • U.S. and Canadian Weather Forecasts • Gardening by the Moon's Sign • Best Days to Do Things • Humor • and much more in the March *EXTRA!*

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