

EXTRA!

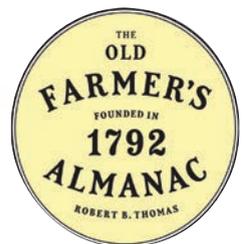
FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

FIT AS A FIDDLE FOREVER

SUPER-SATISFYING SOUP RECIPES

FOUNDATION PLANTINGS CHECKUP

HOW TO LIVE A LONG LIFE



JANUARY 2020

PHOTO: PIXABAY

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Humor Me
*Grins and groans
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See what we have
in store for our
February issue!



FOLLOW US:



JANUARY

Holidays, Fun Facts, and More

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Coming of Age Day (Japan)



In Japan, Seijin no Hi, or Coming of Age Day, arrives each year on the second Monday in January (January 13 this year).

This national holiday, established in 1948 and based on a centuries-old tradition, honors

young people as they enter adulthood, which legally is 20 years of age. (In 2022, this will change to 18, except with regard to the right to drink, smoke, and gamble.)

Any youth in residence who turns 20 between April 2 of the previous year and

April 1 of the current year is invited to attend a ceremony given by the local government, commonly at a city hall or stadium.

Although participation has been declining in recent years, those who do attend listen to speeches by local officials about the



responsibilities and opportunities that they now have as adults.

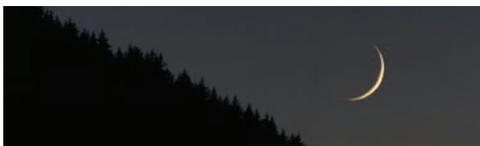
Afterward, the group usually receives small gifts and might enjoy food, music, and professional photo opportunities to preserve memories of the significant occasion. After official ceremonies are over,

celebrations continue with family and friends and might include a visit to a local shrine or an outing to an *izakaya*, or pub.

DID YOU KNOW?

Single young ladies may spend hours preparing for this big event, often going to a beauty salon for

intricate hairdos and makeup. The women wear elaborate, long-sleeve kimonos called *furisodes*; each can cost thousands of dollars, so they are often rented. Young men may choose to wear traditional kimonos with *hakamas* (loose trousers), but more often wear suits and ties.



EYE ON THE SKY

MOON PHASES

- First Quarter:** Jan. 2, at 11:45 P.M. EST
- Full Wolf Moon:** Jan. 10, at 2:21 P.M. EST
- Last Quarter:** Jan. 17, at 7:58 A.M. EST
- New Moon:** Jan. 24, at 4:42 P.M. EST

SPECIAL EVENT

Jan. 5: Earth is at perihelion (point in a planet’s orbit that is closest to the Sun) on January 5, when it will be 91,398,199 miles from the Sun.



TAP FOR MORE ABOUT MOON PHASES



TAP FOR MORE ABOUT JANUARY’S FULL MOON

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

- Jan. 1:** New Year’s Day
- Jan. 6:** Epiphany
- Jan. 17:** Benjamin Franklin’s Birthday
- Jan. 20:** Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday, observed
- Jan. 25:** Chinese New Year (Year of the Rat)

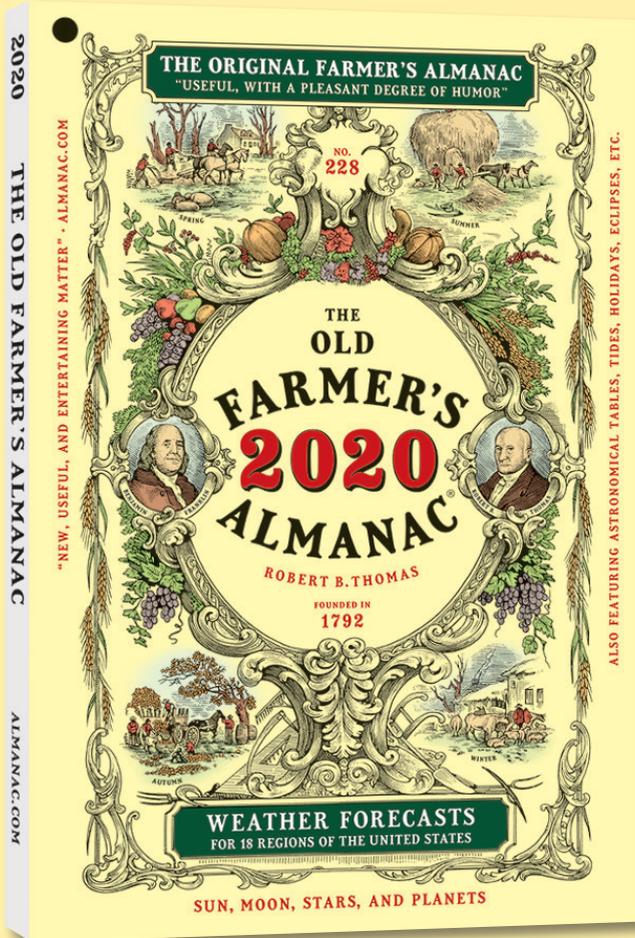
JOKE OF THE MONTH

A New Year’s resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other.



Order Now!

THE 2020 OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC



LEARN MORE



BEST DAYS TO DO THINGS

These January 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: 5, 6

Ask for a loan: 14, 19

Begin diet to lose weight: 14, 19

Begin diet to gain weight: 6, 28

Buy a home: 6, 28

Color hair: 4–6

Cut hair to discourage growth: 15, 16

Cut hair to encourage growth: 27, 28

Get married: 15–17

Have dental care: 13, 14

Move (house/household): 7, 8

Perm hair: 24–26



Quit smoking: 6, 11
Straighten hair: 20, 21
Travel for pleasure: 11, 12
Wean children: 6, 11

AROUND THE HOUSE

Bake: 9, 10
Brew: 18, 19
Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut:
18, 19
Demolish: 18, 19
Dry fruit/vegetables/meat: 11, 12
End projects: 23
Lay shingles: 11, 12
Make jams/jellies: 1, 27, 28
Paint: 15–17
Start projects: 25
Wash floors: 1, 27, 28
Wash windows: 2, 3, 29–31

OUTDOORS

Begin logging: 22, 23
Go camping: 20, 21
Go fishing: 1–10, 24–31
Set posts or pour concrete: 22, 23

IN THE GARDEN

Destroy pests and weeds: 2, 3,
29–31
Graft or pollinate: 9, 10
Harvest aboveground crops: 5, 6
Harvest belowground crops: 13, 14
Mow to slow growth: 18, 19
Mow to promote growth: 2, 3,
29–31
Pick fruit: 13, 14
Plant aboveground crops: 5, 6, 9,
27, 28
Plant belowground crops: 18, 19
Prune to discourage growth: 11, 12
Prune to encourage growth: 2, 3,
29–31

ON THE FARM

Breed animals: 18, 19
Castrate animals: 24–26
Cut hay: 2, 3, 29–31
Purchase animals: 9, 10
Set eggs: 6, 7, 16, 17
Slaughter livestock: 18, 19
Wean animals: 6, 11



GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN

Use the January 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 JANUARY

1 Pisces
2 Aries
3 Aries
4 Taurus
5 Taurus
6 Taurus
7 Gemini
8 Gemini

9 Cancer
10 Cancer
11 Leo
12 Leo
13 Virgo
14 Virgo
15 Libra
16 Libra

17 Libra
18 Scorpio
19 Scorpio
20 Sagittarius
21 Sagittarius
22 Capricorn
23 Capricorn
24 Aquarius

25 Aquarius
26 Aquarius
27 Pisces
28 Pisces
29 Aries
30 Aries
31 Aries



TAP FOR
**MERCURY IN
 RETROGRADE
 DATES**



TAP FOR
**JANUARY
 MOON PHASES**

MERCURY IN RETROGRADE

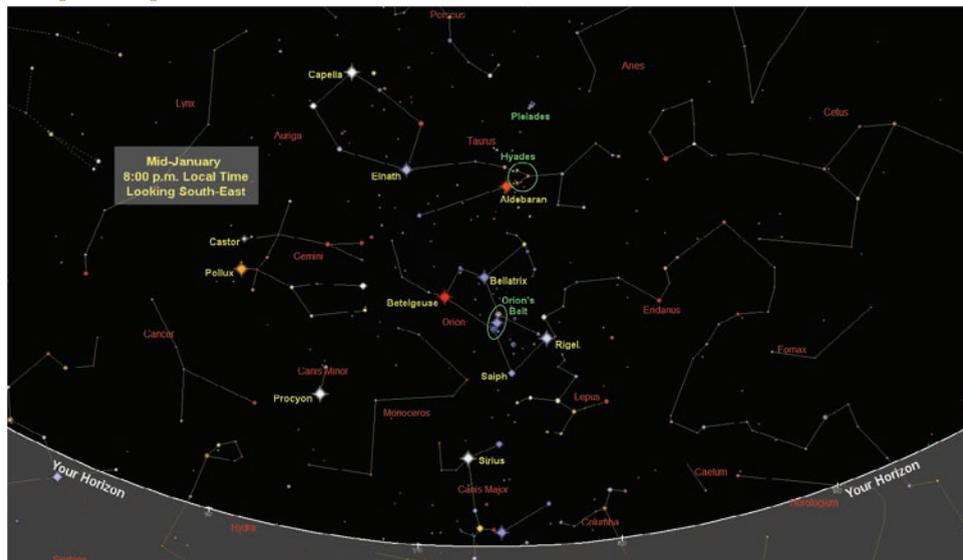
Sometimes the other planets appear to be traveling backward through the zodiac; this is an illusion. We call this illusion *retrograde motion*.

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's 2020 retrograde periods: **February 17–March 10, June 18–July 12, and October 14–November 3.**

–*Celeste Longacre*



THE BRIGHTEST SKY OF THE YEAR!

The combination of crisp, clear winter nights and a southeastern sky filled with celestial wonders makes it well worth bundling up and scanning the heavens in January.

Orion, the Hunter, is not the largest constellation, but it is unquestionably the brightest. It's home to a pair of the sky's Top 10 brightest stars, ruddy Betelgeuse and blue-white Rigel. Star colors are notoriously difficult to discern, but on a clear night, the differing hues of Betelgeuse and Rigel are plain to see at Orion's right shoulder and left knee, respectively.

Somewhat less luminous are Bellatrix at the Hunter's left shoulder and Mintaka, Alnilam, and Alnitak, which comprise Orion's Belt. Saiph, at his right knee, would be a noteworthy star in any other celestial neighborhood, but it doesn't even crack the Top 5 in mighty Orion.



TAP TO GET
A PRINTABLE
JANUARY
SKY MAP



TAP TO
FOLLOW
OHIOAN JEFF
DETRAY'S SKY
ADVENTURES



Above Orion stands Taurus, the Bull, his long horns jutting to the left and one baleful eye represented by the reddish star Aldebaran. Nearby lies a group of stars that make up the Hyades star cluster. The members of the Hyades lie fairly close together in space, but despite its apparent proximity, Aldebaran is *not* a part of the cluster. It is much closer to us than the Hyades (one reason that it appears brighter) and just happens to lie along the same line of sight. This is one of countless examples where celestial objects appear near one another from our point of view, but vast differences in distance mean that they are actually far apart.

Above the Hyades are the Pleiades, also known as the Seven Sisters, which are among the most famous of star clusters. This cluster is so distinctive and its location so prominent that dozens of ancient cultures found a place in their mythologies for the Pleiades. Most people with good vision can spot five stars when they gaze at the Pleiades. However, if your eyesight is especially acute and the sky is wonderfully clear, you may see seven or even more. If you do, you have “the eyes of a warrior,” as ancient lore decreed.

Off to the left is the five-sided figure of Auriga, the Charioteer. The star Elnath is shared between Auriga and Taurus, making it one of the few stars that belongs to two constellations.

Swinging downward, we find Gemini, the Twins. Their names are Castor and Pollux, with stars of those names representing the heads of the reclining twins. They lie holding hands, their legs and feet stretched out toward Orion.

Continuing counterclockwise around the sky, we reach Canis Minor, the Lesser Dog. Its only bright star is Procyon, a name meaning “before the dog.” This refers to the fact that on any given night, Procyon rises above the horizon a few minutes before the bright star Sirius, whose nickname is “the Dog Star.” Thus, Procyon rises “before the dog.”

We’ll skip over the dim constellation Monoceros to reach Canis Major, the Greater Dog. This figure is home to the aforementioned Sirius, which just happens to be the brightest star in the night sky—almost twice as bright as any other! Sirius appears so bright to us because it is both extremely luminous and relatively nearby.

Enjoy the January sky—the brightest of the year!

—Jeff DeTray

LIVING NATURALLY



Fit as a Fiddle Forever

PHOTO: PIXABAY

About 6 weeks after my 40th birthday, we had a freak April storm that dropped 18 inches of wet, heavy snow. My car had broken down, so I trudged the mile and a half to my daughter's elementary school, where I was working with the children to publish a school newspaper.

I rode the school bus home. The next morning, I hurt all over and could barely roll out of bed. As I dressed, I caught a glimpse of something in the mirror.

Whoa! That pale, bloated, ungainly, creature was me!

I call what happened next my “good-animal moment.” Seeing, really seeing, my physical self for the first time, a line from Ralph Waldo Emerson popped into my mind:

First, be a good animal.

In a flash of awareness, I realized that I hadn't honored my animal self,

the essential foundation of the mind and spirit that I'd been cultivating.

A bit later, I came across another line from the great runner-cardiologist-philosopher George Sheehan that explained my situation to a T: “Everyone is an athlete. But some of us are training, and some of us are not.” So I started training.

TRAINING

I started walking a mile every day, then two, then three. I didn't trust the slug within, so for the next 4 months, I slept every night in shorts, T-shirt—even my shoes—and headed out the door before I got busy with anything else. In late May, I taught myself to run a mile, one telephone pole at a time. I remember the day when I arrived at the stern No Passing sign half a mile from my house and ran right by.

I began resistance

training with weights at the gym where my daughter took gymnastics lessons. By the end of that first year, I'd lost 70 pounds, gained a set of shapely muscles, and found a running partner who became my best friend. Every Saturday for 16 years, we slipped out while our families were still asleep and ran together for a couple of hours.

The following spring, I bought a cheap 12-speed bicycle and a helmet and vowed to work up to riding at least 50 miles a week. I joined a running group. I sewed myself a bathing suit from a remnant of hot-pink spandex and trained myself to swim for an hour at a steady speed in the pond behind my house. That June, I entered my first triathlon. Over the next decade and a half, I would enter 60 more. What a blast!

I started walking a mile every day, then two, then three.



EVERYTHING CHANGES

As I got fitter, I had more energy for daily tasks. I didn't get colds. I needed less sleep. My intuition sharpened. I felt smarter and more alive. I found that I could split wood for 6 hours straight. Shoveling compost and snow felt easier. My bicycle turned into real transportation; my commuting miles often added up to more than 100 a week.

When darkness or weather prevented my getting out, I ran stairs, jumped rope on the porch, or turned on the radio and danced around

the house. I bought a used bike trainer and pedaled away indoors during the winter, reading books and magazines perched on the bike's aerobars.

A few years back, pains in my knees brought me to the orthopedic office, where Dr. Fox diagnosed osteoarthritis. No more knee cartilage. No more running. No more triathlons.

I continued to bike, walk, swim, garden, and split wood. I took up serious snowshoeing and water running (either with or without a buoyancy belt). It's much tougher without

the motivation of training partners and summer competitions.

But long before the triathlons, in my chubby days, when running a whole mile had seemed a major life achievement, a guy came up to me at the local corner store, a little smirk on his face.

"Seen ya out there runnin' every day. Whatcha trainin' for, anyway?"

I replied in a flash, "That's easy. For life."

—Margaret Boyles



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



Super-Satisfying Soup Recipes

This is the perfect season for soups. Warm and nourishing in wintertime, soups serve as a delicious lunch, side, or main meal with some good bread and salad. Here are some Almanac favorites.



TAP FOR
RECIPE

Slow Cooker Jambalaya Soup

SLOW COOKER JAMBALAYA SOUP

- 3 cans (14.5 ounces each) chicken broth
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes, with liquid
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried marjoram
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1-1/2 cups chopped onion
- 1 cup celery, thinly sliced
- 2/3 cup long-grain brown rice
- 4 to 5 links smoked sausage, sliced
- 2 pounds skinless chicken drumsticks or skinless, boneless thighs
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1/2 pound medium shrimp, cleaned
- 1/2 pound fresh okra, sliced 1/2-inch thick (optional)

In a saucepan, bring broth, tomatoes, garlic, thyme, marjoram, and cayenne to a boil.

Into a 5- or 6-quart slow cooker, add onions, celery, rice, and sausage. Add broth, then tuck chicken under liquid, meaty sides down. Scatter peppers on top. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours or on high for 2-1/2 to 3 hours, until rice has softened and chicken is tender. Turn to high (or keep on high) and add shrimp and okra. Cook for 5 minutes, or until shrimp are cooked and okra is crisp-tender. Remove chicken and cut meat from bones. Ladle soup into bowls and add chicken to each portion.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.



SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

FOOD

Cauliflower and Brie Soup

 TAP FOR
RECIPE



SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

CAULIFLOWER AND BRIE SOUP

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 tablespoon butter | 1 cup milk |
| 1 tablespoon olive oil | 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper |
| 3 cups coarsely chopped onion | 3 tablespoons chopped chives, divided |
| 6 cups cauliflower florets | 3 ounces Brie cheese |
| 4 cups chicken stock | salt and white pepper, to taste |
| 3 tablespoons uncooked white rice | Parmesan cheese, for garnish |
| 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice | |

In a saucepan, heat butter and oil. Add garlic and onions and cook until soft. Add cauliflower, chicken stock, and rice. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, or until cauliflower is very tender. Remove from heat and add lemon juice.

Purée mixture in a food processor or blender, then return to saucepan over low heat. Slowly stir in milk, then nutmeg, cayenne, and 2 tablespoons of chives. Increase heat to medium and cook until soup is hot.

Cut off outside rind of Brie, if it is crusty and hard. Cut cheese into small chunks and add to soup, stirring until slightly melted. Season with salt and white pepper.

Sprinkle individual servings with remaining chopped chives and Parmesan.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

FOOD

 TAP FOR
RECIPE



Ginger Thai Pumpkin Bisque

PHOTO: MSHEV/SHUTTERSTOCK

 SHARE
THIS
RECIPE

GINGER THAI PUMPKIN BISQUE

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 4 cups canned pumpkin
- 2 tablespoons minced ginger
- 1 can (15 ounces) coconut milk
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon red curry paste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons freshly minced cilantro, divided
- 4 tablespoons shredded coconut (optional)

In a saucepan, warm oil over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and cook until onions are tender. Remove mixture to a food processor or blender. Add pumpkin and ginger, then process until mixture is smooth. Return mixture to the saucepan. Add coconut milk, stock, soy sauce, lime juice, curry paste, and salt. Bring to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Stir in 2 tablespoons of cilantro. Simmer for 2 minutes more. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish each portion with remaining cilantro and shredded coconut, if using.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

GARDENING



Foundation Plantings Checkup

Improve the appeal and value of your home.

PHOTO: AKURTZ/GETTY IMAGES

Whether you're planning to sell or are set on staying in your home, it's worth your time to take a good look at the plants around the buildings on your property. Here's some advice on what works—and what does not.

Draw a landscape plan for your property—or at least the part around the foundations of your house, garage, and outbuildings. Then draw a sketch of your house showing window and door positions. Make photocopies of both sketches. You will mess up several before you get one set good enough to execute.

Walk around your neighborhood or a nursery to find plantings that you like. Ask questions, take notes, and later research on the Internet or use a landscape-design book

to learn more about each plant's characteristics: sunlight and cultural requirements; size at maturity; foliage color; need for irrigation; susceptibility to fungal infections; and hardiness to your region and climate.

Draw your preferences onto a set of your property sketches, with these ideas in mind:

- Peripheral plantings should not compete with the house for emphasis; the eye is to be drawn to the house. It is the central focal point; the borders are incidental.
- Put “framing” and mass at the edges, to leave the center of the space open. Keep the largest plantings off to the sides.
- Avoid scatter: no flower beds in the middle of lawns, no brilliant-color plants without a

background of green foliage to set them off.

- Make flowers incidental, to supply color and finish. The lawn and the mass plantings are the main pieces of the plan.

- Think about position carefully. Far more important than the right choice of plant is its correct position with reference to other plants and to structures.

When you have a tentative planting diagram, consider hiring the manager of a local nursery to visit your site. Invite criticism of your plans. Ask what he or she would charge to develop a plan for you. It could be the best money that you will spend this year.

Your tasks may include the removal of ill-conceived plantings. Do this decisively, especially

**Draw a landscape plan for your property—
or at least the part around the foundations of
your house, garage, and outbuildings.**

GARDENING

if the soil around the foundation is organically poor, rubble-ridden, impossibly acidic, or adversely graded (shedding water toward the house, not away from it). You will have to do some serious digging to get tree trunks down to subterranean levels, but you need not fully remove all roots.

Get a soil test kit and send off a sample to your state soil-testing lab. Pay for the most comprehensive test that's offered. You want to know the levels of organic matter and trace elements such as lead and cadmium, not just soil pH and major nutrient levels.

Regardless of the cost of what the lab suggests—compost,

rotted manure, peat moss, and so forth—buy it. You need fertile, loamy soil, properly graded away from the building in a band reaching to the edge of your planting perimeter at a minimum depth of 6 inches.

Now, plant.

When everything is done, you will have transformed the appearance of your place, increased its value by some large multiple of the cost of the work, and created a pleasant sight for neighbors and passersby to see, season in and season out.

COMMON MISTAKES

Avoid these common errors in foundation-plant placement:

- ball-shape shrubs arranged geometrically around the entrance (nature abhors linear geometry; nature knows only curves)
- evergreens planted so close to the house that they rub the walls
- plants grown so tall that they obscure windows
- walkways lined with plants set too close and now intruding over the walking area
- weed grass beneath shrubs, rising into their bodies
- monochromatic plant choices (everything green or even worse, everything evergreen)

—Robert Kaldenbach

Get a soil test kit and send off a sample to your state soil-testing lab. Pay for the most comprehensive testing that's offered. You want to know the levels of organic matter and trace elements, not just soil pH and major nutrient levels.

AMUSEMENT



How to Live a Long Life

Are you too busy to die?

AMUSEMENT

What do you think? Can a vital undertaking be so engrossing that there is just no time to answer the door when the Grim Reaper comes knocking?

Not likely, say geneticists, insisting that the length of one's life is mainly determined by how long his or her ancestors lived.

But Dr. Kenneth Pelletier, authority on longevity, disputes the geneticists. "Good genes give you an edge," he says, "but this doesn't account for people who live 30 to 40 years beyond the average life expectancy. A strong sense of purpose and commitment to higher values, as well as lifelong physical and mental activity, play a more important role in longevity than purely biological factors such as hormonal changes."

He asserts that the single most important predictor of longevity is enthusiasm for life: staying busy, being curious, feeling that

you are accomplishing something worthwhile.

Proof that the too-busy-to-die theory is more than wishful thinking can be found in the long and productive lives of the Founding Fathers.

Life expectancy at birth in colonial America between 1700 and 1775 was 35 years (today, for men born in the U.S. in 2018, it is 78 years; for women, 82). But since life expectancy is defined as the number of years that an individual of a given age may expect to live, once the colonial American reached 21, odds favored his living another 20 years. And the longer he lived, the better his chance of living to a ripe old age.

Nevertheless, in 1775, a mere 2 percent of the populace was over 65. Yet an amazing number of Founding Fathers, all born in the perilous 18th century, achieved a longevity far beyond the average. Our first 10 presidents lived an average of 77.4 years.

Some might argue that

the Founders must have had long-lived ancestors (some did, but most did not), a privileged background (fewer than half did), or superior medical care (it did not exist for anyone, rich or poor).

Perhaps Benjamin Franklin had the best formula for achieving longevity. In his 20s, he compiled a list of Thirteen Virtues that would govern his life. Virtue No. 6 was Industry: "Lose no time. Be always gainfully employed."

The Founding Fathers were industrious. They were a diverse group: aristocrats, common sorts; college graduates, autodidacts; short-tempered, imperturbable; neat, sloppy; stingy, generous. Some smoked; most drank moderately, mainly wine. Some exercised diligently; others, halfheartedly. But they all had one thing in common: They saw life as a heaven-sent gift, a gift to be utilized, not wasted.

Why don't we all try this and see how it works out? —*Lawrence Doorley*



FOG IN JANUARY MAKES A WET SPRING.

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.

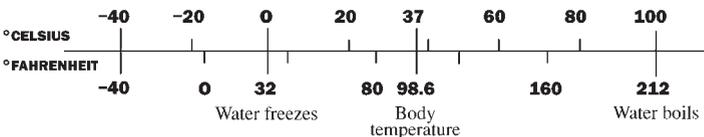


TAP TO FIND OUT THE WEATHER HISTORY OF THE DAY



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

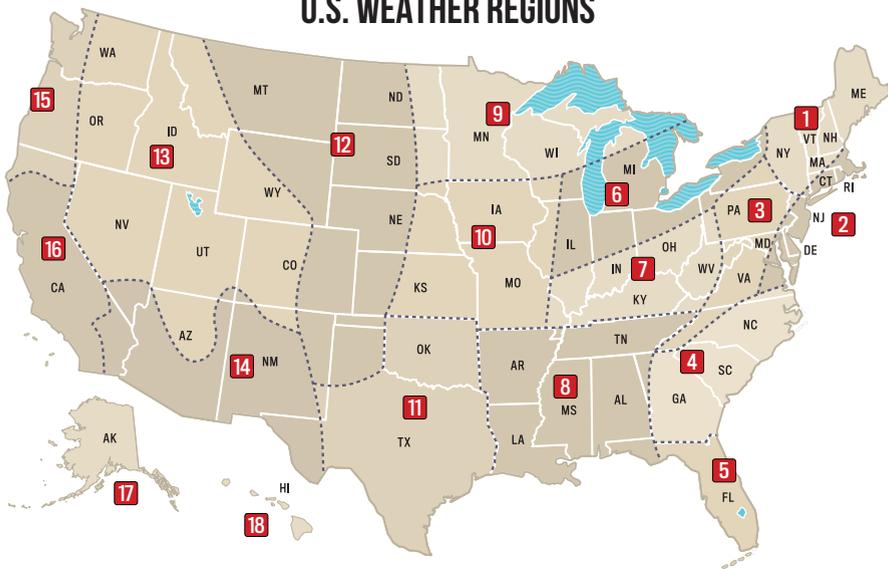
CELSIUS-FAHRENHEIT TABLE



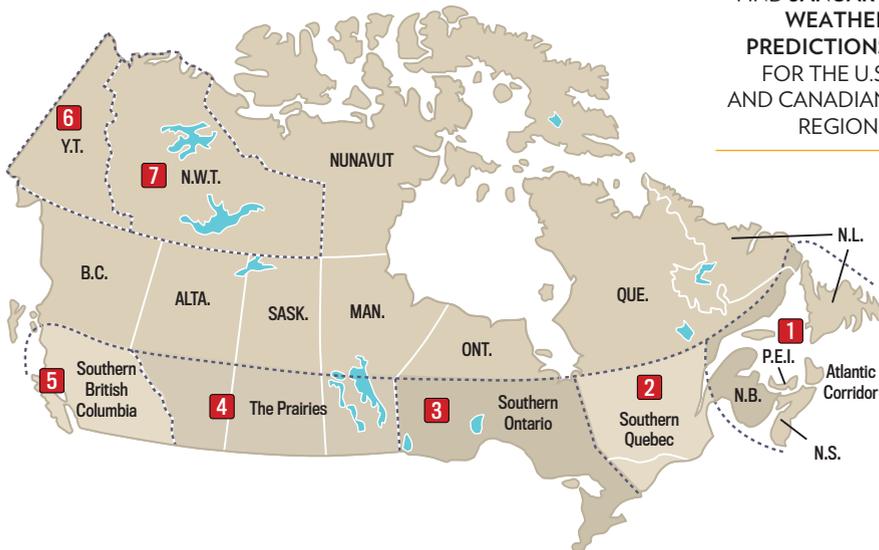


WEATHER FORECASTS

U.S. WEATHER REGIONS



CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS



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WEATHER
PREDICTIONS
FOR THE U.S.
AND CANADIAN
REGIONS





THE REAL MEANING OF “ONCE IN A HUNDRED YEARS”

From time to time when a major weather event occurs, I see it described as a “once in a hundred years” or even “once in a thousand years” event. But what does this really mean?

Usually, it refers to a particular storm that brings heavy rain or snow. For example, in 2017, Hurricane Harvey brought exceptional rain amounts to the Houston, Texas, area—including 60.5 inches in the city of Nederland—while 30 inches or more fell on an area near the Texas coast the size of the state of Maryland.

The 60.5 inches in Nederland was a record for a single storm in the continental United States that created an unprecedented “once in a thousand years” flood event. No rain event of that magnitude has ever happened in the history of the United States.

But there have been several other exceptional rainfalls in Texas brought about by tropical storms in recent decades. The 48 inches of rain in Medina from Hurricane Amelia in 1978; the 45 inches that Claudette dumped on Alvin in 1979; the 43.15 inches brought by Imelda to Jefferson County in



2019; and the 40.68 inches that fell from Allison in Jefferson County in 2001 are also among the 10 highest rainfall amounts from tropical cyclones in the United States since 1950. Three of the other top 10 events occurred in Hawaii, with one each in Florida and Puerto Rico.

All of these events have been characterized as at least “once in a hundred years” events, including all five that hit Texas in the past 41 years.

This raises two important questions:

- (1) How do we know that an event is this extreme?**
- (2) How can we have five “once in a hundred years” events in Texas in less than half a century?**

The answer to the first question is that we have excellent precipitation records from about the past 30 years based on rain-gauge, Doppler radar, and satellite measurements. We have pretty good records from about the past 100 years, mostly with rain gauges. Before that, the records are much more speculative, with some data from weather instruments but most of the weather information on individual events coming from personal diaries, with climatological information coming mostly from indirect measurements of things like the thickness of tree rings.

The answer to the second question is more complicated. Instead of imagining a “once in a hundred years” event happening exactly once every 100 years, think about it as having a 1% chance of happening in any given year. And once such an event occurs, the chance of it occurring again in the following year is still 1%.

Very simply, the United States is large enough, with enough different locations and weather events, that an apparent anomaly like the Texas rainfall will occur over 1% of the country each year. This means that events of this nature will happen somewhere in the United States each year, despite the tiny chance of one occurring in any one location. And Texas is a large state with plenty of room for extreme events in different parts of the state.

Two other factors for consideration:

- (1) Because we do not have good weather records going back for more than a century or two, these events may happen more often than we expect.**
- (2) As climate changes, whether naturally or because of humans, particular events can become more or less frequent.**

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



HUMOR ME

GRINS AND GROANS FROM THE ALMANAC



UMBRELLA COVERAGE

When leaving a street-car one morning, a busy man, much engrossed with his newspaper, absentmindedly picked up an umbrella belonging to a man sitting next to him. The latter protested, and our friend, greatly

mortified, apologized earnestly.

On his way home from business that evening, he called, at his wife's request, for three umbrellas that she had left at a store to be mended.

Now, Fate decreed that the umbrella

owner of the morning should be his nearest neighbor on the homeward car. After eyeing the first man and his umbrellas keenly, he at last said quietly but suspiciously, "I see that you have had a successful day!"



STILL NOT GONE

A lady carrying a little dog on a London double-decker bus wanted to know at every turn whether this was Park Lane.

She began asking the question soon after the bus started and repeated it at intervals all along the route until at last she was told, to the intense relief of all, that Park Lane was right before her eyes.

But they were not to see the last of her, even then. “Look!” she said in ecstatic tones, holding the dog up to the window, “that’s where your mother was born!”

NODDING APPROVAL

“Do you think they approved of my sermon?” asked the newly appointed rector, hopeful that he had made a good

impression.

“Yes, I think so,” replied his wife. “They were all nodding.”

TRUTH-TELLING

The schoolmaster was trying to explain the meaning of the word “conceited,” which had come up in the course of the reading lesson.

“Now, students,” he said, “suppose I was always boasting of my learning—that I knew a good deal o’ Latin, for instance, or that my personal appearance was . . . that I was very good-looking, y’know—what should you say I was?”

Student: “Well, sir, I’d say that you were a prevaricator.”

STRIPPED OF REASON

In order to save time, a prominent physician whose specialty was

physical diagnosis required his patients to divest themselves of all superfluous clothing before entering his private consultation room.

One day, a man presented himself without having complied with this requirement.

“Why do you come in here without complying with my rules?” demanded the doctor. “Just step into that side room and remove your clothing, and then I’ll see you. Next patient, please!”

The man did as requested and after a time presented himself, duly divested of his clothing, in regular order.

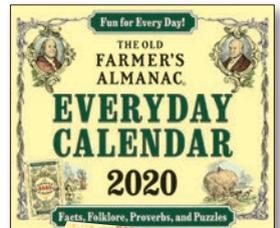
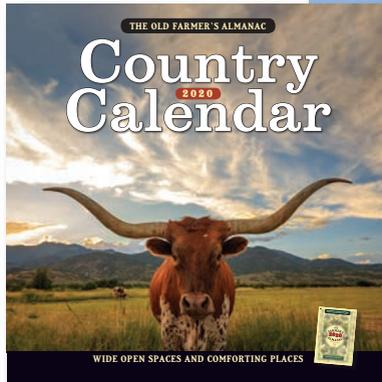
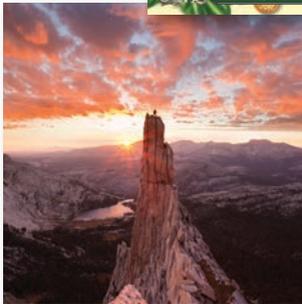
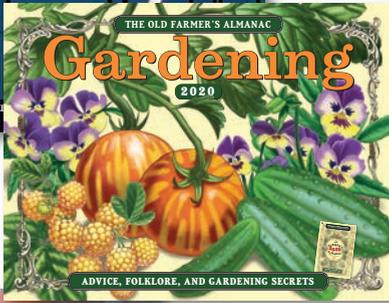
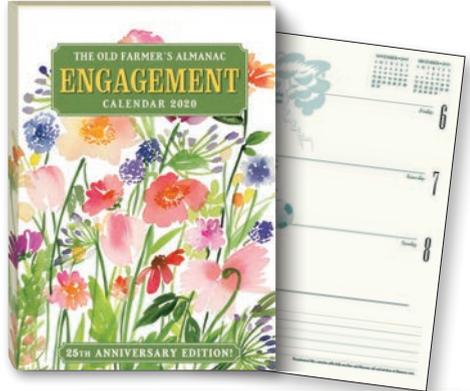
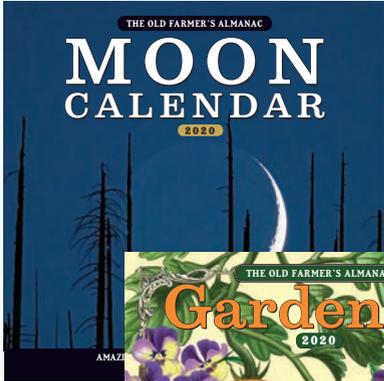
“Now,” said the doctor, “what can I do for you?”

“I just called,” replied the man, “to collect that tailoring bill that you owe us.”

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FEBRUARY 2020

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1	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						

Fast Facts | **Historical Events** | **Birthdays** | **Deaths**

Fast Facts: February is the only month with 28 days. It is also the only month that can be a leap month. The name 'February' comes from the Roman god of the month, Februs. The word 'calendar' comes from the Latin word 'calendarium', which means 'a book of accounts'.

Historical Events: 1787: The Constitution of the United States was signed. 1918: The Spanish Flu pandemic began. 1968: The Apollo 8 mission launched.

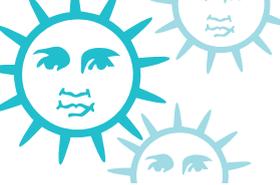
Birthdays: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., and many others.

Deaths: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and many others.

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WHAT'S NEXT



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Moon phases, February holidays, all about Leap Day, Sadie Hawkins Day, Joke of the Month



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