

# EXTRA!

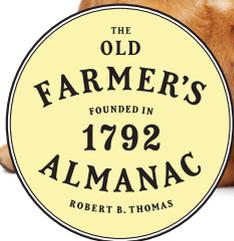
FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

**ST. PATRICK'S DAY RECIPES**

TALES FROM AMERICA'S OLDEST BUSINESSES

**A THING OR TWO ABOUT ONIONS**

HOW TO DECODE FOOD LABELS



MARCH 2018

## FEATURES

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Tales From America's Oldest Businesses

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Humor Me  
*Grins and groans from the Almanac*

### WHAT'S NEXT

See what we have in store for our April issue!



# THE MONTH OF MARCH

## BIRTHDAYS, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, AND MORE



### HOLIDAY HAPPENING:

## SWALLOWS DAY

Every spring, migrating cliff swallows return to Mission San Juan Capistrano in southern California, having traveled 6,000 miles from Goya, Argentina. For scores of years, the community and visitors from around the world have celebrated the birds' arrival on St. Joseph's feast day, March 19.

This day also happens to be the birthday of

Father John O'Sullivan. In the 1920s, he had started the legend of the swallows' return to the mission. The story goes that one day the clergyman passed a hotel proprietor who was busy smashing cliff swallow nests under the eaves of his establishment because he was concerned about the mess and destruction of property. Father O'Sullivan invited the birds to nest instead at the mission.

His invitation was accepted: The very next morning, birds began to build nests at a church on the property. Since then, swallows have returned every year.

In recent decades, however, fewer swallows have been returning to the mission, due to urbanization. Happily, recent efforts to make the environment more attractive for the birds have been yielding some positive results.

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

### 25 YEARS AGO (1993)

**Anthony Davis**

(American basketball player)

**Charlotte Lichtman**

(American ice dancer)

**Abigail Mavity**

(American actress)

**J. T. Miller** (American

ice hockey player)

**Sloane Stephens**

(American tennis player)

### 50 YEARS AGO (1968)

**Kenny Chesney**

(American country music singer)

**Moira Kelly** (American actress)



MOIRA KELLY

### 100 YEARS AGO (1918)

**Pearl Bailey** (American singer)

**Jack Barry** (American television host)

**Victor Manuel**

**Blanco** (Puerto Rican astronomer)



VICTOR  
MANUEL  
BLANCO

**Arnold Newman**

(American photographer)

**Mickey Spillane**

(American crime novelist)

**Sam Walton** (American businessman)

### 125 YEARS AGO (1893)

**James Bryant Conant**

(American chemist)

**Emmett J. Culligan**

(American businessman and inventor)

**Wanda Gág** (American

children's book writer and illustrator)

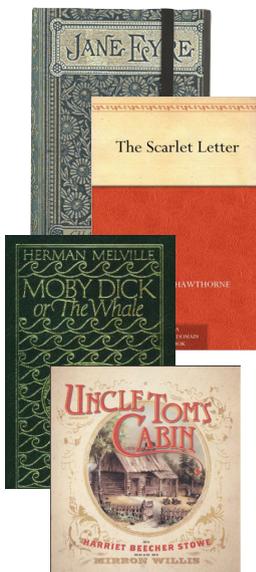
**George Sisler**

(American baseball player)

## FASCINATING FIRSTS

Which book was first published on March 16, 1850?

- Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë
- Moby-Dick*, by Herman Melville
- The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe



Answer: c.



TAP FOR MORE  
MOON PHASES

TAP FOR MORE  
ABOUT MARCH'S  
FULL MOONS

## MOON WATCH

- Full Moon:** March 1, at 7:51 P.M. EST
- Last Quarter:** March 9, at 6:20 A.M. EST
- New Moon:** March 17, at 9:12 A.M. EDT
- First Quarter:** March 24, at 11:35 A.M. EDT
- Full Moon:** March 31, at 8:37 A.M. EDT

*Note: This year, March has two full Moons. The second is commonly called a blue Moon.*

## ANNUAL EVENTS

- The March equinox occurs on the 20th at 12:15 P.M. EDT. In the Northern Hemisphere, it is known as the vernal, or spring, equinox, and marks the start of the spring season. In the Southern Hemisphere, autumn begins.
- Daylight Saving Time begins on March 11 at 2:00 A.M. Remember to set your clocks forward 1 hour.

## MONTHLY MUSE

*In come the  
March winds,  
They blow and  
blow,  
They sweep up  
the brown leaves  
That green ones  
may grow.*

—George Washington  
Wright Houghton,  
American poet  
(1850–91)





## BEST DAYS TO DO THINGS

These March 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

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Advertise to sell: 20, 21

Ask for a loan: 2, 7

Begin diet to gain weight: 21, 25

Begin diet to lose weight: 7, 16

Buy a home: 21, 30

Color hair: 20, 21

Cut hair to discourage growth: 3, 4

Cut hair to encourage growth: 20,  
21, 31

Get married: 3, 4, 31

Have dental care: 1, 2, 28–30

Move (house/household): 22, 23

Perm hair: 13, 14



Quit smoking: 7, 16  
Straighten hair: 8, 9  
Travel for pleasure: 26, 27  
Wean children: 7, 16

### **AROUND THE HOUSE**

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Bake: 24, 25  
Brew: 5–7  
Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut: 5–7  
Demolish: 5–7  
Dry fruit/vegetables/meat: 8, 9  
End projects: 16  
Lay shingles: 26, 27  
Make jams/jellies: 15–17  
Paint: 3, 4, 20, 21  
Start projects: 18  
Wash floors: 15–17  
Wash windows: 18, 19

### **OUTDOORS**

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Begin logging: 10–12  
Go camping: 8, 9  
Go fishing: 1, 17–31  
Set posts or pour concrete: 10–12

### **IN THE GARDEN**

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Destroy pests and weeds: 18, 19  
Graft or pollinate: 24, 25  
Harvest aboveground crops: 20, 21, 28–30  
Harvest belowground crops: 2, 10–12  
Mow to decrease growth: 5–7  
Mow to increase growth: 18, 19  
Pick fruit: 1, 2, 28–30  
Plant aboveground crops: 24, 25  
Plant belowground crops: 5–7, 15, 16  
Prune to discourage growth: 8, 9  
Prune to encourage growth: 26, 27

### **ON THE FARM**

---

Breed animals: 5–7  
Castrate animals: 13, 14  
Cut hay: 18, 19  
Purchase animals: 24, 25  
Set eggs: 3, 4, 30, 31  
Slaughter livestock: 5–7  
Wean animals: 7, 16



## GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN

Use the March 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 MARCH

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



TAP FOR  
**MERCURY IN  
RETROGRADE  
DATES**



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



**APP FINDER!**  
FIND OUT  
UPCOMING  
FULL MOON  
DATES WITH  
THE ALMANAC  
FULL MOON  
FINDER APP

## MERCURY IN RETROGRADE

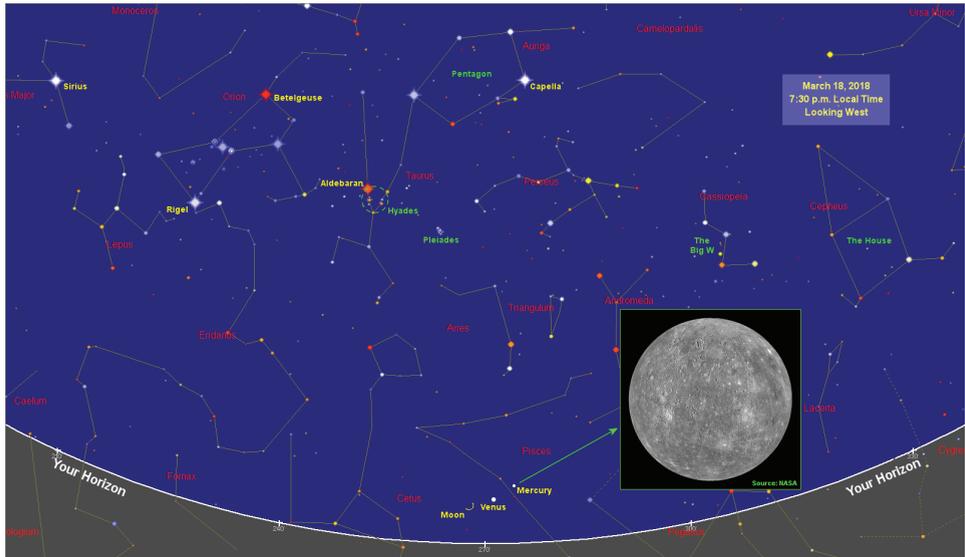
Sometimes the other planets appear to be traveling backward through the zodiac; this is an illusion. We call this illusion *retrograde motion*.

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.

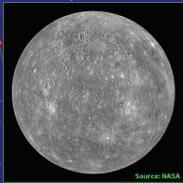
When Mercury is retrograde, remain flexible, allow extra time for travel, and avoid signing contracts. Review projects and plans at these times, but wait until Mercury is direct again to make any final decisions.

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

—Celeste Longacre



March 18, 2018  
7:30 p.m. Local Time  
Looking West



Source: NASA

## TINY MERCURY AND BRILLIANT VENUS

The planet Earth is sometimes called the “Third Rock from the Sun.” The first two “rocks” (planets) are Mercury and Venus, and March offers the perfect opportunity to view them both.

The two planets are close together, low in the west, during the middle 2 weeks of March. The grandest view is shortly after sunset on the evening of March 18, when the thin crescent Moon joins the duo for a beautiful display. The Moon appears near Mercury and Venus for one night only, but the two planets remain in the area for about 2 weeks, before Mercury sinks below the horizon while Venus drifts slowly upward.

Mercury, named for the Roman messenger of the gods, is notoriously difficult to observe, even with a telescope. It is the smallest of the eight major planets, with a diameter about 40 percent that of Earth. It is always near the Sun and is often lost in our star’s glare. Just a few times a year,

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

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



Mercury is visible after sunset in the evening twilight (such as this month) and in the morning twilight before the Sun rises. On these occasions, the planet is always low in the sky, not far above the horizon.

Mercury has received two visits by spacecraft, which provided the only detailed photos and scientific information ever gathered about the planet. *Mariner 10* flew by Mercury in 1974–75, and *MESSENGER* (MErcury Surface, Space ENvironment, GEochemistry, and Ranging) observed Mercury for 11 years, ending in 2015. A photo of Mercury made by *MESSENGER* is included on this month's sky map. It resembles our Moon.

The other celestial celebrity on the map is blazing Venus, Goddess of Love, the second planet from the Sun. Detailed views of Venus are difficult to obtain, even with spacecraft. The planet is eternally shrouded in a thick, virtually impenetrable atmosphere that hides its surface from view. Venus and Earth are often called the Twin Planets because they are nearly the same size and in relatively close proximity. Because of its nearness to Earth, Venus has been visited many times by spacecraft. The visits quickly dispelled the romantic notion that Venus might be a pleasant world full of living things.

We now know that Venus is an example of extreme global warming, an utterly inhospitable place. The thick Venusian atmosphere reflects sunlight, making the planet appear very bright to us viewers, but it also insulates it, retaining heat like a greenhouse does: On average, the temperature on Venus is nearly 900°F. The Soviet space program landed spacecraft on Venus in 1975 and 1982. Before being destroyed by the intense heat, the landers transmitted photos showing a barren, rocky surface.

### **OTHER HIGHLIGHTS**

**A**fter viewing Mercury and Venus during twilight, wait for darkness so that you can enjoy the many other lovely sights in the March sky. At the top center of the map is the pentagon of Auriga, the Charioteer, anchored by Capella, the sixth brightest star in the sky. The leftmost corner of Auriga connects to Taurus, the Bull, home of reddish Aldebaran, the 14th brightest star, and the Hyades star cluster. To the right of and below the Hyades lie the Pleiades, a compact star cluster known as the Seven Sisters. If you have clear skies and very sharp vision, you might see all seven of the Sisters! —*Jeff DeTray*

FOOD



# St. Patrick's Day Recipes

The luck of the Irish is coming your way this March 17, and with it, scrumptious recipes! Our *Old Farmer's Almanac* archive is full of Irish recipes passed down across many generations. Enjoy one or all of them and find more on our St. Patrick's Day page at [Almanac.com](https://www.almanac.com).

PHOTO: LAURI PATTERSON/GETTY IMAGES

FOOD



TAP FOR  
RECIPE

# Irish Beef Stew

## IRISH BEEF STEW

2 pounds lean stew beef or chuck, in 2-inch chunks

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

all-purpose flour, for dredging

2 tablespoons bacon drippings or vegetable oil

2 onions, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

6 to 8 carrots, peeled and sliced

2 to 3 potatoes, peeled and cut into cubes

2 to 3 turnips, peeled and cut into cubes

1 cup Guinness stout

1 cup beef broth

fresh parsley, for garnish

Season beef with salt and pepper, then toss in flour until well coated.

In a Dutch oven over medium-high heat, warm drippings, then brown beef in two batches. When all pieces are browned, remove beef from pan and set aside. Add onions and garlic to the Dutch oven and turn heat down to medium. Cook until onions are translucent. Return beef to Dutch oven and add carrots, potatoes, turnips, stout, and broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer. Cover and cook for 2 hours, or until beef is tender.

Garnish with fresh parsley.

**Makes 6 to 8 servings.**



SHARE  
THIS  
RECIPE

# Irish Soda Bread



 TAP FOR RECIPE

## IRISH SODA BREAD

This recipe comes from our latest cookbook, *The Old Farmer's Almanac Readers' Best Recipes*.

- 1 cup golden raisins or your preference**
- 1 shot or 3 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon Irish whiskey or any dark liquor**
- 4 cups all-purpose flour**
- 1/4 cup sugar**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- 1 teaspoon baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 2 eggs**
- 2 cups buttermilk**
- 1 tablespoon melted butter**
- 1 to 2 tablespoons caraway seeds (optional)**

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease and lightly flour a loaf or cake pan. If using cast iron, put into cold oven and preheat as oven warms. Grease with butter before putting dough into it.

In a bowl, combine raisins and whiskey, set aside to soak, and stir occasionally.

In a separate bowl, mix together flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt.

In another bowl, beat together eggs and buttermilk. Add to flour mixture and stir to blend. Add butter, raisins and whiskey, and caraway seeds (if using) and stir.

Pour into prepared pan, smooth to level dough, and bury raisins as much as possible.

Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Or, out of pan, check to see if bottom is golden brown. Or tap bread: Hollow sound indicates that bread is done.

**Makes 1 loaf.**

SHARE  
THIS  
RECIPE

 TAP FOR RECIPE

# Luck of the Irish Peppermint Brownies

## LUCK OF THE IRISH PEPPERMINT BROWNIES

### BROWNIES:

4 ounces unsweetened chocolate

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter

2 cups sugar

4 eggs, beaten

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup sifted all-purpose flour

### TOPPING:

1 container (16 ounces) cream cheese frosting

1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract, or more to taste

3 to 4 drops green food coloring

5 ounces semisweet chocolate

1/2 cup heavy cream or milk

Preheat oven to 325°F. Grease a 9x9-inch baking dish.

*For brownies:* In a double boiler over not-quite-simmering water, melt chocolate and butter and stir until smooth.

Cool slightly. Stir in sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating thoroughly. Stir in vanilla, then flour. Spread in prepared pan and bake for 40 minutes. Cool in the pan.

*For topping:* Put cream cheese frosting into a bowl and add peppermint extract and food coloring. Spread evenly over cooled brownies.

In a pan over low heat, melt chocolate with heavy cream. Let cool slightly and drizzle or spread evenly over the frosting.

Let chocolate set up, at room temperature, and then cut brownies into squares.

**Makes 16 brownies.**

SHARE  
THIS  
RECIPE



Barker's  
Farm

# Tales From America's Oldest Businesses

... in their own words

## AMUSEMENT



Barker's Farm

### A GROWING CONCERN

Barker's Farm, North Andover, Massachusetts

**E**stablished in 1642, this farm has been run by 10 generations of the Barker family, including most recently George and Dorothea Barker and their adult daughters, Dianne, Laurie, Beth, and Karen. At one time, the farm encompassed over 400 acres; about 110 remain.

The family has adapted

to changing times. "One of the first things I gave up was potatoes," says George. It seems that they weren't a good crop for the hired high school boys to harvest. "It wasn't difficult [work]," he says. "It's just that the little potatoes are nice to throw when the boss isn't looking."

Another time, he says, "I had cows and grew vegetables, specializing in dairy and sweet corn. Then a man who worked

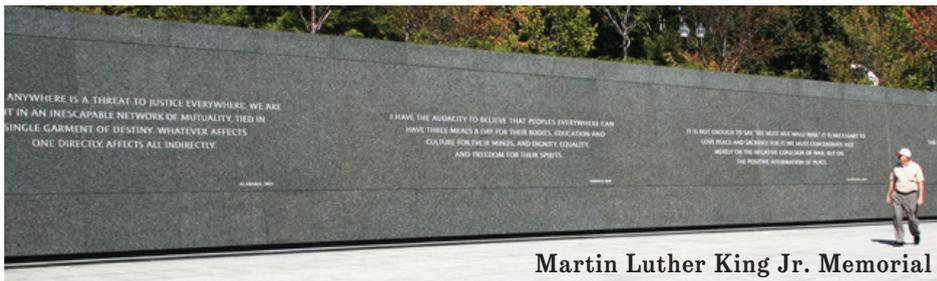
for me for 40 years told me, 'George, I don't want to milk cows anymore.' So it was an easy choice to give up the cows rather than him."

### LAST WORDS

The John Stevens Shop, Newport, Rhode Island

**F**ounded in 1705, The John Stevens Shop engraves stone. In 1927, artist and stone carver John Howard Benson bought the shop from the Stevens family, later passing it on to his son, who in turn passed it onto his son, current owner Nicholas Benson.

"It's so nice to go out to the Common Burying Ground and look at all the old colonial stones that came out of our shop," says Nick, who got involved in the business



Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial

## AMUSEMENT



at age 15.

More recently, the Bensons have inscribed landmarks such as the John F. Kennedy Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, the Boston Public Library, the National Gallery of Art, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial, the World War II Memorial, and the National Cathedral.

Although Nick draws letters by hand with a broad-edge brush just as ancient Roman craftsmen once did, he uses a computer to plan large projects and create typefaces.

“Oftentimes, people think of the shop as this sort of business that’s frozen in amber,” observes Nick. “It

becomes more and more difficult for people to understand the merit of what we do. That being said, because our craft is dying off at such a rapid rate, people are even more impressed.”

### INN STYLE

Seaside Inn, Kennebunk Beach, Maine

**T**rish Mason’s family has been running the Seaside Inn since 1756, when Jedidiah Gooch, her great-great-great-great-great-grandfather bought the business from a cousin. In the 1880s, Isaac Gooch built a hotel.

Change has not come easy for all generations. “During Isaac’s time, indoor plumbing became

available,” says Trish, “but his wife was disgusted by the idea of people doing *that* inside the home and she forbade it. It wasn’t until her death that a ‘tower of toilets’ was added onto the side of the hotel, giving each floor a bath to share.”

### THE SPIRITS OF AMERICA

Laird & Company,  
Scobeyville, New Jersey

**W**hen William Laird emigrated from Scotland to America in 1698, he began making applejack for family and friends. In 1780, his grandson Robert Laird formally established in Scobeyville, New Jersey, what would become America’s first

## AMUSEMENT



commercial distillery. Today, Larrie Laird is president and CEO.

Sometime before 1760, farmer George Washington wrote to the Laird family asking for their applejack recipe. During the Revolution, soldier Robert Laird kept General Washington's troops supplied with "cyder spirits." Later, the future president dined at the Laird home.

Changing times required changes to the business. "Prohibition was a big challenge for us," says Lisa Laird Dunn, executive vice president. The company has adjusted by producing sweet cider, applesauce, and federally

licensed brandy used for "medicinal purposes."

### LIVING HISTORY Shirley Plantation, Charles City, Virginia

**T**welve generations of one family have been running Virginia's first plantation since its founding in 1613. Edward Hill established a farm on the Virginia frontier in 1638. The "Great House" was built between 1723 and 1738 for Edward's great-granddaughter, Elizabeth, who married John Carter.

In the 1950s, estate taxes threatened to make it impossible to pass on the property to the next generation. "My father's response was to open the manor to visitors, lease

out sand mining on a portion of the property, and fight the state's evaluation of the estate," says Charles Carter. "He was successful on all fronts."

Today, Charles and his wife Lauren live in the Great House, where visitors are welcome for tours. With Charles's brother Randy, the couple oversees the 700-acre property and family business.

"I wanted to be a farmer just like my father and his father and on back into time," Charles says. He has the generations on record. "There are 18,000 family documents from the 1600s to the early 20th century on loan to a library for safekeeping and academic research."

—Alice Cary



GARDENING



# A Thing or Two About Onions

*As the days grow longer, many gardeners' thoughts turn to this sunlight-loving vegetable.*



## 'WALLA WALLA' PRODUCES HUGE ONIONS.

**E**ven though onions are cheap enough to buy by the bagful, for the greatest variety, you have to grow your own—and it's not difficult to do.

A member of the lily family, the onion (*Allium cepa*) comes in many shapes, sizes, colors, flavors, and textures. Different varieties of onion have been bred for different areas of the country and length-of-day conditions. To figure out whether you should grow long-day or short-day onions,

imagine a line running across the United States from the border between North Carolina and Virginia to San Francisco (at roughly 36 degrees northern latitude). If you live north of that line, plant long-day types; south of that line, plant short-day onions.

**In the North:** 'Walla Walla' (an heirloom originally brought to this country 100 years ago by a Corsican settler in Washington state's Walla Walla Valley) and 'Ailsa Craig' produce huge onions. 'Southport Red

Globe' and 'Red Florence' are good reds. Some reliable storage onions are 'Copra,' 'Yellow Globe,' and 'Sweet Sandwich,' which gets sweeter the longer it is stored. 'Norstar' and 'Buffalo' are extra-early producers, but they need to be eaten by late December because they will not last.

**In the South:** If you want to grow sweet, Vidalia-type onions, look for the seeds of 'Hybrid Yellow Granex.' Other good choices are 'Texas 1015-Y Supersweet,' a jumbo globe that stores



## ONION SETS WILL BECOME FULL-SIZE IN ABOUT 14 WEEKS.

well; ‘Red Burgundy’; ‘Southern Belle’; and the mild ‘Crystal Wax White Bermuda’.

**Everywhere:** Day-neutral, or intermediate, onions do not care about the length of day and will produce an excellent crop anywhere. ‘Super Star’ is a mild, white onion that produces large, sweet bulbs weighing up to a pound each! ‘Candy’ is one of the golden onions. Its flavor is sharp but sweet, and the thick-fleshed, jumbo-size bulbs

store well. ‘Red Stockton’ forms a large, globe-shape onion with red-ringed, white flesh.

### **SETS, SEEDS, OR PLANTS?**

Determining whether to start with sets, seeds, or plants depends somewhat on what is available to you. Here’s a primer:

Onion sets are tiny onions that will become full-size onions in about 14 weeks. Look for small sets no bigger than three-quarters of an inch in

diameter. Larger ones often produce onions with thick necks that tend to go to seed. The choice of varieties is limited; two common ones are ‘Stuttgarter’, a flavorful, semiflat, yellow onion that grows and stores well, and ‘Ebenezer’.

Onions grown from seed keep well and are less likely to go to seed. Here you also get the widest range of varieties: red, yellow, or white; round, flat, or long; mild and sweet or pungent



## ONIONS GROW BEST IF PLANTED WHERE LETTUCE GREW THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

and tangy. Onion seeds should be started indoors, as they need soil temperatures above 50°F to germinate.

Onion plants are limited to the offerings at your local gardening center and some mail-order services.

### **GIVE THEM A GOOD START**

Onions like lots of sunshine and prefer sweet, fertile soil, with near-neutral pH. (The sulfur that gives onions

their bite comes from sulfur in the soil.) They grow best if planted where lettuce or squash grew the previous year and fare poorly if they follow a cole crop, such as cabbage or broccoli.

Since onions are shallow-rooted plants, keep them well weeded and mulch them to keep the soil moist and cool. To control onion root maggots, place floating row covers over the sets and plants immediately after planting.

Onions are sensitive to temperature and to the amount of daylight that they receive. Cool weather encourages heavy leaf growth, so start your onions early. (Young onions will not be harmed by light frost, and April snow is sometimes referred to as “onion snow” because it can arrive after onions have been planted.)

Leaf production stops and bulbs begin to form in the spring when there are about 12 hours or



## ONIONS WILL KEEP BETTER IF YOU ALLOW THE SKIN TO TOUGHEN UP.

more of daylight. The more lush the top growth is at that time, the bigger the bulbs will be.

### HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN TO HARVEST?

When the onions' tops begin to dry out and fall over, push them all over and withhold water for about 1 week. Pull the onions and spread them out in the sun to allow the foliage to dry and the skin to toughen up, and they will keep better. If it is rainy, let them dry in a

protected place such as a shed, garage, or barn.

Once cured, they can be hung in a mesh bag, spread no more than two deep in a box, or braided and hung in a cool (40° to 60°F), dry, well-ventilated area. Check periodically for sprouting or rotting onions and remove them. Do not store them in the refrigerator; it is too damp.

Sweet onions do not keep well because they have a high water content. To avoid

bruising, store them so that they don't touch each other. One way to do this is to use clean old panty hose. Slip in the onions one at a time, tying a knot between each one. Hang them in a cool, dry place.

In the Middle Ages, it was believed that onion juice could cure baldness, snakebite, and rabies. We can't vouch for this, but we can promise that onions will add flavor to your food.

—Robin Sweetser

# Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)  
 Servings Per Container About 8

**Amount Per Serving**

**Calories** 230                      Calories from Fat 72

**% Daily Value\***

<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>12%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>12%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>16%</b>
Sugars 1g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin A	10%
Vitamin C	8%
Calcium	20%
Iron	45%

\* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.  
 Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on  
 your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

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**Amount per serving**

**Calories**                      **230**

**% Daily Value\***

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Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	

Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in  
 a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories  
 a day is used for general nutrition advice.

# How to Decode Food Labels

# ALL NATURAL! HIGH-FIBER! MULTIGRAIN! ONLY 2 GRAMS OF FAT PER SERVING! CONTAINS REAL FRUIT!

**F**ood marketers have taken full advantage of Americans' growing interest in the connection between good nutrition and good health. To make food seem healthy, they pile on words chosen for their emotional appeal.

But some of the most common food descriptors don't carry any real meaning. Others falsely imply health benefits or intentionally mislead consumers into believing that a product is a healthy (or healthier) choice. Here are a few of the most common.

- **Natural:** Except for meat and poultry

products, this popular term isn't regulated. It just implies that the product and all of its ingredients at some point originated in nature.

- **Fat-free; sugar-free:** Just because a product is genuinely fat-free or sugar-free doesn't mean that it's lower in calories or healthier.

- **Good source of fiber:** Unlike fiber-rich, whole, unprocessed grains, fruit, vegetables, and legumes, many processed food products (including candy bars) contain added "functional fibers," some of which are synthetic and others of which are extracted

from foods. So far, there's been no proof that these added fibers offer the same health benefits as the fiber that you get from eating whole, unprocessed, plant foods.

- **Contains; made with; made with real:** So, a product contains real fruit or is made with whole grains or real butter. But how much of these does it contain? The manufacturer may have shaken a bit of whole wheat flour over a vat of dough or blessed the granola bar with a whisper of apple concentrate. Look for the ingredient list on the package. The ingredients

# YOUR PRODUCT MAY CONTAIN TWICE AS MUCH SUGAR.

in a food product must be listed in descending order of predominance by weight. Your product may contain twice as much sugar as whole grains, and the “real fruit” may not be from the bowl of berries and grapes on the package but from a dab of apple concentrate that appears way down on the ingredients list.

- **Multigrain:** Unless the label on a flour-based product says “100% whole grain,” words such as “multigrain,” “stone-ground,” even “organic” probably mean that the product is made from all or mostly refined flours, which have had the nutritious germ and bran removed.

- **Contains no:** For example, many products

now advertise themselves as containing no high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). But substituting cane sugar or some other caloric sweetener doesn’t make the product healthier. The calories from the added sweetener still add up and may contribute to the health problems associated with obesity and being overweight.

- **Serving:** You often see ingredients listed as “per serving” on a label. But really, who eats only half a cup of ice cream or a teaspoon of salad dressing? Read the product’s nutrition label to see how much fat (or sugar, sodium, etc.) you’ll get in the amount of the product that you actually eat.

- **Lightly sweetened:** “Reduced sugar,” “no added sugar,” and “sugar-free” have legal definitions, but “lightly sweetened” doesn’t. You’ll see this on boxed cereals and beverages, any of which may contain more sugar than you’d consider “light” sweetening.

On the other hand, the word “organic” has a strict, highly regulated meaning. The USDA Organic label indicates that the food has met strict standards of production and (if applicable) processing. The standards prohibit use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering.

On the USDA’s organic

# MAKING MEALS FROM SCRATCH REALLY DOESN'T TAKE THAT MUCH MORE TIME.

consumer-information page, you can also learn the meanings of various other terms such as “free-range,” “cage-free,” and “grass-fed.”

## **A FEW TAKE-AWAYS**

- **Choose real, unprocessed food.** As long as you follow good food-safety practices, you won't go wrong with fresh fruit and vegetables, eggs from the shell, unprocessed poultry and meats, wild-caught fish, whole grains and whole-grain flours, and dry beans and lentils.
- **Read before you buy/eat.** Learn to read and understand nutrition labels and ingredient labels. Government regulations specify what must appear on

these labels, although there's huge room for improvement.

- **Choose grain-based products promoted as “100% whole grain.”**

Words such as “stone-ground,” “100% wheat,” “unbleached,” “enriched,” and “multigrain” often describe products made with refined flours. If the first ingredient listed on the label is 100% whole wheat, rye, corn, etc., this assures you that the product contains only whole grain(s).

- **Cook from scratch.**

With a little extra planning, making meals from scratch really doesn't take that much more time. Think simple: Whole-grain toast, eggs, and fresh fruit make breakfast.

A bowl of salad greens topped with leftover chicken for lunch. A pan-grilled fish with steamed vegetables for supper. Fresh fruit and a cube of your favorite cheese for dessert.

- **Want goodies? Make your own.** Even if you're using highly refined white flour and sugar, your homemade goodies will contain fewer or no artificial ingredients, and you'll be able to avoid the plethora of synthetic ingredients, trans fats, and excess salt/sugars/fats found in most commercial snack and dessert products.

—Margaret Boyles



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



SNOW IN MARCH IS BAD FOR FRUIT AND GRAPE VINE.

# 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.

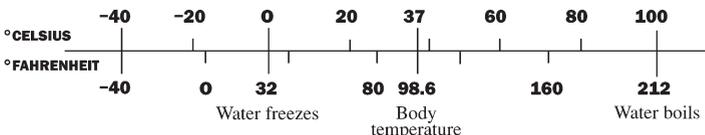


TAP TO FIND OUT THE WEATHER HISTORY OF THE DAY



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

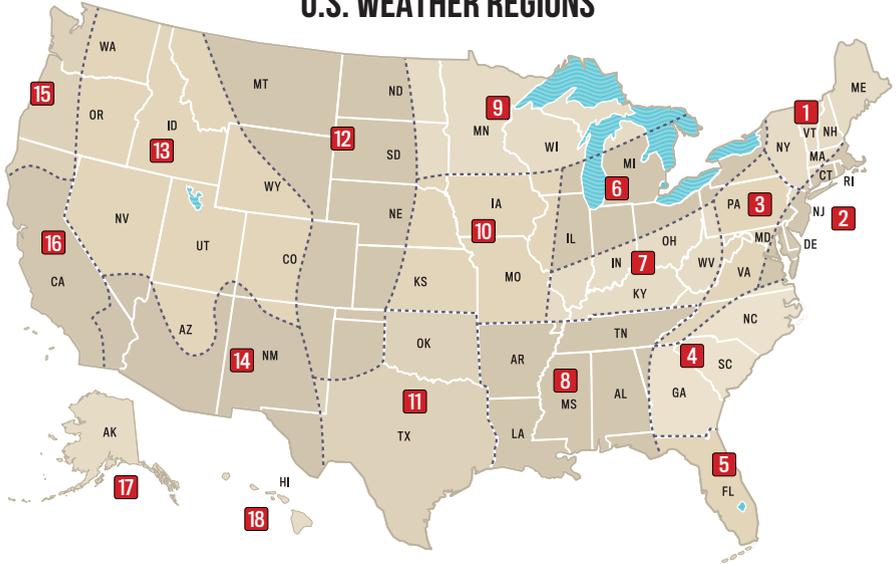
## CELSIUS-FAHRENHEIT TABLE



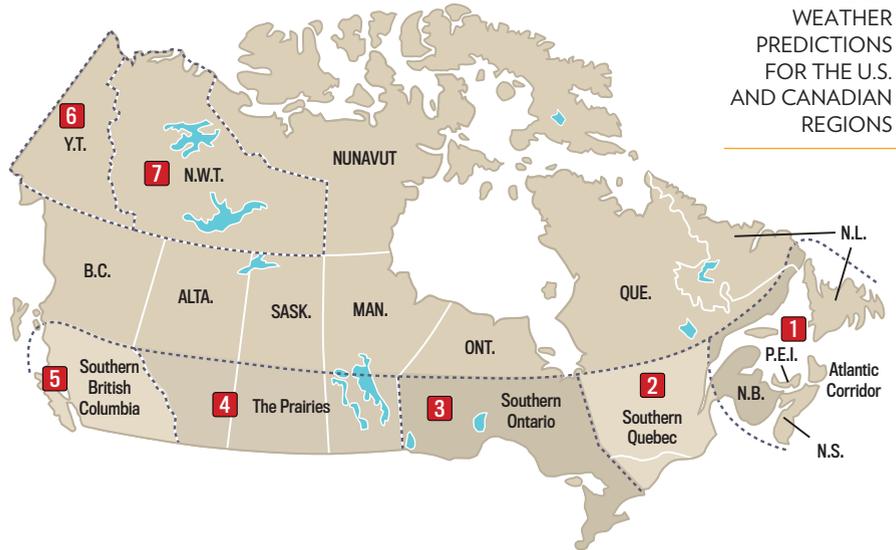


# WEATHER FORECASTS

## U.S. WEATHER REGIONS



## CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS



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



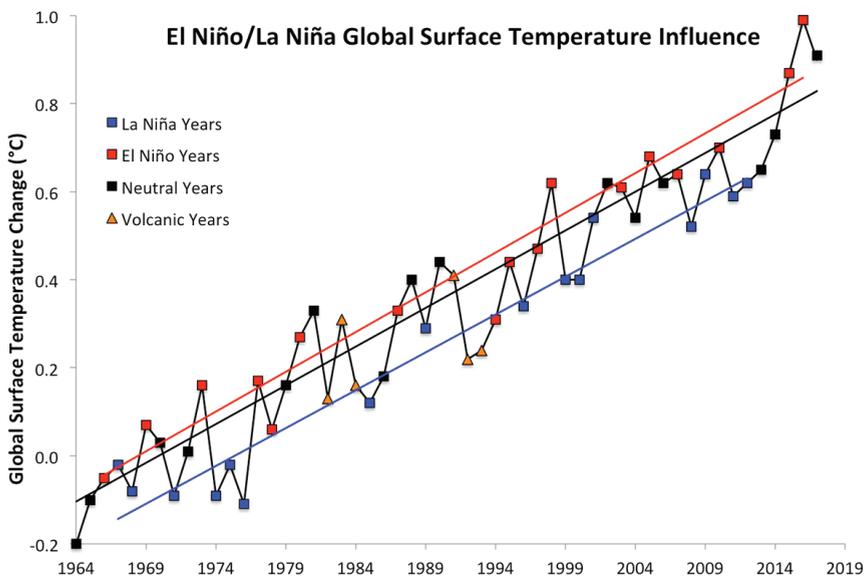


Fig. 1. Global surface temperatures, 1964–2017.

## FEELING THE HEAT?

*With 2017 having been one of the warmest years in history, what can we expect in 2018?*

According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), 2017 was the second warmest year in surface temperatures averaged across the entire Earth since global estimates began in 1880.

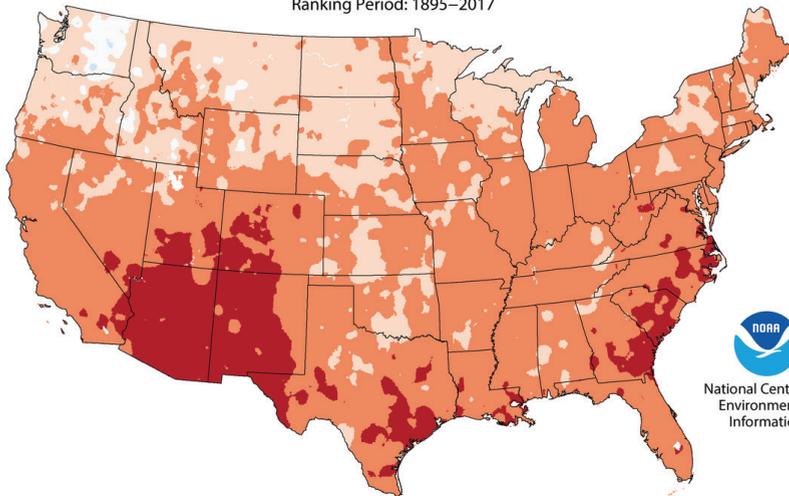
The only warmer year on record was 2016, when temperatures were bolstered by an El Niño, which typically causes warming effects around the globe due to the warmer water in the tropical Pacific Ocean. Thus, 2017 was the warmest year without an El Niño event (see Fig. 1).

Earth's average temperatures in 2017 were 1.62 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the 1951–to–1980 mean, according to NASA scientists. The year continued a decades-long warming trend around the globe, in which 17 of the 18 warmest

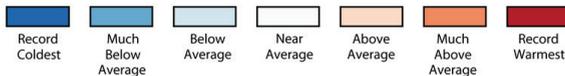
## Mean Temperature Percentiles

January–December 2017

Ranking Period: 1895–2017



National Centers for  
Environmental  
Information



Created: Thu Jan 04 2018

Data Source: 5km Gridded Dataset (nClimGrid)

Fig. 2. U.S. mean temperature percentiles, 2017.

years have now occurred since 2001. The only one of the 18 warmest years that occurred in the 20th century was during the El Niño event of 1998.

Scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) produced a separate, independent analysis that concluded that 2017 was the third warmest year of record across Earth. Minor differences between the NOAA and NASA estimates are due to different methods used for analyzing the temperature data. Both reports found that the five warmest years on record have all taken place since 2010.

The NOAA report also found that 2017 was the third warmest year on record for the 48 contiguous United States, with an average annual temperature that was 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit above the 20th-century average. This was slightly cooler than 2012 and 2016, but it marks the 21st consecutive warmer-than-



average year for the country.

Every one of the contiguous 48 states had above-normal temperatures in 2017 (see *Fig. 2*). For five states—Arizona, Georgia, New Mexico, North Carolina, and South Carolina—2017 was the warmest year on record. In 32 additional states, including Alaska, 2017 ranked among the 10 warmest years since 1895. This is the third consecutive year in which every state across the lower 48 states has had an above-average annual temperature.

Although 2018 got off to a cold start in many places, we expect that 2018 overall will continue the warm trend, with above-normal temperatures expected, on average, during the coming year across both the United States and Canada.

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



# HUMOR ME

## GRINS AND GROANS FROM THE ALMANAC ARCHIVES



### MISTAKEN IDENTITY

He was scorching through the countryside at a mile-a-minute clip. Around a bend he sped, straight into a bunch of fowls, and a terrible clucking told him that something was wrong.

He pulled up and

glanced back. Two birds lay dead in the road; two others were fleeing, squawking, back home; and a burly man in overalls was striding angrily toward the automobile.

“That’s be 12 dollars—3 dollars apiece for the four,”

said the man.

“Four?!” gasped the motorist. “But I only killed two.”

“That’s right,” agreed the owner, “but them other two will never lay a blessed egg after this.”

“I’m sorry,” said the motorist, as he handed over the money. “Due to the fright, I suppose.”

The farmer shook his head as he pushed the bills into his pocket and started away.

“Partly fright,” he agreed slowly, “but mainly because they ain’t hens!”

### Don’t Forget Me!

The sons of the emperor of Austria



got into a quarrel. In the height of passion, one of them said to the other, "You are the greatest fool in Vienna!"

Highly offended by their having the audacity to argue in his presence, the emperor rebuked them: "You forget that I am present!"



### UNANCHORED

"The captain says we can't do any fishing here because there's no holding ground for the anchor, and it makes him cross."

"Cantankerous, I should say."

### That Settles It

**Suitor:** "Sir, I assure you, I would be happy to marry your daughter even if she were as poor as a church mouse."

**Father:** "That settles it, then. I don't want a fool like you in the family."

### AXED

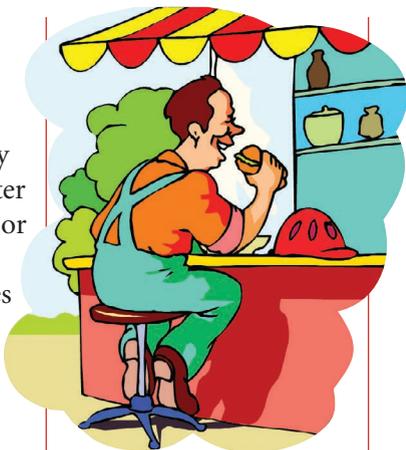
"Our guides are very handy with the axe."

"Yes, they make the fir fly."

### Counting Your Chickens

"If there were 20 chickens in the coop," said the teacher, "and two were missing one morning, how many would you have?"

"Well," answered her pupil, "if they were mine in the first place, I'd have 18. If they weren't, I'd have 2."



### OUTDOOR DINING

"I just saw Johnson at a two-wheeled cart down the street, munching on a sandwich."

"Dining à la cart, as it were."

### Chew on This

"Yes, chewing slowly reduced my weight, but I didn't have enough time to spend doing it. Now, since I've taken up eating fast again, my girth has increased 2 inches!"

"Seems to be a case of haste makes waist."



# WHAT'S NEXT



## GARDENING

An “aye” for  
potatoes



## CALENDAR

Monthly Muse, April  
birthdays, National Humor  
Month, first astronauts



## LIVING NATURALLY

Get Moving and  
Get Outside!



## HISTORY

The Evolution of  
the Barn



## FOOD

Fun and Flavorful  
Chicken 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 April *EXTRA!*

**CELEBRATING THE ALMANAC'S 226TH YEAR!**