

## How the astrological signs of the zodiac influence gardening by the Moon

The Moon moves through the signs of the Zodiac in the heavens every couple of days. Different signs are associated with an element of earth, air, fire or water. When the Moon is in a water sign it is the most fertile time for planting. Different types of plants have favorite signs too, such as leafy plants prefer the water signs. The fertile water signs are Cancer, Pisces, and Scorpio, and are best for planting above ground, leafy annuals.

### Planting by the Signs

The Earth signs, Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, are also very fertile and good for planting. The root is the part of the plant associated with earth signs, so it is especially good for planting root crops, or for transplanting to encourage root development.

Air signs work well for some plants, but are generally barren and dry. Libra is an exception to that rule, and is semi-fertile and good for blooming flowers and herbs. Flowers are the part of the plant associated with air signs. Melons like Gemini, and onions respond well in Aquarius. When the Moon is in an air sign it is a good time to harvest and cultivate.

The fire signs of Aries, Leo and Sagittarius are very barren and dry, but may be used for crops grown for their seed. Because it is barren, Leo is a good sign for weeding and cultivation, so seeds won't sprout. It is also good to harvest during a fire sign.

Some plants have better results with a certain sign or element.

Other garden chores have preferences for the sign also, such as pruning in Scorpio, weeding in Leo. Harvesting in the dry air and fire signs in the fourth quarter helps preserve fruit and vegetables for storage.

See this chart for specifics.



**Aries- A fire sign. Barren and dry.** Harvest root and fruit for storage. Cultivate, destroy weeds and pests.



**Taurus- An earth sign. Productive and moist.** Second best for planting and transplanting. Good for root crops and potatoes, especially when hardiness is important. Also a good sign for leafy vegetables such as lettuce, cabbage and spinach.



**Gemini- An air sign. Barren and dry.** Harvest root and fruit for storage. Cultivate, destroy weeds and pests. Melon seeds respond well in this sign.



**Cancer- A water sign. Very fruitful and moist.** The best sign for all planting and transplanting. Also good for grafting, and irrigation.



**Leo- A fire sign. Very barren and dry.** Cultivate, harvest root and fruit for storage. An excellent time to destroy weeds and pests in the fourth quarter.



**Virgo- An earth sign. Barren and moist.**Some flowers and vines are favored by it. Cultivate and destroy weeds and pests.



**Libra- An air signs. Semi-fruitful and moist.** Best sign for planting beautiful and fragrant flowers, vines and herbs. Good for planting pulpy stems like kohlrabi, and root crops.



**Scorpio- A water sign. Very fruitful and moist.** Best planting sign for sturdy plants and vines. Tomatoes like to be transplanted in Scorpio, and it is a good sign for corn and squash. Graft or prune in the third and fourth quarter to retard growth and promote better fruit. A good sign for irrigation and transplanting.



**Sagittarius- A fire sign. Barren and dry.**Harvest roots and onions for storage, and plant onion sets and fruit trees. A good sign in which to cultivate the soil.



**Capricorn- An earth sign. Productive and dry.** Good for planting potatoes and other root crops, and for encouraging strong hardy growth. Good for grafting, and pruning to promote healing, and applying organic fertilizer.



**Aquarius- An air sign. Barren and dry.**Harvest root and fruit for storage. Cultivate, destroy weeds and pests. Good for planting onion sets.



**Pisces- A water sign. Very productive and moist.** Second best sign for planting and transplanting. Especially good for root growth and irrigation.

## The Phases of the Moon

The moon has four phases or quarters lasting about seven days each. The first two quarters are during the waxing or increasing light, between the new and the full moon. The third and fourth quarters are after the full moon when the light is waning, or decreasing.

## Gravitational pull influences moisture in soil

Planting by the moon is an idea as old as agriculture, based both in folklore and superstition, but there are scientific ideas to back it up. The Earth is in a large gravitational field, influenced by both the sun and moon. The tides are highest at the time of the new and the full moon, when sun and moon are lined up with earth. Just as the moon pulls the tides in the oceans, it also pulls upon the subtle bodies of water, causing moisture to rise in the earth, which encourages growth. The highest amount of moisture is in the soil at this time, and tests have proven that seeds will absorb the most water at the time of the full moon.

At the **new moon**, the lunar gravity pulls water up, and causes the seeds to swell and burst. This factor, coupled with the increasing moonlight creates **balanced root and leaf growth**. This is the best time for planting above ground annual crops that produce their seeds outside the fruit. Examples are lettuce, spinach, celery, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and grain crops. Cucumbers like this phase also, even though they are an exception to that rule.



In the **second quarter** the gravitational pull is less, but the moonlight is strong, creating **strong leaf growth**. It is generally a good time for planting, especially two days before the full moon. The types of crops that prefer the second quarter are annuals that produce above ground, but their seeds form inside the fruit, such as beans, melons, peas, peppers, squash, and tomatoes. Mow lawns in the first or second quarter to increase growth.



After the **full moon**, as the moon wanes, the energy is drawing down. The gravitation pull is high, creating more moisture in the soil, but the moonlight is decreasing, putting energy into the roots. This is a favorable time for planting **root crops**, including beets, carrots, onions, potatoes, and peanuts. It is also good for perennials, biennials, bulbs and transplanting because of the **active root growth**. Pruning is best done in the third quarter, in the sign of Scorpio.



In the **fourth quarter** there is decreased gravitational pull and moonlight, and it is considered a **resting period**. This is also the best time to cultivate, harvest, transplant and prune. Mow lawns in the third or fourth quarter to retard growth.

### How does lunar planting work?



Isaac Newton established the laws of gravity, which proves the tides are affected by the **gravitational pull of the moon**. The pull of the moon is stronger than the sun because, even though the sun is larger, the moon is closer to the earth. The strongest effect is felt when the moon and sun pull from the opposite sides of the earth, at the full moon phase, although it also creates high tides when they are on the same side (at the new moon) as well.

“The gravitation of the passing moon pulls the nearest body of water a little away from the solid mass of earth beneath it, and at the same time pulls the earth a little away from the water on the farthest side. In this manner the moon sets up two tidal bulges on opposite sides of the earth.”

These same forces affect the water content of the soil, creating **more moisture in the soil at the time of the new and full moon**. This increased moisture encourages the seeds to sprout and grow.

Dr. Frank Brown of Northwestern University performed research over a ten-year period of time, keeping meticulous records of his results. He found that **plants absorbed more water at the time of the full moon**. He conducted his experiments in a laboratory without direct contact from the moon, yet he found that they were still influenced by it. Rudolf Steiner was the founder of the anthroposophical movement, which sees a correlation between science, nature, universal laws and spiritual concerns. Out of this movement the Biodynamic methods of planting were developed. He established **a relationship between the elements of earth, air, fire, or water that corresponded to specific parts of the plants**. Earth corresponds to root, water to leaf growth, fire to seed production, and air corresponds to flowers. Hence, when planting crops for their fleshy roots, you would plant them in an earth sign, and so forth.

Biodynamic methods are based on the heliocentric, or astronomical, position of the moon. This system is more complicated and also takes into consideration eclipses, trine, apogee and perigee as well as descending and ascending moons. (The Gardening by the Moon Calendar is based on the geocentric and astrological calculations.)

John Jeavons, author of "How to grow more vegetables..." adds the **influence of the increasing or decreasing moonlight** on the growth of plants. When the moon is in its waxing phases the "increasing amount of moonlight stimulates leaf growth", and "as the moonlight decreases the above ground leaf growth slows down. The root is stimulated again." Further tests have been conducted, most notably by Frau Dr. Kolisko in Germany in 1939, and by Maria Thun in 1956. They primarily experimented with root crops, showing the effect of lunar phases on seed germination. They found maximum germination on the days before the Full moon. Crop yields were reported by weight.

Thun was surprised to discover that the signs of the zodiac played its part as well. Thun experimented with a variety of crops: carrots and parsnips represented root crops; lettuce, spinach and corn salad as leaf types; beans, peas, cucumbers and tomatoes as fruit seed types; zinnias, snapdragons and asters were air crops. Crops responded well when planted in the appropriate sign for their type of plant. There were some exceptions, however. Some plants seemed to favor signs other than what would appear to be logical; for instance the brassica family, (broccoli, cauliflower, etc.) which one might consider flowering types, seemed to favor water signs. Cucumbers sown on leaf days had strong leafy growth, but did not produce many flowers. Their tests also seemed to indicate that **responses to lunar planting were heightened when planted in organic soil** that had not been treated with chemical fertilizer or pesticides. Ute York, in her book "Living by the Moon" says "The old-time gardeners say, "With the waxing of the moon, the earth exhales." When the sap in the plants rise, the force first goes into the growth above ground. Thus, you should do all activities with plants that bear fruit above ground during a waxing moon. With the waning of the moon, the earth inhales. Then, the sap primarily goes down toward the roots. Thus, the waning moon is a good time for pruning, multiplying, fertilizing, watering, harvesting, and controlling parasites and weeds"

Plants sown in the correct combination of the best lunar phase and sign show increased vigor, due to having all the best influences. They are growing at an optimum rate and are not as prone to setbacks

that would affect less healthy plants. Harvests are often quicker, larger and crops don't go to seed as fast.