

GARDENING BY THE MOON



2020

By Elaine H. Peterson

Who hasn't found oneself wishing that there were a few more hours in the day, a few more days in the month, a longer weekend every weekend so that there would be more time for weeding, pruning and the countless other garden chores that face us year round? And who hasn't wished that the energy we had at 25 was still with us at age 50, so that those chores wouldn't take twice as long as they used to take?

I've turned to the moon for help - or more correctly stated, to the relationship between the sun, moon and earth for help, in easing the load of gardening chores. As a practicing astrologer, I'd always planted my vegetables and flowers according to the sign and phase of the moon. But what about all the other aspects of gardening, could the moon tell me when best to undertake other duties as well? To find out I returned to the knowledge of the ancients, ably rewritten by some contemporary authors.

In The Art of Timing Johanna Paungger (whose parents and ancestors were Tyrolean farmers) and Thomas Poppe make a serious case for the benefits of living by lunar cycles in all of our ordinary daily pursuits and offer many examples for gardening. For instance, they suggest that **weeding** be done when the moon is on the wane, preferably in the sign of Capricorn. I decided to give it a try with some very unyielding viburnum suckers that were defeating me with their tenacity. Much to my delight they came out with barely any effort whereas two weeks earlier, I couldn't budge them! I was so excited by this that I moved on to the maple seedlings and the bittersweet vines, pulling out sturdily rooted ones from hard soil with complete ease. In the space of an afternoon I was able to weed happily what otherwise would have taken days of resentful effort!

On further reading I found that you might easily harm or kill a tree or shrub by **pruning** it on the full moon when its sap is most "up." Apparently the proper time to prune anything is when the moon is waning, just before new moon being the best time, as the sap has descended then and the least stress will be caused to the plant. In addition, they go further and highly recommend that sickly or diseased trees be tipped or pruned just before or on new moon for full recovery to a healthy tree. I would add that removal of invasives be done at full moon for greatest effectiveness in eradication.

Irrigation and fertilization also have their own proper times for application according to nature's forces. Apparently in former times, when we humans lived in closer agricultural relationship to the earth, it was well known that the earth absorbs water much more readily when the moon is waning than when it is waxing. Thus it is important not to fertilize when the moon is waxing since the soil will not be able to take up the nutrients easily with the result that they will likely run off into streams, estuaries, ponds and lakes, or find their way into the ground water, risking contamination. If, however, one fertilizes after the full moon, the soil and plant roots will absorb the water and the fertilizer carried with it, the plants will be well nourished, and the surrounding waters clean. This also helps to explain why weeding is easier when the moon is waning - the soil is more moist. (These rules apply to indoor plants as well.)

April is perhaps the most important month in the garden in our area. It certainly is one of the busiest. Restored by the winter rest period we are eager to plant seeds, dig and divide perennials, transplant new plants and cuttings and plant new trees and shrubs. Naturally we hope for the best conditions in which to get all these **new plantings** off to a good start. Perhaps the single most important consideration is for root growth to be optimal. So what does moon lore have to say about the right timing for these activities?

In general, flower and vegetable **seeds** are best sown according to whether the plants they produce will be mostly above ground or below ground. The above ground type, such as peas and cucumbers, should be sown when the moon is waxing and energy is moving up and out. Below ground plants such as carrots and potatoes should be planted when the moon is waning and energies are moving downward. The astrological sign the moon occupies is also important for successful timing and in general one wants to plant when the moon is in a water sign – Cancer, Scorpio or Pisces. Ornamental flowers can also be sown when the moon is in Venus-ruled Libra for especially beautiful plants.

When **transplanting or repotting** in spring the best results will be achieved when work is done during the waxing moon and in one of the last six (or descending) zodiac signs. Particularly good results will be seen when the work is done with the moon in the earth sign Virgo. The earth receives the plants readily and they develop roots easily at this time. Then they are ready for the increase in moisture that follows with the waning moon period.

If you haven't seeded a new lawn in April or made repairs to an existing lawn, there is still time to do so in May. In general the best time for **seeding lawns** is when the moon is in Leo or Virgo and waxing. Lawns sown then, in the appropriate soil, will be vigorous and disease resistant. If you are fertilizing your lawns remember to do so only when the moon is waning in a water sign. The fertilizer will be better absorbed at that time than when the moon is waxing, and not run off to somewhere it doesn't belong. Try going organic with your lawn this year and use compost, dry or liquid - many lawn and landscaping companies now offer this alternative. Or stop fertilizing entirely and allow the native ground-covering weeds like clover and sorrel to take over - the bees will thank you.

The best times for **mowing your lawns** are when the moon is in a water sign – Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces. This means mowing every ten days instead of every week, but the grass will suffer less trauma and be encouraged to grow thicker at these times. It may not be possible to keep to this schedule in a wet spring, but do give it a try in the summer months when lawns are stressed by drought.

May and June are also prime time for planting seeds and setting out new plants. Most **pruning** will already have been done, but some spring flowering shrubs need to be pruned right after flowering so remember to do so only during the 'old' moon - the last quarter of the moon, near to or at new moon. Plants are putting on significant growth in May and can be damaged if pruned at other times of the moon's cycle.

When the moon is in Leo all kinds of **weeds** will spout if the earth is touched. So either avoid weeding and cultivating then or do so with the intention of weeding again when the moon is in Capricorn, 10 days later. That way you'll have fooled them and be free of weeds for some time.

According to our reference, The Art of Timing, (a copy of which is available in the HAH library), the time for **harvesting** herbs for drying, **preserving** fruits and **storing** grains and vegetables should be carefully selected. If the correct time is chosen the plants will be less susceptible to rot and mold and will last longer. Generally the best time for these activities is when the moon is in ascending signs, from Sagittarius to Gemini, except when it is in the water sign, Pisces. Garden produce that is harvested during the waxing moon period should be consumed as soon as possible, when the moon is not in an ascending sign. Ideally harvesting should be done when the moon is waning.

In addition to the usual garden chores, **July and August** often provide us with time to restore old or create new garden features. Whether we are infused with extra energy from our vacation time or from the long hours of daylight, we feel like undertaking painting projects, laying new stone paths, replacing wooden railings and other such necessary jobs in the **garden structure** department. The results of these projects are meant to last a long time so it is best to have the moon on our side when undertaking them. In [Moon Time, The Art of Harmony with Nature and Lunar Cycles](#), by Johanna Paungger and Thomas Poppe, we are told that the best time for undertaking these projects is during the waning moon, always avoiding the sign of Cancer. **Paint and varnish** will be applied more easily and adhere better during the waning moon period, and the body will not absorb harmful vapors as readily. It is important, however, to avoid the water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) since drying will take too long, the fire sign Leo, when the paint may dry too fast, and the air sign Gemini which rules the lungs.

Laying stones or gravel for paths and walkways should also be done when the moon is waning, again avoiding Cancer days, lest the setting not be firm and subject to erosion. The earth sign of Capricorn (structure) is the best sign for these activities. The **setting of wooden posts** also follows these rules, the best days being when the moon is in an earth sign (Taurus, Virgo, or Capricorn), or on the day of new moon. Placed at the proper time wooden posts will supposedly stand firm for decades without rot or loosening.

I always welcome the sun's shift from Leo to Virgo in late August because it signals the end of high summer. Blazing sun, extinguishing heat, endless watering chores and too many guest activities give way to blissfully mild sun, more frequent showers, fewer bugs, balmy temperatures and the time and energy to get back out to the garden's quieter but still lovely song. Chores can be done at a more comfortable pace than in spring and I can linger longer to enjoy my efforts. The astrological sign Virgo rules most of the month of **September** and gardeners know this time of the year as one of the most important work periods in the garden. Virgo days are workdays so it's no surprise to us that Labor Day was given a September date. The time of the new moon, when both the sun and the moon are in the sign of Virgo, especially should be set aside for working in the garden. No better time all autumn is there for transplanting, rooting cuttings, sowing lawns, setting posts and fences, repotting, and planting trees and shrubs.

Virgo is that part of the trilogy of earth signs represented by sand and grain. Spring Taurus is fertile, moist and rich soil. Winter Capricorn is hard rock. Late summer Virgo is drier land that has been grown upon and is now giving forth its fruit. This is the time to reap the bounty of our efforts in the vegetable garden and to appreciate the work of those others who have grown what we will live on for this coming year. Spend some time studying and collecting seeds now for pleasure and use!

October offers us many days for **planting bulbs**, preserving produce for winter's use and cleaning up the garden, the three most important tasks this month. Be sure to remember to add potash (granite dust) and compost to your bulb beds before planting for the best growth and largest flowers. Add both to existing bulb beds as well and those bulbs that you thought were weakening may surprise you next spring.



November is also the time for **bulbs**, both planting new ones and digging old ones that need to be rested. Since the part of the bulb we want to grow in the fall is the root, it's best to plant new bulbs, which will produce flowers in the spring, when the moon is waning, but in a water sign (Cancer, Scorpio or Pisces.) We also want to dig old bulbs that need to rest when the moon is waning, but when it is in a "fruit" or fire sign (the dry times of Aries, Leo and Sagittarius.)

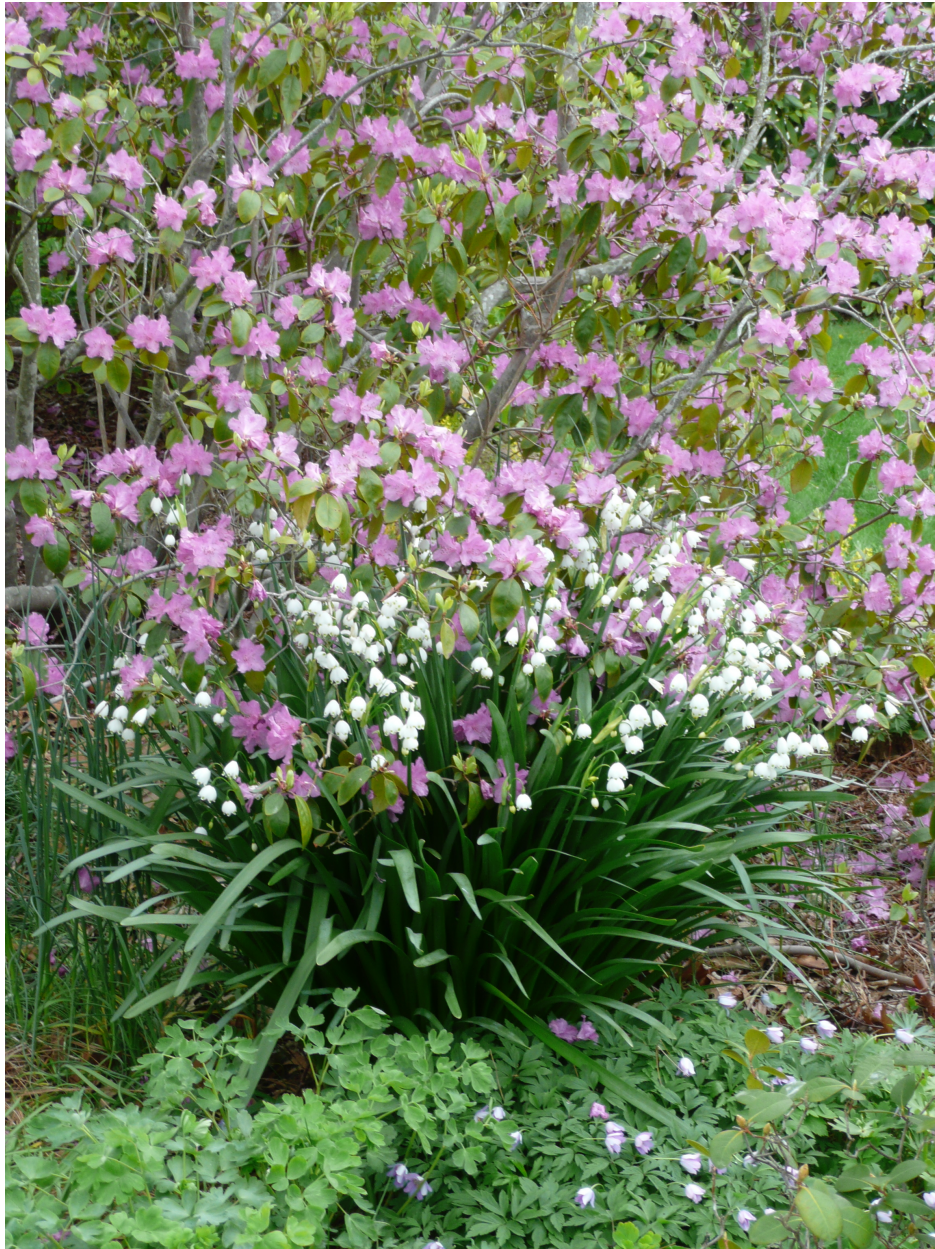
The old rules of forestry are many and they are very specific as to what days wood for particular purposes should be harvested. In **December** there are several times which are best for cutting wood. The first is the week following the December new moon. Wood cut during this period when the moon is in Aquarius or Pisces will apparently remain firm and not warp. This wood should be used for edging and molding needs. Wood that is cut on December 21st will not shrink and will dry hard making this the best day all year for wood harvesting. And wood cut on December 31st won't split. Another interesting suggestion I've found states that Christmas trees and greens should be cut three days before the eleventh (November) full moon for the best needle retention. Fir trees can hold their needles for many years (!) when harvested at this time.

For more information see:

1. Paungger, Johanna and Poppe, Thomas, The Art of Timing, The C.W.Daniel Company, Saffron Walden, U.K., 1996.
2. Paungger, Johanna and Poppe, Thomas, Moon Time, The C. W. Daniel Company, Saffron Walden, U. K., 1993.
3. Riotte, Louisa, Astrological Gardening, Garden Way Publishing, Storey Communications, Inc., Pownal, VT., 1989.

The latest English edition is titled, The Power of Timing, Living in Harmony with Natural and Lunar Rhythms, Wisdom Keeper Books, White Plains, NY. 2013. The authors again are Johanna Paungger and Thomas Poppe. It is readily available at Amazon.com for a very reasonable price. In it you will learn about the best timing for everything related to gardening as well as everything else in household and everyday life. Find out the best time of the month for doing laundry or having dental work done. It's quite amazing! You may also read more on the Paungger Poppe website: www.paungger-poppe.com





The calendar of best days for 2020, which follows on pp. 6 & 7, is calculated for my location in North America. Slight adjustments may be needed for other areas on Earth.

GARDENING BY THE MOON

2020 CALENDAR OF BEST DAYS by Elaine H. Peterson



PLANTING

Seeds for above ground crops

January 9-10, 27-28

February 6-7

March 4-5, 31

April 1, 27-29

May 6-7, 25-26

June 2-3, 30

July 27-28

August 23-24

September 1, 19-21

Seeds for vines

January 7-8

February 3-5

March 1-3, 29-30

April 25-27

May 22-24

Seeds for flowers

February 6-7

March 4-5

April 6-7

May 4-5, 31

June 1-2

July 25-26

Seeds for root crops

January 17-19 February 14-15

March 12-13 April 8-10

May 15-16 June 11-13

July 8-10 August 5-6

FALL BULBS

October 3-5, 8-10

November 5-7

TRANSPLANTING

Trees, shrubs, perennials, seedlings, etc.

General clean-up and repotting

January 13-14

February 10-11

March 8-9

April 5-6

May 2-3, 29-31

June 25-27

July 23-24

August 19-20

September 15-16

October 13-14

CULTIVATION (to promote weed seed sprouting)

January 11-12

February 8-9

March 6-7

April 2-4

May 27-28

June 23-25

July 21-22

August 17-18

September 13-15

October 11-12

WEEDING

January 22-23

February 18-20

March 16-18

April 13-14

May 10-12

June 6-8

July 4-5, 31

August 1-2, 27-29

September 24-25

October 21-22

(for other times, weed between full and new moons)

PRUNING, CUTTING BACK (where appropriate)

January 22-23 February 18-22
March 22-23 April 20-22
May 20-22 June 19-20
July 20 August 17-18
September 15-16
October 13-16

SEEDING LAWNS

April 2-6
May 1-3, 27-30
June 23-27
July 21-24
August 19-20
September 13-16

FERTILIZING (outdoors and indoors, as needed)

February 14-15
March 12-13, 21-23
April 9-10, 17-19
May 15-16
June 11-13
July 8-10, 18-19
August 5-6, 15-16
September 2-3, 11-12

WATERING / LAWN-MOWING

March 4-5, 12-13, 21-23
April 1, 9-10, 17-19, 27-29
May 6-7, 15-16, 25-26
June 2-4, 11-13, 21-22, 30
July 8-10, 18-20, 27-28
August 5-6, 15-16, 23-24
September 1-3, 11-12, 19-21, 29-30
October 8-10, 17-18, 26-27

CUT GREENS FOR HOLIDAYS

October 28

PAINTING AND VARNISHING

January 20-23
February 16-22
March 14-20
April 11-16
May 8-14
June 6-10
July 6-7 August 10-11
September 4-5
October 3-5, 13-14

HARDSCAPING (posts, stones, etc.)

March 1-2, 27-29
April 24-25
May 21-22
June 17-19
July 25-26
August 21-22
September 17-19, 26-27
October 14-16, 24-25

HARVESTING FOR STORAGE

May 8-9
June 5-6, 14-15
July 11-12
August 7-9
September 4-5
October 6-7, 15-16

