



THE  
ALMANAC

A SEASONAL GUIDE TO  
2023

LIA LEENDERTZ

THE ORIGINAL  
& BESTSELLING  
ALMANAC

THE  
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Octopus Books

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A SEASONAL GUIDE TO  
2023

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With illustrations by Whooli Chen





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Pepper should be freshly ground black pepper unless otherwise stated.

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## INTRODUCTION

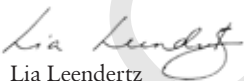
Welcome to *The Almanac: A Seasonal Guide to 2023*. Hello to new readers – I hope you will find something within this book to help you enjoy every month of the year ahead. And if you are a regular reader, then thank you for keeping me company through another year.

For this year's theme I have cast my eyes up to the heavens, and to the invisible and occasionally visible patterns of the solar system and zodiac that churn around us throughout the year. We will look at the planets of our solar system, what and where they are in relation to earth, and when is the best time to spot each in our skies. We also visit the grand mythology behind the zodiac, and match each zodiacal creature to some very earthy and bawdy British folk songs. Watch out for Cancer's crab...

This almanac is as much about minutiae as it is about grandeur, and we will also follow the swirling micro world of the garden pond through the year. Mating frogs, maturing tadpoles, emerging dragonflies, flowering water mint, swooping pipistrelle bats and falling leaves – the garden pond acts as a microcosm of the seasonal changes we see in the wider landscape, and I hope you will enjoy a monthly peer into its depths.

In addition to this you will find many ways of connecting to the season and the months: moon phase charts so that you will know the exact moment of the full Plough Moon or Rose Moon; sunrise and set tables so that you can follow the tip of the northern hemisphere towards and then away from the sun; jobs to carry out in the garden; tide timetables; spring and neap tides; and seasonal and celebration recipes – including this year a 'bun of the month', from Swedish *semlor* for Fat Tuesday to hot cross buns for Easter and sweet, round *challah* for Rosh Hashana.

Whether you are a baker, a gardener, a singer, a mudlark, a stargazer, a nature lover or just someone who gets an odd thrill out of looking at tide timetables (that's me), I hope that within this almanac you will find your own keys to unlocking some special moments in the year ahead. Have a wonderful 2023.

  
Lia Leendertz

## THE YEAR AHEAD

### The year

Gregorian year	2023, begins 1st January
Japanese year	2683, begins 1st January
Chinese year	Black Water Rabbit, begins 22nd January
Islamic year	1445, begins 18th July
Coptic year	1740, begins 12th September
Jewish year	5784, begins 15th September

### The sky at night in the year ahead

It should be a good year for spotting the bright planets. Venus starts the year as an evening star, visible for a short time after sunset. It will then become steadily more prominent, setting some four hours after sunset by mid-May. From then on it will approach the sun again and be lost in the glare of our sunset by mid-July. It will reappear as a morning star by the end of August, getting steadily higher until it rises some four hours before sunrise by the end of October.

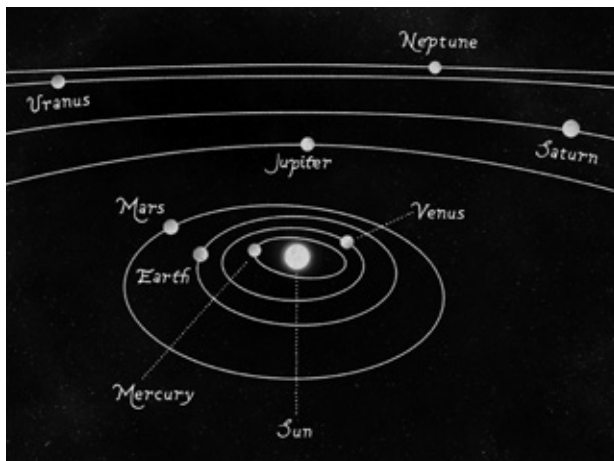
Mars will be bright and high at the start of the year but fading as the weeks go by. It will be dim by mid-March, then unremarkable for the rest of the year.

Jupiter progresses on its 12-year orbit. It will give a good display, reaching a greater height in the night sky than last year. It will get higher each year now until 2025–6, after which it will gradually get lower each year until around 2031 when it will be very low in the sky all year. The cycle will then repeat.

Saturn progresses on its 29-year orbit. It will be dim for the first half of this year but bright by autumn. A small telescope will reveal the ring system, and the time around opposition (see page 172) this year will be the last chance of a good view of the rings for quite a while. They are 'closing' and will be seen edge-on by 2025. They will then 'open' and be visible again by 2026–7.

There will be two solar eclipses this year but sadly neither will be visible from the UK or Ireland. There will also be two lunar eclipses, one of which will be visible from the UK and Ireland, at the end of October. This will only be a partial eclipse, which will be interesting but not awesome.

The full moon will detract from the Quadrantids meteor shower in January, but the Perseids in August and the Geminids in December will have dark skies.



The position of the planets of the solar system on 1st January 2023

### Notes on using the tide times

The full tide timetable given each month is for Dover, because Dover is widely used as a standard port from which to work out all other tide times. Every port has a 'high water time difference on Dover' figure, which you can find on the internet. For instance, Bristol's high water time difference on Dover is  $-4\text{h } 10\text{m}$ , and so looking at this almanac's visual tide timetable you would just trace your finger back along it 4 hours and 10 minutes to see that a midday high tide at Dover would mean it will be high tide at Bristol at 07.50. London Bridge's is  $+2\text{h } 52\text{m}$ , so – tracing forwards – a midday high tide at Dover would see a high tide in London at 14.52. Once you know any local port's figure, you can just trace that amount of time backwards or forwards along the Dover tide line.

Here are a few ports and their high water time differences on Dover. Find your local one by searching the name of the port and the phrase 'high water time difference on Dover'.

Aberdeen:	+2h 31m	Cork:	-5h 23m
Firth of Forth:	+3h 50m	Swansea:	-4h 50m
Port Glasgow:	+1h 32m	Bristol:	-4h 10m
Newcastle-upon-Tyne:	+4h 33m	London Bridge:	+2h 52m
Belfast Lough:	+0h 7m	Lyme Regis:	-4h 55m
Hull:	-4h 52m	Newquay:	-6h 4m
Liverpool:	+0h 14m	St Helier, Jersey:	-4h 55m

Do not use these where accuracy is critical; instead, you will need to buy a local tide timetable or subscribe to Easy Tide, [www.ukho.gov.uk/easytide](http://www.ukho.gov.uk/easytide). Also note that no timetable will take into account the effects of wind and barometric pressure.

Spring tide and neap tide dates are also included. Spring tides are the most extreme tides of the month – the highest and lowest tides – and neap tides are the least extreme. Spring tides occur as a result of the pull that occurs when the sun, moon and earth are aligned. Alignment occurs at new moon and full moon, but the surge – the spring tide – is slightly delayed because of the mass of water to be moved. It usually follows one to three days after. Knowledge of spring tides is particularly useful if you are a keen rock-pooler, beachcomber or mudlark. You want a low spring tide for best revelations.

### General notes

All times in this almanac have been adjusted for British Summer Time/Irish Standard Time, when relevant.

Haltwhistle in Northumberland has been chosen for the sunrise and set tables because it is the midpoint of the longest north–south meridian within the British Isles.

All efforts have been made to ensure the dates within this almanac are correct, but some may be subject to cancellation or rearrangement after publication.

# January



- 1 New Year's Day
- 2 Bank holiday, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland
- 3 Bank holiday, Scotland
- 5 Twelfth Night (Christian/traditional)
- 6 Epiphany/Three Kings' Day/Little Christmas (Christian)
- 6 Nollaig na mBan/Women's Christmas (Christian/Irish traditional)
- 6 Orthodox Christmas Eve (Orthodox)
- 7 Orthodox Christmas Day (Orthodox)
- 7 Lidat (Rastafarian)
- 9 Plough Monday (English traditional)
- 13 Lohri (Punjabi winter festival)
- 17 Old Twelfth Night (traditional)
- 21 Chinese New Year's Eve
- 22 Chinese New Year/Spring Festival/Lunar New Year – year of the Black Water Rabbit begins
- 25 Burns Night (Scottish traditional)
- 25 Vasant Panchami (Hindu spring festival)
- 28 28th–29th: RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch



## JANUARY AT A GLANCE

Spend time outside during the year and you will soon come to see that there is a season for everything, for seeds to tentatively germinate and begin to grow, for frantic work, such as that of the honeybees when the sun shines, for harvesting and feasting, and for closing down, resting and recovering. Our human years, generally, do not cycle. We hit the ground running in early January, let up for a couple of weeks in August and then push on through until the Christmas break. Unlike the birds and the bees, the flowers and the trees, we are forever 'on'.

But the natural year can act as a guide to living, if we let it. And January – it just so happens – is a wonderful place to start, because if you step outside now and look for obvious activity, you will find, well, very little. Yes, there is the odd bumblebee buzzing on the milder days, and the shoots of the snowdrops have pushed through the cold earth, but other than that? There is a whole lot of peace and quiet, of plants and animals tucked away and resting, pulled back in on themselves, surrounded by piles of leaves. In these dark and inhospitable days they conserve their energies, remaining underneath the soil or secreted away in little nooks. It isn't that nothing is happening at all underground: roots stretch down deeper into the soil during all but the hardest frosts. The plants and animals are laying the foundations of the year ahead, but they are doing it from a place of deep slumber.

So this is a time of darkness, rest and recuperation. And the challenge for us busy-busy humans is not to fight it, but to let it be so. Take your opportunities for calm and self-reflection wherever you can find them this month. Close your eyes, breathe and welcome that peace and quiet into your life, even if it is only for ten minutes a day. Cook stews. Stay in and light candles. Sleep more and daydream when you are awake. You are laying the foundations for the year, now. The light will come soon enough. Don't fight the darkness.

## THE SKY AT NIGHT

The year begins beautifully with the moon, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn all visible early in the month. Mars was at opposition – that is, at its brightest and closest – in December, and so is still high and bright in the sky. It will be dim by March, so this is the time to catch a glimpse of its fiery hues.

**3rd:** Close approach of a bright Mars and the Moon. First visible in the east at around 16.20, they reach an altitude of 63 degrees in the south by 21.30 and go on to set in the northwest around 05.00 the next day. Closest at around 20.00 with a separation of less than 1 degree.

**3rd–4th:** Quadrantids meteor shower. This runs from 1st to 5th January with up to 40 meteors per hour at its peak on the late night of the 4th and early morning of the 5th. Due to the full moon, only the brightest trails will be visible.

**22nd:** Brief view of close approach of Venus and Saturn. First visible in the dusk at around 17.00 in the southwest at an altitude of 11 degrees with a dim Saturn 0.4 degrees above Venus. They set at around 18.00 in the southwest.

**23rd:** Close approach of the moon, Venus and Saturn. First visible in the dusk at around 17.00 in the southwest at an altitude of 11 degrees. Visible for one hour before setting.

**25th:** Close approach of Jupiter and the moon. First visible in the dusk around 17.00 at an altitude of 35 degrees in the south. Visible until setting in the west at around 21.20. Saturn and Venus will also be visible until around 18.00.

**26th:** Close approach of Mars and the moon. First visible in the southeast at an altitude of 50 degrees at around 17.00. They reach an altitude of 63 degrees in the south by 19.40 and set in the northwest at around 03.50 the next day.

**30th:** Mercury at greatest western elongation. Mercury, the closest planet to the sun, is often hard to spot when lost in the sun's glare. Towards the end of the month it will be the furthest it gets away from the sun in our sky, so you may spot it low in the eastern sky up to an hour before sunrise.

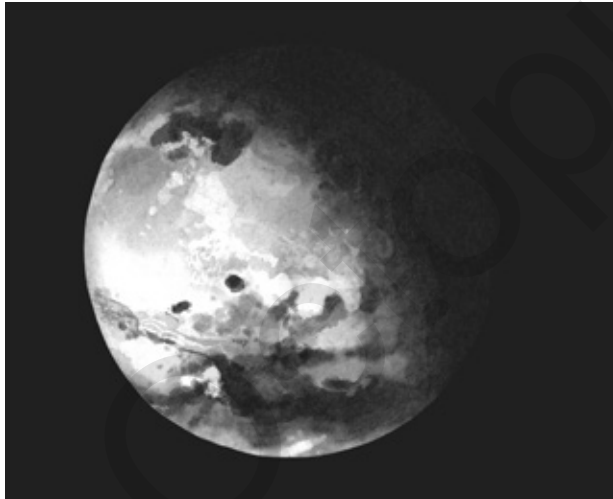


## THE SOLAR SYSTEM

### Mars

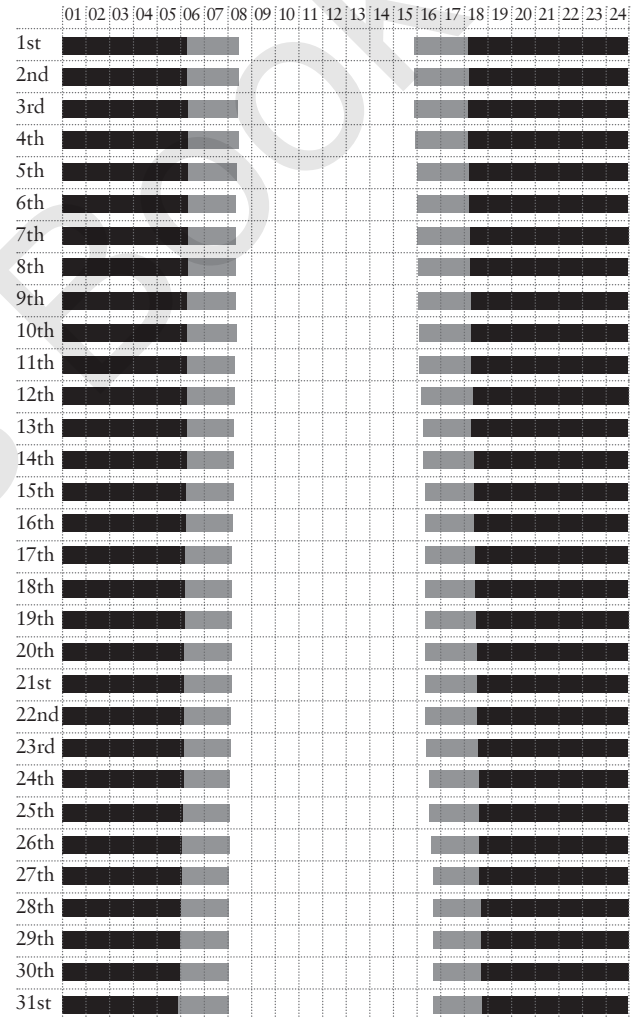
This is the best moment of this year to see Mars. It was at opposition – at its closest to earth – late last year, and will become dimmer as the year wears on. See it high in the south in the evening hours, early this month, glittering red. The red colour is iron oxide on the surface, like rust. Mars, named after the Roman god of war, is one of the four terrestrial planets (as opposed to the four gaseous planets) and so is more earth-like than most solar system objects, though about half the size of earth.

Mars is one of the five bright planets, often easily visible to the naked eye. Mars is the fourth planet from the sun (earth is the third), so, like earth, it is part of the inner solar system. Not only is it relatively close to us in solar system terms, but it is also not lost in the glare of the sun, as Mercury and Venus often are (being closer to it than to us).



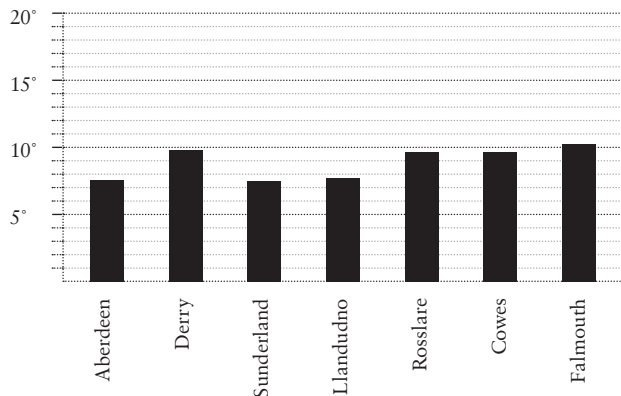
### Sunrise and set

*Haltwhistle, Northumberland*



## THE SEA

### Average sea temperature in Celcius



### Spring and neap tides

Spring tides are the most extreme tides of the month, with the highest rises and the lowest falls, and they follow a couple of days after the full moon and new moon. These are the times to choose a low tide and go rock-pooling, mudlarking or coastal fossil-hunting. Neap tides are the least extreme, with the smallest movement, and they fall in between the spring tides.

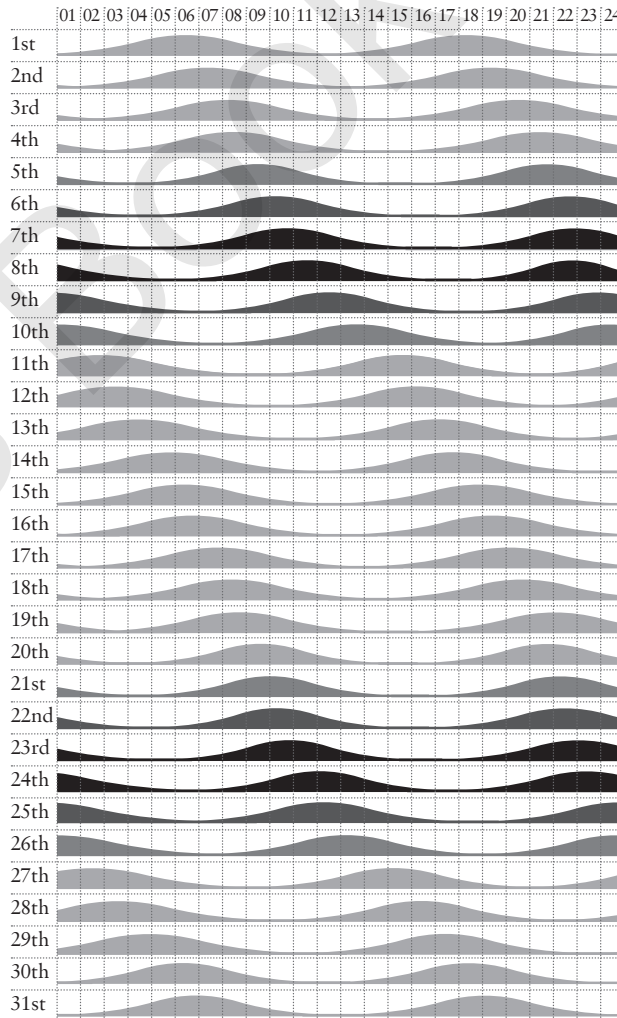
Spring tides: 7th–8th and 23rd–24th

Neap tides: 16th–17th and 29th–30th

Spring tides are shaded in black in the chart opposite.

### January tide timetable for Dover

For guidance on how to convert this for your local area, see page 8.



# THE MOON

## Moon phases

Full moon – 6th January, 23.08



Last quarter – 15th January, 02.10



New moon – 21st January, 20.53



First quarter – 28th January, 15.19



## Moonrise and set

Like the sun, the moon rises roughly in the east and sets roughly in the west. It also rises around 50 minutes later each day. Use the following guide to work out approximate moonrise times.

**Full moon:** Rises near sunset, opposite the sun, so in the east as the sun sets in the west.

**Last quarter:** Rises around midnight, and is at its highest point as the sun rises.

**New moon:** Rises at sunrise, in the same part of the sky as the sun (and so cannot be seen).

**First quarter:** Rises near noon, and is at its highest point as the sun sets.

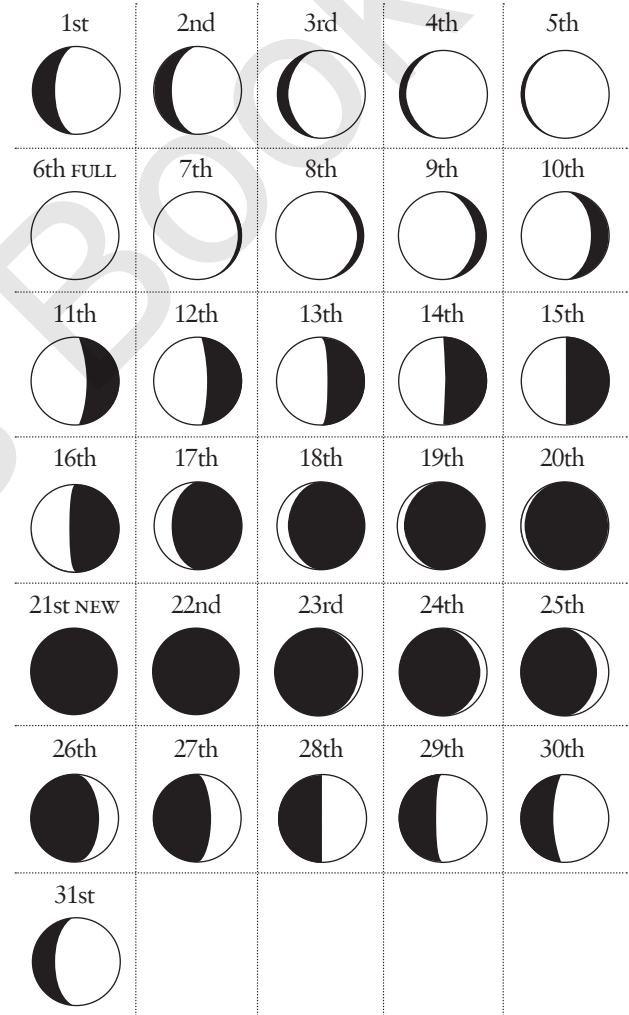
## Full moon

January's full moon is known as the Wolf Moon or the Stay at Home Moon.

## New moon

This month's new moon, on the 21st, is in Capricorn. Astrologers believe that the new moon is a quiet, contemplative time before a phase of growth. Each new moon has its own energy, depending on the zodiacal sign that it is in, and the Capricorn new moon is said to rule ambitions and goals.

## Moon phases for January



## GARDENS

### To enjoy this month

**Ornamental:** Hellebores, dogwood stems, willow stems, hazel catkins, seed heads, grasses, sarcococca, witch hazel, crocuses, aconites, holly, ivy and its flowers and berries, box, skeletons of trees, mahonia flowers, winter clematis, cotoneaster and pyracantha berries

**Edible:** Purple sprouting broccoli, Oriental leaves, Jerusalem artichokes, carrots, leeks, parsnips, swedes, chervil, coriander, parsley, rosemary, sage, bay

### Gardening by the moon

The following is a guide to planting with the phases of the moon, according to traditional practices. It also works as a guide to the month's gardening for moon-gardening cynics, who can do these jobs whenever they wish during the month ahead.

#### First quarter to full moon: 30th December 2022–6th and 29th–5th February

This is the best time for sowing crops that develop above ground, but is bad for root crops. Plant out seedlings and young plants.

Take cuttings and make grafts. Avoid any other pruning. Fertilise.

- Sow chillies and aubergines indoors in a heated propagator.
- Sow broad beans straight into the ground if it is not frozen and cover them with cloches.
- Sow hardy peas and sweet peas in pots under cover.

#### Full moon to last quarter: 7th–14th

A 'drawing down' energy. This phase is a good time for sowing and planting any crops that develop below ground: root crops, bulbs and perennials. Light is high but decreasing.

- Plant garlic and rhubarb crowns if the ground is not frozen.
- Sow onions and leeks in seed trays in a heated propagator.
- Plant fruit trees and bushes, hedging and bare-root rose bushes.
- Chit seed potatoes.

#### Last quarter to new moon: 15th–21st

A dormant period, with low sap and poor growth. Do not sow or plant. A good time though for pruning, while sap is slowed. Weeding now will check growth well. Harvest any crops for storage. Fertilise and mulch the soil. Garden maintenance.

- Prune apple, pear, medlar and quince trees. Prune autumn-fruited raspberries, red and white currants, and gooseberries.
- Prune wisteria, cutting back long growths to 2–3 buds and avoiding flower buds.
- Clean and oil tools. Clean pots.
- Check your soil for its pH level. If it is low this would be a good time to add lime or calcified seaweed.
- Weed beds ahead of spring. Mulch areas that have not been recently limed with organic matter.

#### New moon to first quarter: 22nd–28th

The waxing of the moon is associated with rising vitality and upward growth. Towards the end of this phase plant and sow anything that develops above ground. Prepare for growth.

- You could sow chillies and aubergines, broad beans, peas and sweet peas now, in a heated propagator.
- Buy seeds and prepare seed trays or plugs and compost.
- Place forcers over rhubarb plants to exclude light and draw up the stems.

**Note:** Where no specific time for the change between phases is mentioned, this is because it happens outside of sensible gardening hours. For exact changeover times for any late-night or pre-dawn gardening, refer to the moon phase chart on page 19.

## THE RECIPES

### Bun of the month

#### Swiss Three Kings cake

Yeast dough buns enriched with butter, sugar, eggs and sometimes chocolate and spices have long been eaten to mark moments of celebration throughout the year, the best known of these perhaps being hot cross buns. Every month of this almanac includes a recipe for a traditional bun with which to mark the season.

Three Kings cake, or *Dreikönigskuchen*, is primarily made in Switzerland to celebrate Epiphany on 6th January. It is usually flavoured with lemon and sultanas or chocolate chips. This version, however, contains dark chocolate chips and Seville orange zest and is given a sticky Seville orange glaze, to mark the arrival of Seville oranges in the shops this month. Traditionally, one of the buns would contain a small *fève* – a tiny porcelain figure or a dried bean – and the person who finds it is crowned king for the day.

#### Makes 1 large and 7 small buns

##### Ingredients

##### For the dough:

175ml milk, plus extra for egg wash

30g butter

50g brown sugar

300g strong white bread flour, plus extra for dusting

1 teaspoon salt

1 sachet (7g) instant yeast

50g hazelnuts, roughly chopped

50g dark chocolate, roughly chopped

Zest of 1 Seville orange

1 egg

##### For the glaze:

Juice and zest of 1 Seville orange

2 tablespoons brown sugar

#### Method

Line a large baking tray with parchment. Gently heat the milk, butter and sugar in a saucepan over a low heat until melted together; leave to cool. Combine the flour with the salt and yeast in a bowl. When the milk has cooled, add it to the flour mixture and form into a dough. Knead for a few minutes in the bowl, then add the chopped hazelnuts, dark chocolate and the orange zest. Knead to combine, then turn out onto a floured surface and knead for a further 5 minutes. Pop the dough back in the bowl, cover and allow it to puff up for 1 hour in a warm, dry place.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C, Gas Mark 6. Separate the risen dough into 7 small balls and 1 larger one, and roll each in your hands until smooth. Place the big one in the middle of the baking tray and the little ones around it in a circle, being sure to leave enough room for the buns to puff out and touch in the second prove. Cover and leave to prove for up to 40 minutes in a warm, dry place. Brush the top of the buns with egg wash (the egg beaten with a little milk). Bake on the middle shelf for approximately 35 minutes.

While they bake, make the glaze. Combine the orange juice and zest with the brown sugar in a saucepan, allowing it to simmer for a couple of minutes. When the buns are fresh from the oven, brush with the glaze and serve.

### Quick plough pudding

Plough Monday is the first Monday following Epiphany, and this year it falls on 9th January. It was once the beginning of the agricultural year and the day that farm workers would return to work following the Christmas season. In the 15th century a plough would be dragged through the streets and money collected for parish funds. This was then used to pay for 'plough lights', candles kept burning in church throughout this period to bless those working in the fields.

Plough pudding was a boiled suet pudding with a sausage filling and was traditionally served on Plough Monday. This recipe uses many of the same ingredients but is far quicker to throw together on a cold, dark Monday night in January, and the sausage can be replaced with a veggie version if you wish. The sage-and-onion stuffing mix gives this some 'retro roast dinner' flavours and helps to bind the whole thing together, but the dish also works well without it. It would go well with a sweet and spicy chutney, buttery mashed carrots and steamed greens.

Serves 4

#### Ingredients

6 large eggs

300ml milk

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon pepper

300g white or brown bread, cubed

85g sage-and-onion stuffing mix

6 sausages, sliced into bite-sized rounds

Cooking oil (optional)

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 Bramley apple, peeled and finely chopped

A few sprigs of thyme

5 large sage leaves, finely sliced

150g Gruyère cheese, finely grated

#### Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C, Gas Mark 4 and generously grease a 23cm-square tin. In a large bowl, beat the eggs, milk and seasoning. Add the bread cubes and stuffing and mix together until evenly coated. Fry the sausage rounds in a large frying pan, adding a little oil if using veggie sausages. Add the onion, apple, thyme sprigs and sage, and fry for a few minutes until everything has a bit of colour and the ingredients release all their wonderful aromas.

Tip the fried ingredients into the bread mixture, and add most of the Gruyère, reserving a little for sprinkling on top. Stir with a large spoon until evenly distributed. The mixture should be quite wet, so add a splash more milk if necessary. Turn into the tin and press down a little. Sprinkle the remaining Gruyère over the top. Bake in the centre of the oven for about 40 minutes until it has browned and is pattering away nicely. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes before serving.



## WHAT IS THE ZODIAC?

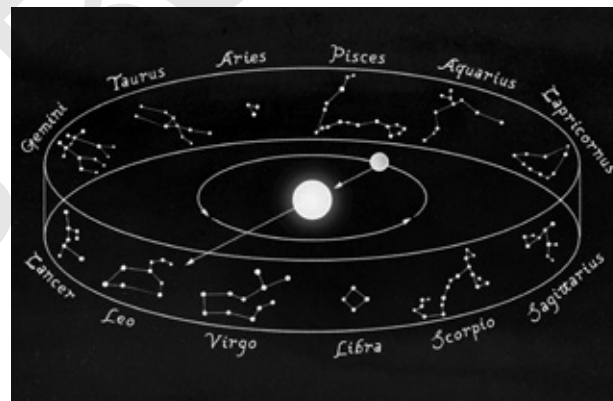
The zodiac is a band of sky that lies 8 degrees either side of the ecliptic, the path the sun takes through our sky during the year. The band is divided into 30-degree sections, each containing a constellation, and as the sun moves through the 12 constellations it moves in and out of the various zodiacal signs. The term 'zodiac' comes from the ancient Greek *zōdiacus*, meaning 'cycle of little animals'. Astrologers believe that the time of our birth in relation to these signs affects our personalities, and that the movement of the planets of the solar system through the zodiac, and their aspects relative to each other, affects events, moods and movements on earth.

The Western zodiac is one of the oldest still in use, originating in Mesopotamia around 1900 years BCE. It spread through ancient Greece, Rome and the Arab world and finally made its way to western Europe. The 12 signs are well known to us – Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces – and each has a corresponding animal or symbol.

Jyotishya is traditional Hindu astrology, also known as Vedic astrology, and it, too, is based upon the idea of the sun moving through the constellations. Its *rasi* correspond pretty closely with Western zodiac signs – Mesa the ram coincides with Aries, Vrsabha the bull with Taurus, Mithuna the twins with Gemini – and it is thought that Jyotishya, too, may have been influenced by ancient Greek astrology. Astrology is still widely used in Hindu culture: it influences the names of babies and is consulted to find suitable dates for important days such as marriage and moving house.

Although the Chinese zodiac, or Sheng Xiao, is divided into 12 and has an animal assigned to each segment, it is not based on the movement of the sun through the constellations. Instead, each whole lunar year is assigned an animal and its characteristics in a 12-year cycle. People born in each year are believed to take on the sign's attributes. Years also alternate between Yin and Yang, Yin being dark/night/female/receptive and Yang being light/day/male/active, and each is assigned a

'fixed element' – water, earth, wood, fire or metal. Whereas this month's new moon falls on the 21st in the UK and Ireland, it falls on the 22nd in China, and this will mark the beginning of the new year, a Yin and water year, with Rabbit as its animal. Yin water is represented by mists, clouds and drizzle, and its colour is black, therefore this is the year of the Black Water Rabbit.



## THE ZODIAC

### Capricorn: 22nd December–19th January

The sun begins the month in the same area of sky that holds the constellation of Capricorn, the Goat, the 270th–300th degree of the zodiac. On the 20th of this month the sun will move into Aquarius (see page 50).

**Symbol:** The Goat

**Planet:** Saturn

**Element:** Earth

**Colour:** Brown

**Characteristics:** Hard-working, diligent, ambitious, pragmatic, responsible

The Greek gods rewarded favoured mortals by placing them in the sky as constellations, and this is one of the stories behind the constellation of Capricornus (star sign Capricorn). The Titan Cronus was told that one day his own child would overthrow him, and so as each was born he ate them. When the sixth child, baby Zeus, was born, his mother, Rhea, handed Cronus a swaddled stone, which he quickly swallowed. Rhea hid Zeus in a cave on Mount Ida, in Crete, where he was suckled and raised by a goat, Amalthea. Sure enough, Zeus grew up to become king of the gods on Mount Olympus. When Amalthea died, her skin became the aegis – a magical protective garment burnished with gold that Zeus wore in battle – and Amalthea became a constellation, which some say was Capricornus. The best time to spot Capricornus is when it is in the opposite part of the sky from the sun six months from now, in July.

**Also in astrology this month:** Mercury is in retrograde this month, from 13th December 2022 to 18th January 2023, and astrologers believe this creates a period when communications break down, technology malfunctions, tempers fray and plans go awry (see page 82).



## A FOLK SONG FOR CAPRICORN'S GOAT

### 'Bryan O'Lynn'

Traditional, arr. Richard Barnard

The folk songs in this year's almanac have links to our zodiac stories, and many of them provide an earthy, silly or downright bawdy change of tone from the grandiose posturing of the Greek myths. The link with this song is the goatskin – while Amalthea's skin after she died was burnished with gold and worn by Zeus in battle, Bryan O'Lynn's was made into a silly coat with the horns still attached. There is not much sense to this song, so don't look for it. The daftest and most nonsensical of British and Irish folk songs (and this was widely sung in England and Ireland) are often the oldest. 'Bryan O'Lynn' is thought to be around five hundred years old.

♩ = 76

O, Bry - an O' - Lynn had no trou - sers to wear so he  
 got him a sheep - skin to make him a pair, with the fle - shy side out and the  
 fur - ry side in, "They'll be cool in the sum - mer," said Bry - an O' - Lynn.

O, Bryan O'Lynn had no trousers to wear,  
 So he got him a sheepskin to make him a pair,  
 With the fleshy side out and the furry side in  
 'They'll be cool in the summer,' said Bryan O'Lynn.

O, Bryan O'Lynn had no shirt on his back,  
 So he went to the neighbours to borrow a sack.  
 He gathered the mouth of it under his chin  
 'They'll take them for ruffles,' said Bryan O'Lynn.

O, Bryan O'Lynn had no coat to put on,  
 So he got an old goatskin to make himself one.  
 With horns sticking out of his pockets, 'Well then,  
 'They'll answer for pistols,' said Bryan O'Lynn.

O, Bryan O'Lynn and his wife and wife's mother  
 They all three crossed over the river together.  
 The bridge it broke down and they all tumbled in  
 'We'll walk home on the bottom,' said Bryan O'Lynn.

## NATURE

### The pond in January

Perhaps the single most useful thing one person can do to help wildlife is to build a pond in their garden or allotment. There was once a 'dew pond' (a shallow pond, usually man-made, replenished with water from the dew) in the corner of every field for livestock to drink from, and they would be used not only by cows and sheep but by amphibians, insects, small mammals and birds. Most have been drained or filled in and, of those that remain, around 80 per cent are thought to be polluted or degraded, mainly by the nitrogen and phosphorus from agricultural fertiliser.

Fortunately, garden ponds are insulated from many of the problems that countryside ponds face, and it is remarkably straightforward to create a pond that quickly becomes an intricate ecosystem supporting dozens of species. The phrase 'build it and they will come' could have been written for ponds: just make one and sit back and you will see. This year's almanac follows the year in a garden pond, and all the wonderful things that are happening above and below the surface.

There are few signs of life in the January pond. Many garden birds visit it to drink and wash, and mammals will stop by to drink: during mild weather hedgehogs may even emerge from their sleep to take a drink. But other than that, all appears calm. Beneath the sometimes frozen surface there is life, but it is at its lowest ebb. The bottom of the pond is full of decaying sticks and leaves, and nestled within it are the larvae of beetles and insects, and even adult water beetles, which will occasionally return to the surface briefly to take in air. Nymphs of caddisflies, dragonflies and mayflies are down there and create a kind of antifreeze that prevents their bodies from freezing and their cells from rupturing. Dragonfly eggs nestled in the mud are in diapause, a type of hibernation that prevents them from hatching until the weather warms. Life is suspended, but not for long.

