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“Moon Gardening Calendar” article

by Sheree Scott



When builder Ray Scott and his wife Jean decided to venture into commercial vegetable growing in the 1970s they needed all the help they could get. They had mixed success in the early stages, and with five children to feed were quick to take any advice from established growers.

“An Italian grower put us onto gardening by the moon,” Jean Scott says from their home in Kuranda, Queensland.

“He was also a water diviner and identified underground streams for drilling bores on farms. He was spot-on for us, with the drillers finding water in just the place and depth he said it was at. So when he talked about the principals of moon gardening, we were all ears.”

Ray Scott put the advice to the test by germinating beans at various times of the month and checking their growth rates. After its initial germination, he says a lima bean could grow 10cm overnight during the peak growing time, while others planted during the contrary period just rotted. Parsley seeds could germinate in about 10 days instead of the recommended 21-28 days, and lettuce seeds could be up in just three days. The crops then went on to be a lot healthier, producing high yields.

“Before we were moon gardening, we could have one paddock of lettuce growing great, and another lot planted from the same seed a fortnight later bolt to seed,” Jean explains. “We couldn’t afford those sorts of losses – in money and effort.”

She says lettuce is an especially good example of why moon gardening works because they commonly bolt to seed or become bitter with stress and high temperatures. If planted at the right moon time, the lettuce germinate quickly and are less stressed due to the higher natural soil moisture content during that time.

The practice of moon gardening goes back thousands of years to the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and continues in many cultures around the globe. It most likely developed through the powers of observation when people’s very survival depended on being able to grow their own food successfully, Jean says.

In touch with the natural rhythms, a wealth of folklore was gathered about the best times for planting using the phases of the moon as a reference.

Ray and Jean have produced a perpetual Moon Gardening Calendar which divides the 28-day lunar cycle into six periods of various lengths to show the best days in the month for different activities. It can be adjusted to any month you're ready to start gardening, and can be used year after year.

It provides easy-to-follow directions on the right time to plant root crops or above ground crops, sow seeds and take cuttings, when to fertilise, the best time for pruning and grafting, when to cultivate the ground and even when the fish are more likely to be biting.

“In the early 1990s we started a plant nursery just north of Cairns, in Far North Queensland, and applied the moon calendar to taking cuttings, with far better strike rates when the sap run was high,” Jean says. “It also applied for flower seedlings, when to fertilise and for transplanting.”

Basically, moon gardeners divide plants into two groups. One is above ground crops, which have their edible part above the ground, such as leafy greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, and even fruit trees. The other group of plants are root crops, which have their edible part below the ground, such as potatoes, carrots, beetroot and ginger.

Just as the moon influences the rise and fall of the tides each day, it also creates a monthly lunar cycle of rise and fall in the groundwater tables. Without the pull of the moon on the Earth's water, it is believed the Earth's rotation would only take 10 hours instead of 24 hours. This movement of the groundwater also creates a rise and fall in the pressure of water in the plants, resulting in periods of high and low sap run at different times of the lunar month. It creates prolific top growth when sap run is high and favours the development of root crops at other times. Using a moon gardening calendar over the past 35 years, the couple say they often notice it rains during the main growing times and is drier during the dormant times.

“This is why growing by the moon works so well, as you are not battling nature but working with it,” Jean says.

The 1886 publication *Moon Lore* records that early carpenters rejected the timber of trees fallen in the full moon as being soft and tender, and more subject to rot and borers due to excessive moisture. It says royal orders were given to conservators of the forests in France directing them to fell oaks only “in the wane of the moon”, a practice which continues today in some European cultures.

“There is a logic to moon gardening and the results speak for themselves,” Jean says. “Seed germination times can be cut by a third or more, crops grow faster and

healthier, so are less prone to disease and insect attack, and produce higher yields. Even grafting and cuttings are far more successful when done at the right time, when there is more sap in the plants, as this offers the new plant more nutrients to draw from.

“We are getting great feedback from people all around the country using our calendar, and even send them overseas.”

The Moon Gardening Calendar is available from Acres Australia or for more information go to www.moongardeningcalendar.com or phone Jean Scott at (+617) 4093 9490.

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