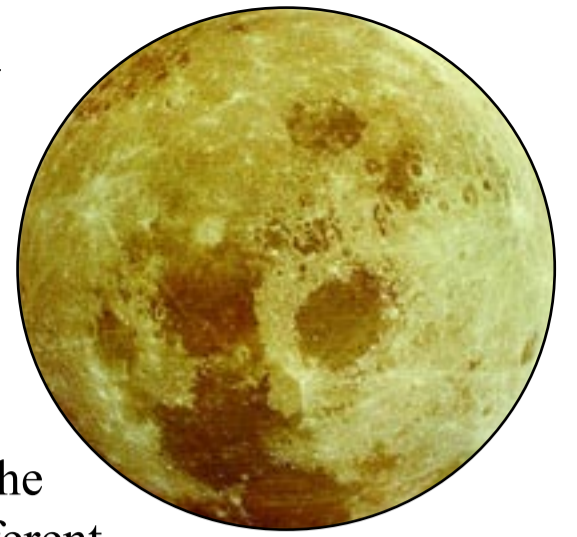


MOON GARDENING TRADITIONS



Gardening by the moon is one of those practices that separates the green thumbs from the brown ones. Many successful gardeners who follow their instincts on when to plant are pleasantly surprised to find they have done so at the right time according to moon gardening practices. Other people know from knowledge passed down through their family or culture.

Moon gardening goes back thousands of years to the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, back to the time of Pliny, Plutarch and the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster. It was developed through the powers of observation when people's very survival depended on being able to grow their own food successfully. 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.



However, it fell out of favour in the wake of the Industrial Revolution with the advancing modernisation of agriculture and the development of artificial fertilisers. But thanks to the foresight of Rev. Timothy Harley, this folklore was gathered from around the globe into a volume called Moon Lore, published in London in 1885, ready for a revival of moon gardening again today.

Moon gardeners divide plants into two groups. One is above ground crops, such as leafy greens, tomatoes and cucumbers, and fruit trees. The other group of plants are root crops, such as carrots,

beetroot and onions.

Briefly it works on the principle that at different moon phases the gravitational pull of the sun and moon are combined to create a high sap run in plants. At other times these natural forces create a rest period when water needs are reduced.

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. I have noticed it often rains during the main growing times and is dry during the dormant times, so you are working with nature, not battling against it.

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. 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 countries.

While some may dismiss moon gardening as nonsense, there is a logic to it and the results speak for themselves. Seed germination times can be cut by more than a third, crops grow faster and healthier, so are less prone to disease and insect attack, producing 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.

So moon gardening isn't some weird ritual where you plant only at night or dance around the garden by the light of the full moon – although that may help to keep the bandicoots from digging it up.

- by Sheree Scott (The perpetual Moon Gardening Calendar by J&R Scott is available online or phone (07) 4093 9490; PO Box 492, Kuranda Qld 4881.)

For more information visit: www.moongardeningcalendar.com