

EXTRA!

FROM THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

HOMEMADE GIFTS FROM THE KITCHEN

- PLUS: • Best Days to Do Things
• Gardening by the Moon's Sign
• Monthly Calendar • Astronomy • Weather



DECEMBER 2023

PHOTO: JULIA SUDNITSKAYA/SHUTTERSTOCK

DECEMBER

Holidays, Full Moon Names, and More

CALENDAR THIS 'N' THAT

The years teach much which the days never know.

–Ralph Waldo Emerson,
American writer (1803–82)

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Dec. 7: Chanukah begins at sundown

Dec. 7: National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Dec. 13: U.S. National Guard Birthday

Dec. 15: Bill of Rights Day

Dec. 17: Wright Brothers Day

Dec. 20: U.S. Space Force Birthday

Dec. 21: Winter Solstice

Dec. 25: Christmas Day

Dec. 26: Boxing Day (Canada)

Dec. 26: First day of Kwanzaa



EYE ON THE SKY

DECEMBER'S FULL MOON NAMES

Cold Moon, Winter Maker Moon,
Long Night Moon

MOON PHASES

Last Quarter: December 5, 12:49 A.M. EST

New Moon: December 12, 6:32 P.M. EST

First Quarter: December 19, 1:39 P.M. EST

Full Moon: December 26, 7:33 P.M. EST



TAP FOR MORE ABOUT MOON PHASES



TAP FOR MORE ABOUT DECEMBER'S FULL MOON

Get ready for 2024! Order your *Old Farmer's Almanac* calendars at Almanac.com/Shop or Amazon.

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BEST DAYS TO DO THINGS

These December dates, deemed to be propitious in astrology, are based on the astrological passage of the Moon. However, consider all indicators before making any major decisions. –*Celeste Longacre*

ON THE FARM

Breed animals: 9, 10

Castrate animals: 16, 17

Cut hay: 20, 21

Purchase animals: 26–28

Set eggs: 5, 24, 25

Slaughter livestock: 9, 10

Wean animals: 6, 11

IN THE GARDEN

Destroy pests and weeds: 20, 21

Graft or pollinate: 26–28



Harvest aboveground crops: 22, 23

Harvest belowground crops: 4, 5

Mow to promote growth: 18, 19

Mow to slow growth: 1–3

Pick fruit: 4, 5, 31

Plant aboveground crops: 18, 19

Plant belowground crops: 9, 10

Prune to discourage growth: 1–3

Prune to encourage growth: 20, 21

OUTDOORS

Begin logging: 13–15

Go camping: 11, 12

Go fishing: 12–26

Set posts or pour concrete: 13–15

PERSONAL

Advertise to sell: 22, 23

Ask for a loan: 9, 10

Begin diet to gain weight: 19, 24

Begin diet to lose weight: 6, 11

Buy a home: 22, 23

Color hair: 22, 23

Cut hair to discourage growth: 6–8

Cut hair to encourage growth: 22, 23

Entertain: 1–3, 29, 30

Get married: 6–8

Have dental care: 4, 5, 31

Move (house/household): 24, 25

Perm hair: 16, 17

Quit smoking: 6, 11

Straighten hair: 11, 12

Travel for pleasure: 1–3, 29, 30

Wean children: 6, 11

AROUND THE HOUSE

Bake: 26–28

Brew: 9, 10

Can, pickle, or make sauerkraut:
9, 10

Demolish: 9, 10

Dry fruit, vegetables, or meat: 1–3

End projects: 25

Lay shingles: 1–3, 29, 30

Make jams or jellies: 18, 19

Paint: 6–8

Start projects: 13

Wash floors: 18, 19

Wash windows: 20, 21



GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN

Use the December dates shown in the Moon's Astrological Place calendar below to find the best days for the following garden tasks:

PLANT, TRANSPLANT, AND GRAFT: Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces, or Taurus

HARVEST: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius, Gemini, or Aquarius

BUILD/FIX FENCES OR GARDEN BEDS: Capricorn

CONTROL INSECT PESTS, PLOW, AND WEED: Aries, Gemini, Leo, Sagittarius, or Aquarius

PRUNE: Aries, Leo, or Sagittarius. During a waxing Moon, pruning encourages growth; during a waning Moon, it discourages growth.

THE MOON'S ASTROLOGICAL PLACE IN DECEMBER

1 Leo	9 Scorpio	17 Aquarius	25 Gemini
2 Leo	10 Scorpio	18 Pisces	26 Cancer
3 Leo	11 Sagittarius	19 Pisces	27 Cancer
4 Virgo	12 Sagittarius	20 Aries	28 Cancer
5 Virgo	13 Capricorn	21 Aries	29 Leo
6 Libra	14 Capricorn	22 Taurus	30 Leo
7 Libra	15 Capricorn	23 Taurus	31 Virgo
8 Libra	16 Aquarius	24 Gemini	



TAP FOR
MERCURY IN
RETROGRADE
DATES



TAP FOR
DECEMBER
MOON
PHASES

MERCURY IN RETROGRADE

Sometimes the other planets appear to be traveling backward through the zodiac; this is an illusion. We call this illusion *retrograde motion*.

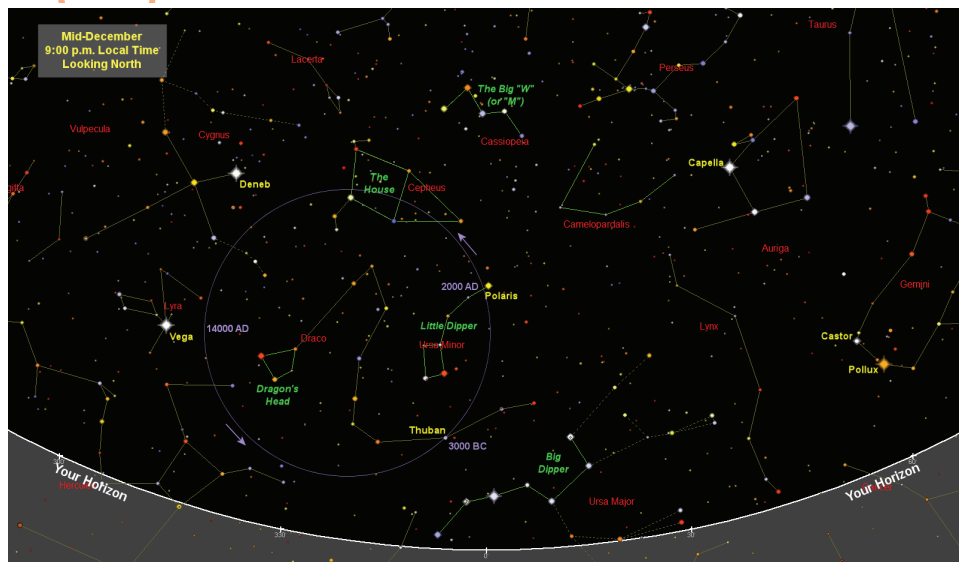
Mercury's retrograde periods can cause our plans to go awry. However, this is an excellent time to reflect on the past. Intuition is high during these periods, and coincidences can be extraordinary.

When Mercury is retrograde, remain flexible, allow extra time for travel, and avoid signing contracts. Review projects and plans at these times, but wait until Mercury is direct again to make any final decisions.

Mercury's remaining 2023 retrograde period: **December 13–(January 1, 2024)**.

–*Celeste Longacre*

Celebrating its 47th anniversary in 2024, the best-selling *Old Farmer's Almanac* Gardening Calendar is filled with beautiful art, helpful tips, insightful quotes, and an easy-to-use grid with holidays and Moon phases. Order yours today at [Almanac.com/Shop](https://www.almanac.com/shop).



THE STARS GO 'ROUND AND 'ROUND

The sky is always in motion. Or, to be more accurate, the sky *appears* to be in constant motion due to the rotation of Earth on its axis. For observers in the Northern Hemisphere, this motion is most obvious when you look to the north on a dark night.

The apparent motion of the sky can be compared to the movement of the hands of a clock. The center of the “sky clock” in the northern sky is Polaris, the North Star. Polaris lies very near the North Celestial Pole, the point in the sky that lies directly above Earth’s north pole. Polaris always remains nearly stationary, while all of the other stars and constellations appear to slowly revolve around it. Just as the hands of a clock revolve around the center of the clock’s face, so too does the sky appear to revolve around the Celestial Pole as Earth rotates on its axis.

The stars of the northern sky appear to rotate counterclockwise around Polaris. And just as with a clock, the movement is



TAP TO GET
A PRINTABLE
**DECEMBER
SKY MAP**



TAP TO
FOLLOW
OHIOAN JEFF
DETRAY'S SKY
ADVENTURES



slow. Here is an example: Note the Big Dipper, located at the bottom of the map, directly below Polaris at 8:00 P.M. If you wait 6 hours—until 2:00 A.M.—and look at the northern sky again, you will see that the Big Dipper has revolved to a position directly to the right of Polaris. All of the other stars on the map will have moved, too. This apparent movement is caused entirely by the rotation of Earth on its axis.

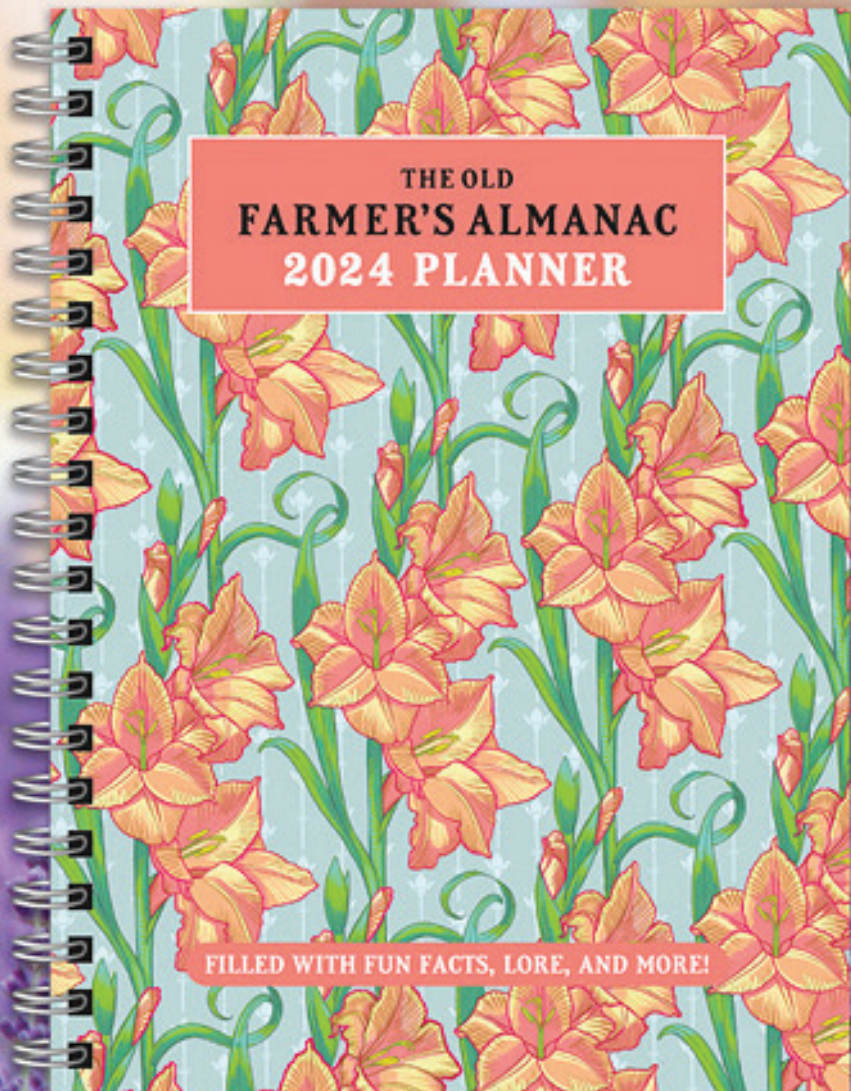
A few constellations are near enough to Polaris that they never drop below the horizon, as do constellations farther from the North Star. These constellations close to Polaris are thus visible all night and every night of the year for observers at midnorthern latitudes, such as in the 48 contiguous United States and much of Europe, and are known as circumpolar constellations. There are six of them, highlighted in green on our map: Ursa Minor, the Lesser Bear (including Polaris); Ursa Major, the Greater Bear (including its Big Dipper asterism); Camelopardalis, the faint Giraffe; Cassiopeia, the Queen (with her distinctive Big W or M shape); Cepheus, the King (looking like a child's drawing of a house); and Draco, the Dragon (whose four-sided head is especially distinctive). These six circumpolar constellations perpetually chase one another around Polaris.

However . . . On a cosmic time scale, different stars take turns as our North Star. This is because Earth slowly wobbles as it spins through space, just as a spinning toy top wobbles as it slows down. This means that the axis of Earth does not always point at Polaris or indeed toward any bright star. Over a period of about 26,000 years, Earth's axis traces out a huge circle on the sky, shown in purple on our map. For much of this time, the axis points toward mostly empty space, so there are long periods when we have no North Star! We're lucky to live during a time when Earth's axis points toward Polaris.

Between 4,000 and 6,000 years ago, Earth's axis pointed at Thuban, a not-so-bright star in the body of Draco, so Thuban—much dimmer than Polaris—was then the North Star. Looking ahead, about 12,000 years from now, Earth's axis will point toward the vicinity of the extremely bright star Vega, which will then be our dazzling North Star for a few thousand years, much brighter than our current North Star, Polaris. And in 26,000 years, the axis will once again point at Polaris, making it our North Star once more!

—Jeff DeTray

Everything you need to stay on track in 2024



THE OLD
FARMER'S ALMANAC
2024 PLANNER

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FOOD



Homemade Gifts From the Kitchen

These simple culinary creations are perfect to give out during the holiday season and also serve well as hostess gifts. You may even want to make these delicious treats to keep at home!

FOOD



Butterscotch Icebox Cookies

PHOTO: SAMANTHA JONES/VAUGHAN COMMUNICATIONS

BUTTERSCOTCH ICEBOX COOKIES

- 1-1/4 cups brown sugar
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts

Using a hand or stand mixer, cream together brown sugar and butter until light. Add egg and vanilla and mix well.

In a bowl, sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. Add to butter mixture and mix well. Stir in nuts.

Form dough into a 2-inch-diameter log and wrap in aluminum foil or wax paper. Chill for 12 to 24 hours.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

Cut log into slices and place on prepared baking sheets. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until golden.

Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

Looking for more great recipes? Get a copy of *The Old Farmer's Almanac's Best Everyday Recipes*, a collection of delicious dishes inspired by our most popular and most requested recipes. For more information or to order, go to Store.almanac.com/cookbook-best-everyday-recipes/

Maple Granola

MAPLE GRANOLA

3-1/2 cups old-fashioned oats

2/3 cup maple syrup

1/2 cup shredded unsweetened coconut

1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional)

1/4 cup vegetable oil

1/4 cup sesame seeds

1 cup raisins, dried cranberries, and/or dried cherries

Preheat oven to 225°F. Line a large, rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a bowl, thoroughly combine oats, maple syrup, coconut, nuts (if using), oil, and sesame seeds. Spread on prepared baking sheet.

Bake for up to 1 hour, or until granola is golden brown; stir mixture several times so that it toasts evenly.

Transfer warm toasted granola to a large bowl. Stir in dried fruit and let cool. Store in a tightly sealed container at room temperature.

Makes about 6 cups.

FOOD

Candy Cane Bark

PHOTO: SAMANTHA JONES/VAUGHAN COMMUNICATIONS

CANDY CANE BARK

10 candy canes

12 ounces dark chocolate chips

1/8 teaspoon peppermint extract

8 ounces white chocolate chips, melted

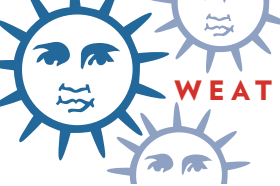
Line a 16x12-inch baking sheet with parchment paper.

Put the candy canes in a plastic bag and crush them with a rolling pin or mallet.

In a bowl, combine dark chocolate with peppermint extract. Melt the mixture gently in the microwave (or in a double boiler), then spread it evenly onto the prepared baking sheet. Place in the refrigerator to harden the candy quickly.

Once the dark chocolate has hardened, spread melted white chocolate evenly over the top of the dark chocolate and quickly sprinkle crushed candy canes over the white chocolate. Refrigerate again to harden.

Break bark into pieces and wrap in individual bags for gifts.



WHEN THE BUSHES ARE FULL OF BERRIES,
A HARD WINTER IS ON THE WAY.



HOW WE MAKE OUR PREDICTIONS

We derive our weather forecasts from a secret formula that was devised by the founder of this Almanac, Robert B. Thomas, in 1792. Thomas believed that weather on Earth was influenced by sunspots, which are magnetic storms on the surface of the Sun.

Over the years, we have refined and enhanced this formula with state-of-the-art technology and modern scientific calculations. We employ three scientific disciplines to make our long-range predictions: solar science, the study of sunspots and other solar activity; climatology, the study of prevailing weather patterns; and meteorology, the study of the atmosphere. We predict weather trends and events by comparing solar patterns and historical weather conditions with current solar activity.

Our forecasts emphasize temperature and precipitation deviations from averages, or normals. These are based on 30-year statistical averages prepared by government meteorological agencies and updated every 10 years. Our forecasts are based on the tabulations that span the period 1991 through 2020.

We believe that nothing in the universe happens haphazardly, that there is a cause-and-effect pattern to all phenomena. However, although neither we nor any other forecasters have as yet gained sufficient insight into the mysteries of the universe to predict the weather with total accuracy, our results are almost always very close to our traditional claim of 80 percent.

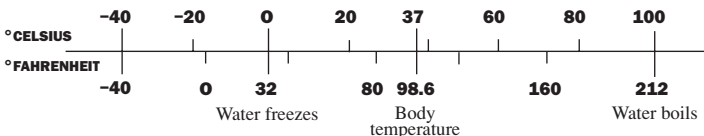


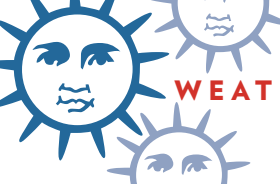
TAP TO FIND OUT THE WEATHER HISTORY OF THE DAY



LOVE ALL THINGS WEATHER? TAP FOR THE WEATHER FOLKLORE OF THE DAY

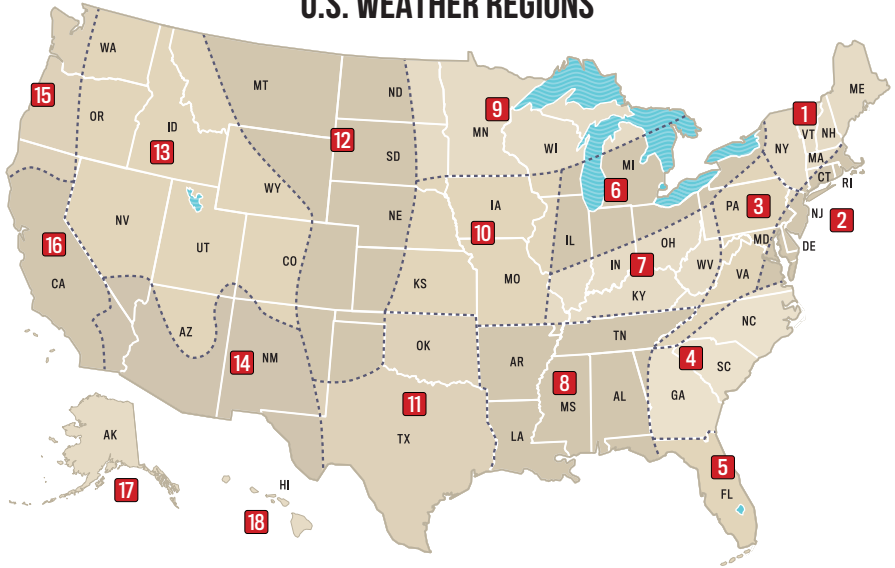
CELSIUS-FAHRENHEIT TABLE





WEATHER FORECASTS

U.S. WEATHER REGIONS



CANADIAN WEATHER REGIONS



CLICK HERE TO
FIND DECEMBER
WEATHER
PREDICTIONS
FOR THE U.S.
AND CANADIAN
REGIONS





SANTA'S MIXED BAG

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, December 7, will see weather that is mild and rainy across Hawaii, while showers will fall over the Appalachians, Southeast, Texas, and Pacific Northwest. Skies will be dry with sunshine across much of the rest of the mainland U.S.

December 21 marks the arrival of the winter solstice, with its shortest day and longest night of the year in North America. Sunny skies will be welcome up and down the eastern seaboard, in the Appalachians, across the Deep South, along the West Coast, and over Hawaii. Rain will occur across the Great Lakes and from the Heartland down into the Desert Southwest, while snow is expected from the Upper Midwest through the northern Plains. In Canada, rain and/or heavy snow will occur from Atlantic Canada into southern Quebec, while it will be very cold with snow showers across much of the rest of the country.

On December 25, Christmas, rainfall will cause wet roadways and slow travel from the Atlantic Coast into the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, as well as across Florida and the Deep South into Texas. Snow will cause slippery travel in the northern Appalachians and the Heartland. It will be very cold and snowy from the High Plains and Intermountain West into the Cascades of the Pacific Northwest, while much of the West Coast will be sunny but chilly. Expect flurries over Alaska and lots of sunshine over Hawaii. Across Canada, expect rain and snow from Atlantic Canada into southern Quebec and very cold with flurries elsewhere.



December 26 is Boxing Day in Canada. Folks there will find it stormy with rain and snow from Atlantic Canada into southern Quebec and bitter cold with flurries from southern Ontario across the Prairies into interior British Columbia, as well as in the Northwest Territories. Expect clear and very cold conditions along the Pacific Coast and in the Yukon.

Those attending New Year's Eve celebrations can expect rain and snow as the ball drops in New York City and a chilly rainfall in Atlanta, Nashville, and New Orleans. It will be chilly with showers in Las Vegas and mild and rainy in Los Angeles. In Canada, snow will be falling as the year changes to 2024 in Montreal and Toronto, while it will be clear and very cold in Vancouver.

December temperatures across the United States will be warmer than normal along the East Coast from New England through the mid-Atlantic states and across Florida and Alaska, about average in the Southeast, and colder than normal elsewhere. Precipitation will be above normal from New England down through the Appalachians to Florida, across the Great Lakes and Ohio and Tennessee valleys, and from Texas across the Desert Southwest into the southern West Coast; it will be near to below normal elsewhere.

Up north, December will be warmer than normal across Atlantic Canada and the northern Northwest Territories and colder than normal elsewhere. Precipitation will average above normal in Atlantic Canada, western Quebec, southern Ontario, and the eastern Prairies. It will be near to below normal across the rest of the country.

One important factor in the upcoming winter may be El Niño, although its potential strength could be held in check by cooler-than-average ocean temperatures between Baja California and Hawaii. Two others are the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation (AMO), which will be in a cool phase, and the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), which will be neutral. Oscillations are linked ocean-atmosphere patterns that influence the weather over periods of weeks to years. We're also monitoring solar activity, as there is a relationship between solar energy and the stratospheric winds near the equator known as the Quasi-Biennial Oscillation (QBO). Under certain conditions, the polar vortex can be displaced from the North Pole, which would open the door for cold shots across the central and eastern United States and southern Canada this upcoming winter.

-Bob Smerbeck and Brian Thompson, Old Farmer's Almanac meteorologists