

# Stars of April

## CELESTIAL TIME TABLE

April	3	8:25 a.m. EDT	Moon in last quarter
	10	10:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Jupiter
	11	12:39 p.m.	New Moon
	14	5:00 p.m.	Moon passes south of Venus
	17	10:00 p.m.	Moon passes south of Saturn
	18	5:00 p.m.	Mercury behind sun
	19	12:41 a.m.	Moon in first quarter
	22	5:00 p.m.	Venus passes north of Aldebaran
	25	3:55 p.m.	Full Moon

Starting this month our skycharts will have a new look, brought about by a change that makes them much more useful to readers. The previous version of the chart divided the sky into northern and southern halves. The new chart shows the entire sky, arranged so that the center of the chart is the point over the observer's head. The horizon is represented by the border of the chart. North is at the top and east is on the left, as would be correct if one were looking at the chart held up overhead. Now, all visible constellations appear whole, and lines of sight from one star to another appear as "true" on the chart as they do in the sky.

by James Stokley

Venus, steadily increasing in brightness, now dominates the western evening sky and you'll be able to see it well before any other planet or any star appears. It sets about 10 p.m., local DST, on April 1 and an hour later at the month's end.

Last Nov. 6 Venus was invisible as it passed behind the sun. A few weeks later it had moved enough to the east of the sun as to be visible, very low in the west, just after sunset. Evening after evening since then it has been setting later and later and increasing in prominence.

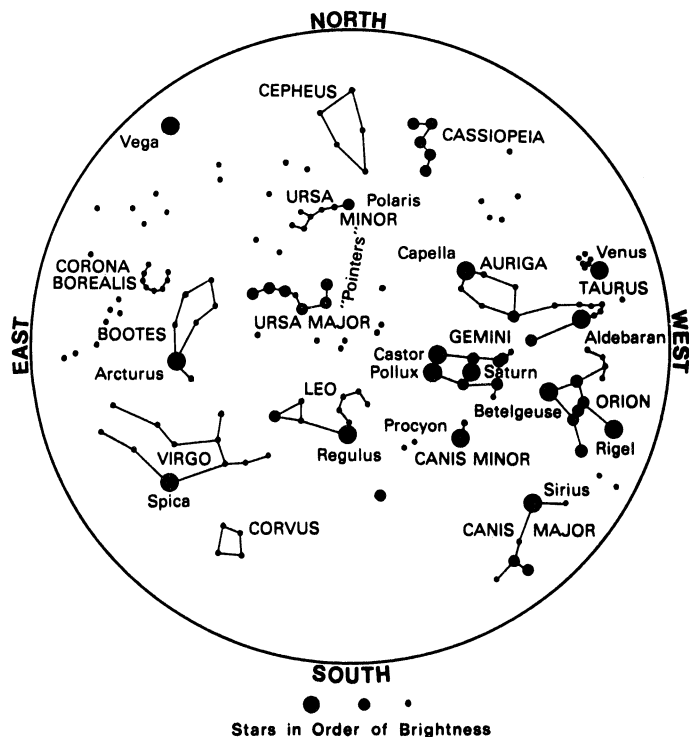
In the coming months it will become even more conspicuous as it sets still later. On June 18, farthest east of the sun, it will be visible nearly until mid-

night. After that it will start moving back toward the sun, setting earlier each evening. At the same time, however, it will approach closer to earth, which will make it still brighter. On July 21, at greatest brilliancy, it will be nearly twice as bright as now. After passing almost between sun and earth at the end of August it will again shine brightly—in the eastern sky at dawn.

During this period it will undergo a change in phase as the moon does every month, although you'll need a telescope to perceive the phases of Venus. Now farther away than the sun, which illuminates it, more than half of its bright hemisphere is visible to us. Thus it has a

gibbous phase like the moon between first quarter and full. In mid-May it will be a "half-Venus," similar to the half-moon at first quarter. As it moves still nearer, and more than half of the sunlit hemisphere is turned away from us, it will appear as a crescent. This will get thinner as it approaches the sun.

By the end of April, if you look low in the east just before sunrise, you may see Jupiter. It's about a sixth as bright as Venus is now. Mars, considerably fainter and higher, will be visible in the southeast. It rises about two hours ahead of the sun. Mercury, which passes behind the sun on April 18, won't be visible this month. □



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