

# Venus and Jupiter Shine on April Evenings

by James Stokley

The finest display of bright planets in years is the treat that April brings to the evening sky.

Mars this month is at its brightest, as it makes the closest approach to earth of this trip around the sun. It shines in the southeast, in the constellation of Virgo, the virgin. Sirius, the brightest nighttime star, is only a little brighter. It is visible in the southwest, in Canis Major, the great dog.

Venus, in the west, is still brightening and will reach its greatest brilliance in July.

Jupiter is the third brilliant planet. It is in the southwest, in Cancer, the crab, and is a little brighter than Mars.

The accompanying maps show where the principal stars and planets are located about April 1, at 10:00 p.m., your own kind of standard time. The skies look about the same at 9:00 p.m. on the 15th and 8:00 p.m. on the 30th.

Venus, however, changes during the month, because it is moving rapidly

across the sky. A line on the southern map, passing through Taurus, the bull, shows its path. Three of the symbols for a brilliant object show where it will be about April 6, 15 and 30.

Mars also is moving against the starry background, but not as rapidly.

Jupiter moves more slowly than either Venus or Mars. It is in the southwest, in Cancer, but close to the border between that constellation and Gemini, the twins. Pollux, just above, represents one of the brothers. The other, shown on the northern sky map, is Castor.

The maps show seven other very bright stars. Those close to the horizon, however, are dimmed because of atmospheric absorption. Low in the west, in Taurus, is Aldebaran, many times fainter than nearby Venus. A little higher, and farther to the right, stands Capella, in Auriga, the charioteer.

A familiar group is the Big Dipper, which is part of Ursa Major, the great bear. In the bowl of the Dipper are the

two "pointers." These indicate the direction of Polaris, the pole star, in Ursa Minor, the little bear.

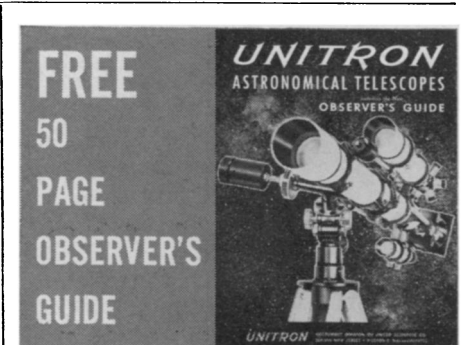
A line to the right, following the curve of the Big Dipper's handle, leads to Bootes, the herdsman. This is in the east with the bright star Arcturus, and is shown on the map of the southern sky. In the south shines Leo, the lion, with brilliant Regulus, part of a subgroup called the "Sickle."

## CELESTIAL TIMETABLE FOR APRIL

April	EST	
1	3:59 p.m.	Moon in last quarter
8	10:00 p.m.	Moon farthest, distance 252,600 miles
9	5:21 p.m.	New moon
13	1:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Venus
15	7:00 a.m.	Mars in opposite part of sky from sun
17	11:00 a.m.	Moon passes north of Jupiter
	3:48 p.m.	Moon in first quarter
21	1:00 p.m.	Mars nearest earth, distance 55,850,000 miles
23	noon	Moon passes south of Mars
	2:00 p.m.	Moon nearest, distance 222,300 miles
24	7:04 a.m.	Full moon; total eclipse of moon, not visible in North America (Visible generally in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and the Pacific Ocean)

Subtract one hour for CST, two hours for MST, and three hours for PST

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With artificial satellites already launched and space travel almost a reality, astronomy has become today's fastest growing hobby. Exploring the skies with a telescope is a relaxing diversion for father and son alike. UNITRON's handbook contains full-page illustrated articles on astronomy, observing, telescopes and accessories. It is of interest to both beginners and advanced amateurs.

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