

The Night Sky

Venus at Greatest Brilliancy in Evening Sky

Our nearest planetary neighbor, Venus, will reach its greatest brilliancy by the end of April. Venus passes just above the Pleiades star cluster in Taurus on April 3rd. Let's hope for a clear sky over a few days at the beginning of April to witness this very close conjunction. Venus will be very high in the evening sky throughout the month, setting 4 hours after sunset on the 1st to slightly less than 3½ hours after sunset by month's end.

We now have to wait until a few hours before sunrise to catch the remaining naked-eye planets (except Mercury which will not be visible this month). Looking towards the southeast an hour before dawn at the beginning of the month, see Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter in order moving left to right. Mars will have a reddish color and Jupiter will be the brightest of the three. As the days progress, watch Mars pull away from Saturn. On April 9th, these 3 planets are equally spaced from each other. From April 14th through the 16th, watch the moon move eastward below these 3 planets. As April begins, Jupiter rises about 3½ hours before the sun, followed less than one-half hour later by Saturn and Mars.

The moon will be at full phase at 10:35 p.m. EDT on April 7th. The moon reaches perigee (closest to earth) just 8½ hours after reaching this full phase, making for our second "supermoon" for the year. Full moons are called supermoon when the full moon occurs within a day of the moon being at perigee. Supermoons are noticeably brighter and larger than normal full moons. Full moons in the month of April are known by variety of different names by Native Americans, including the "Full Pink Moon", "Full Egg Moon", and "Full Spouting Grass Moon".

The ETSU Powell Observatory open houses are on hiatus until September. Later this summer, the 2020-2021 schedule for our Astronomy open houses can be found on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/observatory/default.php>.

The ETSU Planetarium Shows are also on hiatus until September. Later this summer, the 2020-2021 schedule for the ETSU Planetarium Shows will be posted on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/outreach/planetarium.php>.

This month's Night Sky was written by Dr. Donald G. Luttermoser, Chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at ETSU. He can be reached at lutter@etsu.edu. Any students wishing to pursue a career in Physics or Astronomy are encouraged to contact him at this email address. Astronomy-related information for the public, including a link to the ETSU Powell Observatory,

can be found at <http://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/> by selecting the Public Outreach pull down menu at the top of this web page.