

The Night Sky

A Meeting of the Two Brightest Planets

Throughout the previous two months, we have watched the two brightest planets in the evening sky, Venus and Jupiter, slowly approach each other. Finally, this month on June 9th, they reach their closest separation on this evening, with Jupiter residing 1.5-degree of arc to the lower-left of Venus. These two planets will be joined by a third naked-eye planet, the innermost planet to the Sun, Mercury, sitting about 10-degrees to the lower right of Venus and Jupiter. You might notice two additional stars just to the right of Venus. These are the two brightest stars in Gemini, Pollux (on the left) and Castor. Make sure you catch this sight before Mercury sets (about one hour after sunset).

As the month progress, watch Jupiter sink lower and lower with respect to Venus. On the nights of June 16th and 17th, the waxing crescent Moon joins this planetary trio. During these two nights, Jupiter will be halfway between Venus and Mercury. On the 16th, the Moon will be just above Mercury, and on the 17th, to the upper-left of Venus. This should make for a dazzling show! Hopefully the sky will be clear during this time.

We now have to wait until the early morning sky to see our last two naked-eye planets, Mars and Saturn. Mars rises about an hour and a half before the Sun at midmonth. It should be easy to spot sitting low above the east-northeast horizon one hour before sunrise. Saturn will also be visible during this time, sitting in the southern sky during the early morning hours.

The Moon will reach full phase on June 29th at 7:57 p.m. EDT. The June Full Moon is known as the Full Strawberry Moon by many Native Americans, since strawberries are typically harvested during the month of June.

The ETSU Powell Observatory open houses are on hiatus until September. Later this summer, the 2026-2027 schedule for our Astronomy open houses can be found on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/observatory/starparty.php>.

The ETSU planetarium shows are also on hiatus until September. The 2026-2027 schedule will be posted on the web later this summer at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/outreach/planetarium.php>.

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can be found at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/> by selecting the Public Outreach pull down menu on the lower-left side of this web page.