

©ABRAMS PLANETARIUM SKY CALENDAR MAY 2020

An aid to enjoying the changing sky

Use this scale to measure angular distances between objects on diagrams below.

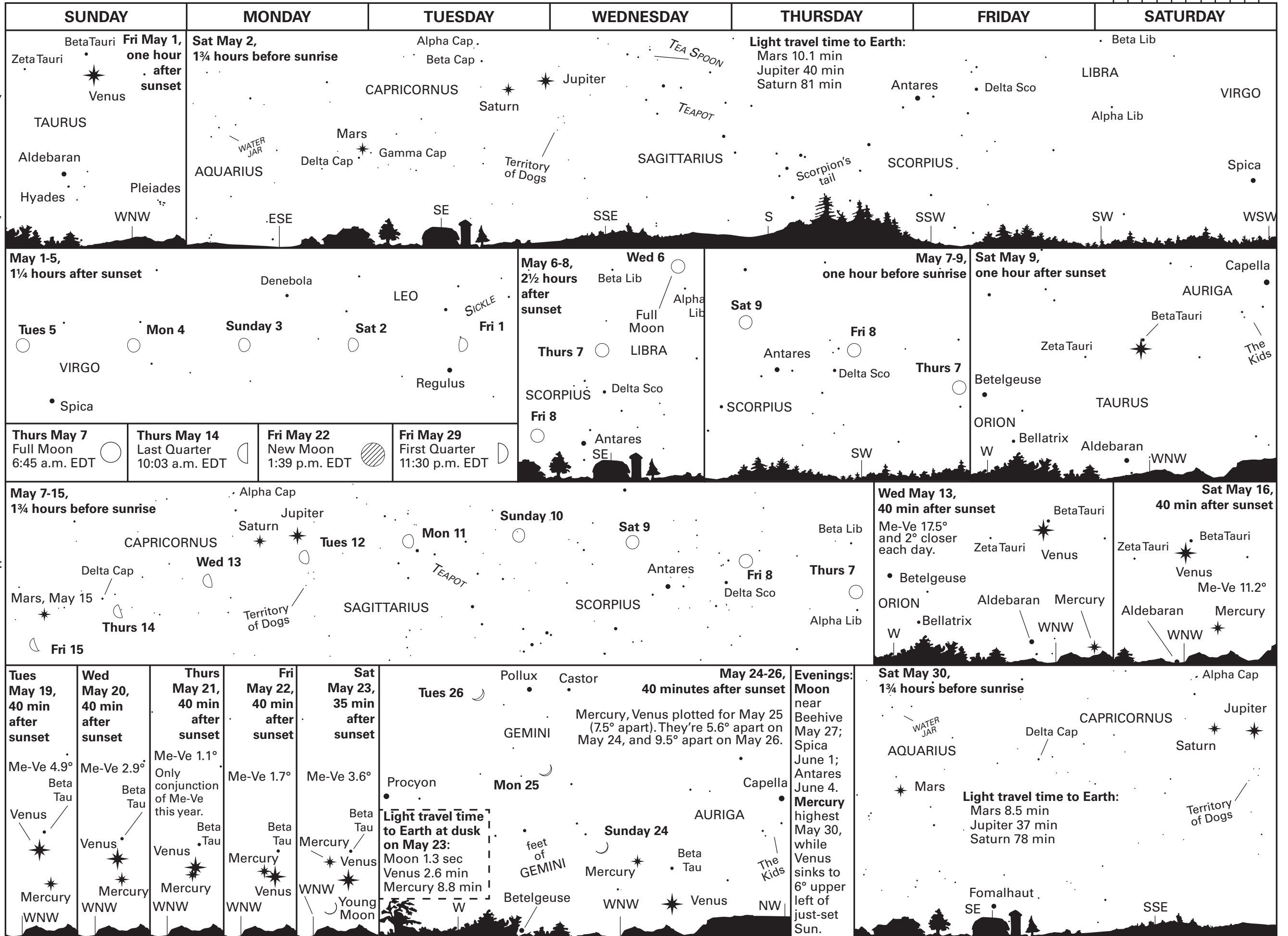


Evening planets: Venus on May 1 is near peak, mag. -4.7. Its crescent, 24 percent and 40" (arcseconds) across, can be resolved even by 7x binoculars, in day or bright twilight. At sunset on May 1, Venus is 38° upper left of Sun and sets 3.4 hours later. Starting retrograde, Venus hovers 1.5° from Beta Tauri May 9-12 in *quasi-conjunction*, not overtaking star. **Dramatic changes!** By May 16, Venus is 25° upper left of setting Sun, sets 2.3 hours after Sun, phase 10%, 51" across. On May 22, 18° from Sun, setting 1.6 hours afterward, 5%, 55" across. On May 29, only 7.5° from Sun, setting 40 min after, very thin crescent under 1%, 58" across. (Setting times for lat. 40°N.)

Mercury passes *superior conjunction* behind Sun on May 4, and *perihelion* five days later, so emerges fast and bright into evening sky. Using binoculars, can you spot Mercury on May 9, when it shines at mag. -1.7 and sets just 30 minutes after sunset? It'll be easy even for unaided eye a few days later; see May 13, 16, 19-26. Separation of Mercury and Venus around their May 21 conjunction changes rapidly, because Mercury, outbound, is on far side of its orbit on way to *greatest elongation* on June 3, while Venus, on near side of its orbit, is racing sunward to reach *inferior conjunction* on same date. **Don't miss gibbous Mercury and crescent Venus about 1° apart on May 21.**

Three bright outer planets at dawn: See May 2, 7-15, 30. Bright Jupiter (mag. -2.3 to -2.6) is in SSE to S. Saturn (mag. +0.6 to +0.4) is within 5° to Jupiter's east all month. **They're in quasi-conjunction**, with least separation 4.7° on May 18. Saturn commences retrograde on May 11, Jupiter on May 14. Through binoculars, note 2.1° by 1.1° kite-shaped asterism of four stars of mag. 4.5 to 4.9, *Territory of Dogs*, in eastern Sagittarius within 7° S of Jupiter. Telescope shows Jupiter's cloud belts and four moons, Saturn's rings. Mars (+0.4 to 0.0) is in SE, lower left of Saturn, by 20° on May 1, by 30° on May 16, and 40° on May 30. It's early spring in Mars' S hemisphere; gibbous disk is tiny, yet its extensive, bright CO2 South Polar Cap is obvious. For more, visit our *Extra Content Page*, www.abramsplanetarium.org/msta

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