

The Full Moons of the Year in the Northern Hemisphere

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The Wolf Moon Dancing with Mars, January 2025

The full moon was an incredibly critical monthly event for our ancestors. Perhaps after this article you, like me, will make a point to go outside to greet and admire each magical full moon.

Our ancestors (and some of us to this day) used the full moon for timekeeping and to guide activities for agriculture and hunting. Its cycles were used for religious ceremonies, storytelling, and social gatherings; our ancestors believed it influenced fertility, plant growth, emotions, and spiritual energy. Pragmatically, the autumn full moon's brightness offered extra light for harvesting and hunting.

For this exhibit I had the opportunity to visually explore a topic that I have been in love with for decades – the interpretation of the names and meanings of the full moons. It was a great deal of creative fun and required research into the full moon names and their meanings. Through painting and researching I gained insight into why the full moons were named as they are and it provides a narrative of survival, challenges, joy, and the timing of life's tasks.

I hope you will also find the full moon names poetic, heartbreaking and joyful. They help us connect to the land, history and nature's cycles.

January

Common Moon Names: Wolf, Old, Ice, Cold, Moon After Yule, Quiet



The Wolf Moon

January is the darkest and coldest month. In many cultures it is a time for reflection as well as a challenge for survival. Ancient Celtic cultures called it the quiet moon because it marks a time of rest and reflection before the activity of an awakening spring. January is a cold month, which is reflected in the Cree name, Cold Moon. During the coldest parts of winter freezing to death was a daily hazard for our ancestors. It is also referred to as the old moon because it marks the end of a year. Wolf Moon refers to the sound of howling wolves in the cold night.

February

Common Moon Names: Snow, Hunger, Trapper's, Little Famine, Bony



The Snow Moon

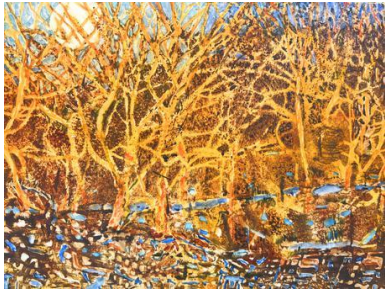


The Hunger Moon

While January's survival challenge was the cold, February began the risk of starvation as food stores started to run out. This is recognized in three names: the Little Famine, Hunger and Bony moons. Snow Moon honors February's reputation as a month of snow and blizzards. The Trapper's Moon refers to a key February activity - trapping animals for their thick winter fur, another important survival task.

March

Common Moon Names: Worm, Crust, Death, Windy, Fish, Sap, Big Famine, Crow, Lenten



The Worm Moon



The Crow Moon

March was probably the hardest month as food stores ran out and the possibility of acquiring food from crops was still far off. The names of the March full moon covers two themes: the March weather and the challenge of survival. While Death Moon certainly refers to death from starvation it also refers to the death of winter as March heralds the arrival of spring. The Worm, Windy, Crust moon names describe the physical changes in the earth as winter starts to retreat. Animals are honored as well. The Crow Moon refers to the cawing of crows that signals the end of winter. The Worm Moon recognizes the awakening of worms in the earth, while the Fish Moon honors fish, like shad, which swim upstream to spawn in March, making them easier to catch. The migration of some fish species upstream was a major factor in preventing starvation. The Sap Moon refers to the running of sap and marks the time to tap maples for maple syrup. Lenten Moon is from the Old English or Anglo-Saxon and references the month of Lent.

April

Common Moon Names: Pink, Seed, Awakening, Grass, Egg, Planter's



The Pink Moon



The Awakening Moon

April's full moon names celebrate the arrival of spring. Simple!

May

Common Moon Names: Flower, Planting, Milk, Hare



The Planting Moon



The Flower Moon

The celebration of spring, beauty and abundance continues in the name of the May full moon. The name Hare Moon is more symbolic than it looks. If, like me, you had an explosion of baby bunnies on your property this year, you might think that the arrival of baby bunnies is the meaning of the moon's name. However, in medieval England, seeing a "hare in the moon" was a common sight and more prevalent than seeing a "man in the moon" which we see today. The image of a hare or rabbit in the moon is a widespread symbol of fertility, rebirth, and new beginnings.

The full moon in May signaled farmers to begin planting their crops, hence the name the Planting Moon.

June

Common Moon Names: Rose, Strawberry, Mead, Dyan



The Mead Moon



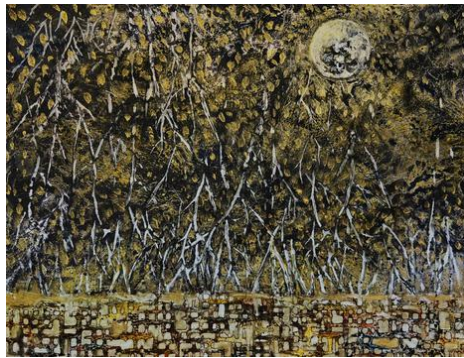
The Mead Moon-Solstice

The Mead Moon name is from Europe and it marks the time when honey was ready for harvesting, and mead (a honey-based alcoholic drink) was traditionally brewed. It is also associated with the "honeymoon," a period when newlyweds were given mead to celebrate their marriage during the

month of June, which was a popular time for weddings. Dyan Moon is a Celtic name, with "dyan" possibly coming from a word meaning "pair," which may also reference love and partnering. Strawberries are ripe and roses are at their peak in June, and both are honored in common full moon names for June.

July

Common Moon Names: Buck, Thunder, Hay, Salmon



The Thunder Moon



The Buck Moon

In July bucks begin growing their antlers, hence the name the Buck Moon. It is a time of harvesting hay, experiencing thunderstorms, and catching salmon as they migrate upstream.

August

Common Moon Names: Corn, Grain, Sturgeon, Lightening, Fruit, Dispute



The Corn Moon



The Sturgeon Moon

The harvesting of corn, grain and fruit are honored in three of the common names for the August full moon. The name Dispute Moon has an interesting meaning. Ancient Celtic tribes used this name because it marked a time for settling disagreements, often during harvest festivals and feasts.

September

Common Moon Names: Harvest, Barley, Nut, Singing, Fruit

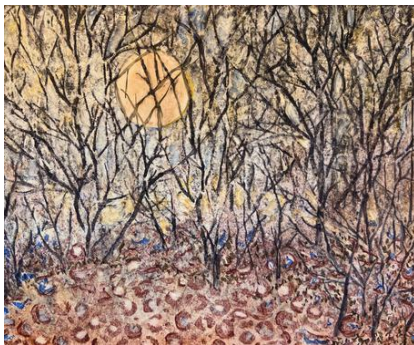


The Harvest Moon

The Harvest Moon, which celebrates the act of harvesting, is the most popular name for this moon. It also describes how the light of the full moon could extend harvesting during this busy time. The types of harvests are found in the names Fruit and Nut moon. Singing Moon may not be as obvious a meaning for this moon. In ancient Celtic and European traditions, harvesting and singing went together. Singing was also an integral part of harvest celebrations.

October

Common Moon Names: Hunter's, Blood, Blackberry



The Hunter's Moon



The Blood Moon

The Hunter's Moon is the traditional and common name for this moon. October's full moon is sometimes called the Blood Moon because it refers to either the red color of the moon during a lunar eclipse or to the red color of changing autumn leaves. The Blood Moon name is also tied to the Hunter's Moon. Hunters tracked and killed prey by its light in preparation for winter and it may be a

reference to the blood from hunted animals. Nice juicy blackberries can be harvested in October in some areas, hence the more uncommon name Blackberry Moon.

November

Common Moon Names: Beaver, Mourning, Trading, Frosty, Dark



The Beaver Moon



The Mourning Moon



The Frosty Moon

Often the explanation for the Beaver Moon is that beavers are active in November building and fortifying their huts for winter. Based on my research I think the more likely reason is that this was the ideal time to trap beavers for their fur. This was a survival task as the thick beaver fur was needed to keep warm in the approaching winter. Trader Moon, though a less common name, notes the beaver pelt trading activity in November. November is also a month that sees the first frost and snow while the days significantly shorten. My research on why it is called the Mourning Moon found several explanations. The word mourning may have been chosen by Pagans because the full moon falls before the winter solstice, making it a time for letting go of the past and grieving what has been lost. It's a period for reflection, mourning old habits, and preparing for a new season or year by shedding what is no longer needed. It can also reference literal death, or perhaps symbolic death as the season of abundance dies.

December

Common Moon Names: Cold, Moon Before Yule, Long Night, Snow, Oak, Christmas



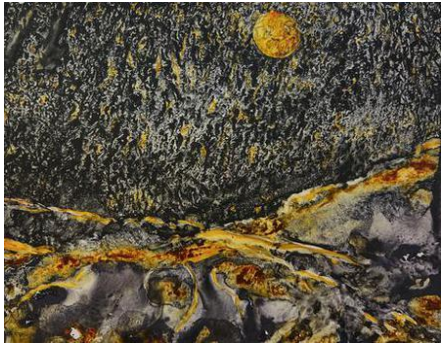
The Moon Before Yule

December's full moon names are straight forward. The use of Oak Moon is less common and comes from ancient Celtic traditions that associate the oak tree with strength and eternity. December was

the time for gathering mistletoe from oak trees for the upcoming winter solstice festival. This name also reflects the importance of the oak during the harsh winter months.

Other Significant Moon Names and Traditions

The Black Moon



The Black Moon

A Black Moon is a term for an extra new moon that occurs either as the second new moon in a single calendar month or the third new moon in a season that has four new moons instead of the usual three.

The Blue Moon



The Blue Moon

A Blue Moon is the second full moon in a month or the third full moon in an astronomical season that has four full moons. Though the common expression “Once in a Blue Moon” implies rarity, Blue Moons are fairly common, occurring every two to three years.

Supermoon



A supermoon is a full moon that occurs when the moon is at or near its closest point to Earth in its elliptical orbit, called perigee. This alignment causes the full moon to appear up to 14% larger and 30% brighter than a full moon at its farthest point (apogee). The term "supermoon" is a non-scientific nickname that gained popularity to describe this phenomenon.

The December 2025 full moon, known commonly as the Cold Moon, will occur on Thursday, December 4, 2025, at approximately 6:14 p.m. EST. This is the third and final supermoon of the year.

Planting by the moon

A full moon was traditionally used for planting root vegetables, as its peak gravitational pull was thought to draw moisture and nutrients deeper into the soil, encouraging strong root growth. This period was also considered ideal for planting above-ground crops like leafy greens and fruits, as the increased nighttime light was thought to support leaf and fruit development and encourage greater sap flow and moisture content for harvesting.



The Winter Solstice is on December 21 at 10:02 am