

★ **Sown in the Stars: Planting by the Signs****Sarah L. Hall****Meg Wilson, Photographer**

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*Sown in the Stars* surveys the revered practice of planting, farming, and harvesting by the phases of the moon and positions of the zodiac.

Centered in Appalachia, the book includes interviews with various rural Kentucky residents who consult shifting astrological and astronomical positions before they plant their vegetables, flowers, trees, and other crops. While the earth's orientation to the sun remains in each astrological position for an approximate month, the book notes, the moon is in each of the twelve signs for only two to two and a half days before shifting to the next sign. Whether the moon is waxing or waning is also considered, with the "Old Moon" having a different effect than new and full moons.

Here, Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces, and Taurus are regarded as the most nurturing moon signs, while "barren" Sagittarius is "best limited to destroying pests and harvesting." The book also investigates how zodiac signs correspond to parts of human anatomy: Aries might be referred to as the head, rather than by its astrological name; and certain signs are thought to encourage faster healing, while others, like Leo or the heart, could cause excessive bleeding.

Even in an era of increasing technology and agribusiness, Sarah L. Hall notes, planting by the signs endures. Indeed, the book explains how gardening and farming by the signs is an Appalachian tradition, with wisdom passed down through oral legends, written records, and general advice. It covers practices that differ according to personal experiences: some gardeners counsel against sowing during lunar Gemini, for example, noting that as the sign of the twins, the full breadth of the plants will be divided. Through its engaging and informative interviews, *Sown in the Stars* preserves these customs for future generations.

With a rich historical and regional grounding, *Sown in the Stars* is a fascinating, pragmatic cosmic resource for biodynamic planting.

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