

•GARDENING

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Many thoughts are expressed when experts are asked if the moon affects plant survival and productivity. Phillip Case is a retired editor of The State-Journal in Frankfort, Ky., where he has been a gardening columnist. He is a University of Kentucky Extension Master Gardener, and a minister at the Warsaw Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Warsaw, Ky. He likes to grow herbs and tomatoes, which are his particular passion.

He first got interested in the practice when he moved from Lexington to Frankfort and observed that a member of his church had a better garden. "I asked him about the difference in his garden and mine; he said he planted by the phase of the moon and signs of the zodiac."

I was intrigued by the duality of a man of faith who also followed zodiac and moon signs and asked how he might explain this gardening

practice to a skeptic?

He answered, quite rightly, with a quote from Ecclesiastes 3: "To everything there is a season...a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted." He added: "(Planting by the signs) has been followed for generations, and no doubt centuries, by indigenous people and others who passed their knowledge down from one generation to the next."

But what about the science? "As we became more 'scientific,' folks started to laugh at the idea. Those who try it and practice good gardening techniques, however, don't laugh long."

By consulting almanacs and following their advice on planting and killing times, when best to weed or plant root crops or above ground plants, he found that the practice worked for him, especially in increased yields. "People tell me once they try following the phases and signs, they aren't going back to just 'planting in the ground.'" Case said.

He's also clear about one thing: "I don't debate other systems of planting by the signs and I can't take the blame if someone plants a tomato plant in the right phase and sign, say under a shade tree where a sun-loving plant never gets any direct rays, and doesn't water or care for it and it doesn't produce."



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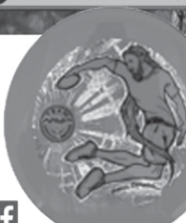


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