

Consideration of the Attic month and Nate's graphic of the moon on the 20th

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 30, 2022 at 9:10 AM

I wanted to make a dedicated post regarding the calendar used in ancient times. It is such a very different way to measure time for each month (according to the moon), compared to how we keep our time now. Late yesterday afternoon looking up at the moon (a waxing crescent) had me pondering that ancient way of keeping time.

Based on Wikipedia we can deduce that it is very likely that Epicurus would have used the Attic calendar since he was living in Athens. But before he lived in Athens, he may have used different calendars, since it also says this:

Quote

The **Attic calendar** or **Athenian calendar** is the [lunisolar calendar](#) beginning in midsummer with the lunar month of Hekatombaion, in use in ancient [Attica](#), the ancestral territory of the [Athenian polis](#). It is sometimes called the **Greek calendar** because of Athens's cultural importance, but it is only one of many [ancient Greek calendars](#).

Although relatively abundant, the evidence for the Attic calendar is still patchy and often contested. As **it was well known in Athens and of little use outside Attica**, no contemporary source set out to describe the system as a whole. Further, even during the well-sourced 5th and 4th centuries BC, the calendar underwent changes, not all perfectly understood. As such, any account given of it must be a tentative reconstruction.

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attic_calendar

Quote

The Greeks, as early as the time of [Homer](#), appear to have been familiar with the division of the year into the twelve lunar months but no intercalary month *Embolimos* or day is then mentioned, with twelve months of 354 days.^[1] Independent of the division of a month into days, it was divided into periods according to the increase and decrease of the moon. **Each of the city-states in ancient Greece had their own calendar** that was based on the cycle of the moon, but also the various religious

festivals that occurred throughout the year.[2]

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek_calendars

Wikipedia goes on with this:

Quote

Monthly and annual festivals were not usually allowed to fall on the same days so every festival month had an opening phase with exactly recurrent practices and celebrations while in the body of each month was a unique schedule of festival days.

A parallel function of this calendar was the positioning of the perhaps 15 or so forbidden days on which business should not be transacted.

Rather than considering the month as a simple duration of thirty days, the three-part numbering scheme focuses on the moon itself. In particular the waning days 10-2 and the waxing days 2-10 frame the crucial moment where the moon vanishes and then reappears.

A date under this scheme might be "the third (day) of Thargelion waning", meaning the 28th day of Thargelion.

Names of the days of the month

new moon	11th	later 10th
2nd waxing	12th	9th waning
3rd waxing	13th	8th waning
4th waxing	14th	7th waning
5th waxing	15th	6th waning
6th waxing	16th	5th waning
7th waxing	17th	4th waning
8th waxing	18th	3rd waning
9th waxing	19th	2nd waning
10th waxing	earlier 10th	old and new [moon]

To summarise the days with special names.

- The first day: *noumenia*, or new moon.
- The last day: *henē kai nea*, the "old and the new".

- The 21st day: "the later tenth". The Attic month had three days named "tenth" (equivalent in a straight sequence to the 10th, 20th, and 21st days). These were distinguished as
 - 10th: "the tenth (of the month) waxing"
 - 20th: "the earlier tenth" (i.e. waning)
 - 21st: "the later tenth" (i.e. waning)

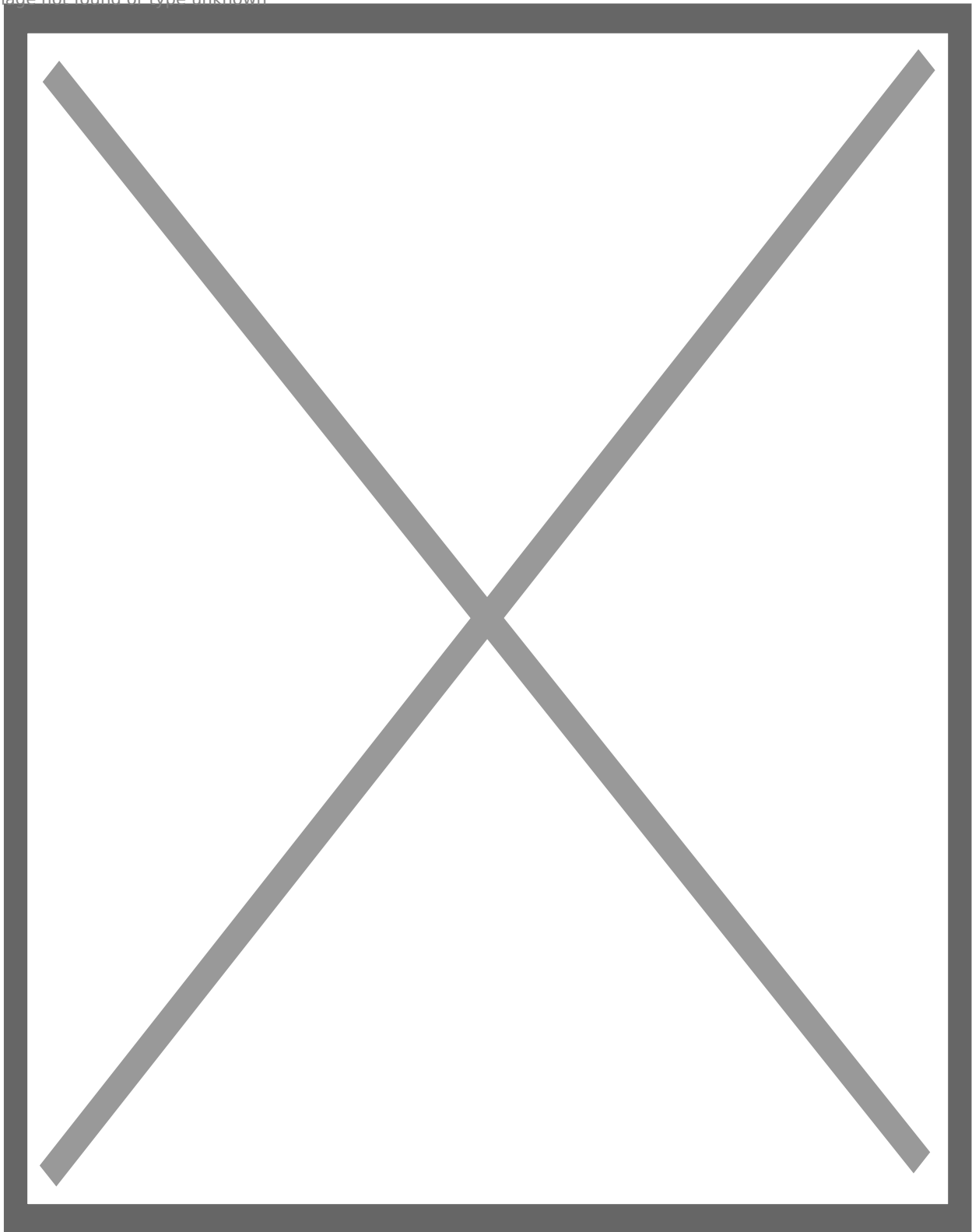
This strange juxtapositioning of the two days called the tenth, the earlier and the later, further highlighted the shift into the moon's waning phase.

When a month was to last 29 instead of 30 days (a "hollow" month), the last day of the month ("the old and new") was pulled back by one day. That is to say, the "second day of the waning month" (the 29th in straight sequence) was renamed as month's end.

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Now I want to say that as I was looking at a moon chart, and remembering past times of gazing at the moon, it came to me that it is difficult to know exactly when the moon is completely full by the ordinary eyes -- so then this counting would only apply to days when you can discern clear changes in the size of the moon.

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[Moongiant - Moon Phase Calendar](#)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2763-consideration-of-the-attic-month-and-nate-s-graphic-of-the-moon-on-the-20th/>

Current, past and future Moon Phase Calendar. Click on Moon Phase Calendar to get complete moon phase details for that day.

www.moongiant.com



And I would like to go on to suggest a way of counting which may or may not make sense (but is different than the Wikipedia article) and this way of counting is according to what a human eye can see happening with the moon. My idea would be that you start counting on the day that you see a large enough crescent -- that would be waxing day 1, waxing day 2, etc. and then you continue to count to waxing day 10 (which would be called the "earlier 10th", the following day would be considered full moon of which there would be several days (as you can see from the chart above, that the moon is nearly full both before and after the actual full moon). Then on the day when you can discern that the moon is waning you begin counting waning day 1, waning day 2, etc. and continue counting up (not down) and so this would give you the "later 10th".

But this is just my own idea, my own imagination of trying to make sense of things.

Although now thinking further, we do actually know when the moon is full because it rises opposite of the sun setting. So not sure than if my idea makes any sense to count the way I suggest.

@Nate what do you think?

By my counting then, the 20th (which would be the 2nd 10th) would fall on the last day of a visible waning crescent. (And this is different than [what Nate calculated on another thread](#)).

Waning crescent:

[moon_day WanC 10.jpg](#)

Edit note: Dec.1, 2022 -- I have now resigned myself to the Wikipedia version of the counting of the days of the month (and I found nothing to support my own idea). The rest of this thread goes on with a little bit of a back and forth between this and the Wikipedia counting. And also contains Nate's nice graphic design, in multiple colors.

Post by “Cassius” of November 30, 2022 at 1:48 PM

This is an interesting approach and I look forward to seeing what the birthday experts think. It sort of makes it more immediate when you can see the changes on the face of the moon.

Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 2:52 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

By my counting then, the 20th (which would be the 2nd 10th) would fall on the last day of a visible waning crescent.

Wouldn't the "earlier tenth" (20th) look like the moon on the above charts on Dec. 13 or 14th? The Noumenia seems to have started when the "first sliver" of the new moon was visible.

[Noumenia - Wikipedia](#)

btw, I really like this line of thinking of [Kalosyni](#) and the graphics that @Nate has been working up!!

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 30, 2022 at 3:45 PM

Quote

The Noumenia was marked when **the first sliver of moon was visible** and was held in honor of Selene, Apollon Noumenios,^[1] Hestia and the other Hellenic household Gods. The Noumenia was also the second day in a three-day household celebration held each lunar month; [Hekate's Deipnon](#) is on the last day before the first slice of visible moon and is the last day in a lunar month, then the Noumenia which marks the first day in a lunar month, followed by the Agathos Daimon (Good Spirits) on the second day of the Lunar month.

Actually this confirms my idea:

If you read carefully it says: "when the first sliver of moon was visible" -- by my method that would 1st day waxing and it would look like December 24/25th. And it says that the last day of the lunar month is the day before the first sliver is visible.

But I am unclear as to when to say that the first sliver is visible...for our naked eyes do we need to have it be enough of a sliver to register the presence of light?... and so moon would need to be like on December 25th (even though the picture shows the beginning of a sliver on the 24th, but may not yet be visible to the naked eye).

Also the same problem with waning moon...at what point can we see with our eyes that the moon is waning? I am coming from a very intuitive (and primitive) way of seeing the moon and judging the changing of the shape to determine what day of the month it is.

Post by “Cassius” of November 30, 2022 at 4:03 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

btw, I really like this line of thinking of Kalosyni and the graphics that Nate has been working up!!

I suppose by now at the advanced age I am it is getting a little easier to judge the seasons by position of the sun in the sky, but even now it's kind of hard. On the other hand the phase of the moon sure is a lot more immediate and easier to judge, so I can see why people thought it made good sense to use it as the basis for a calendar.

Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 4:17 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

"when the first sliver of moon was visible" -- by my method that would 1st day waxing

Right. Using the Nov/Dec calendars above, to my understanding:

The noumenia or the first sliver of waxing would be Nov. 24 or 25.

The 10th would be Dec. 3

The 20th or "earlier 10th" would be Dec. 13 or 14.

Then the final 10 waning days count down toward the next noumenia.

So the 20th day of the lunar month would always look the same.

Post by “Eikadistes” of November 30, 2022 at 4:24 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

By my counting then, the 20th (which would be the 2nd 10th) would fall on the last day of a visible waning crescent.

Wouldn't the "earlier tenth" (20th) look like the moon on the above charts on Dec. 13 or 14th? The Noumenia seems to have started when the "first sliver" of the new moon was visible.

That's what I determined (*approximately the geometry of my current profile picture*).

[Kalosyni](#) I believe the picture you shared is a waning crescent just a few days away from a new moon, which should occur on the first and last days of the month (assuming it began on a new moon and is 30 days long).



Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 5:13 PM

@Nate : I hope you don't mind but I'm trying out your 20er avatar, too. Let me know y'all if that's too confusing and I'll go back to my tetradrachm 😊

Post by “Cassius” of November 30, 2022 at 6:56 PM

Should lend itself to color variations if the similarity gets too confusing! I probably won't switch but I do like it too!

Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 7:08 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

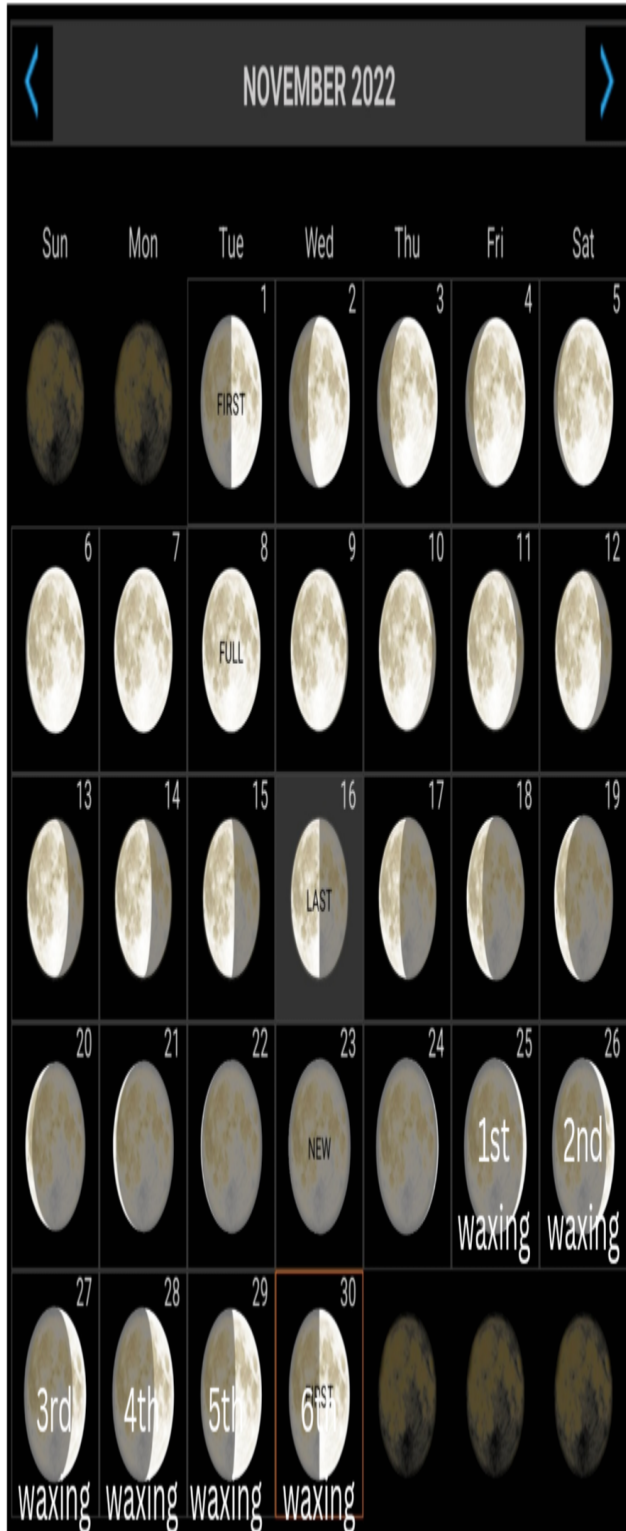
Should lend itself to color variations if the similarity gets too confusing! I probably won't switch but I do like it too!

That's a good idea. At least natural colors like hues of red, yellow, blue, etc.

What do you think, @Nate ?

Post by “Kalosyni” of November 30, 2022 at 7:31 PM

Okay, so even though everyone has the Wikipedia calculations (and I must be clearly wrong) -- I made a graphic to explain (the colored text is only to make it more readable).



What I am saying is that you only count the increase or the decrease of the shape of the moon.

Post by “Eikadistes” of November 30, 2022 at 7:36 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

[Quote from Cassius](#)

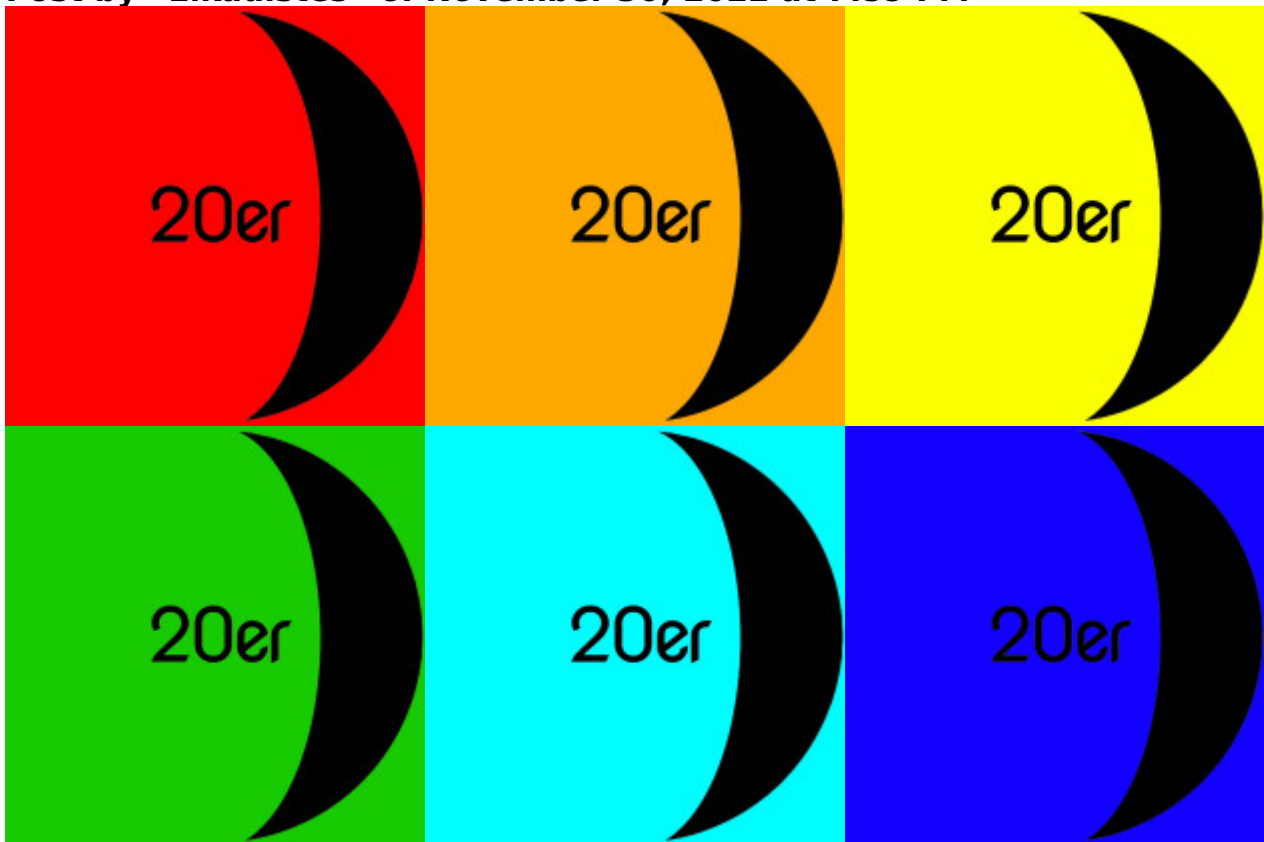
Should lend itself to color variations if the similarity gets too confusing! I probably won't switch but I do like it too!

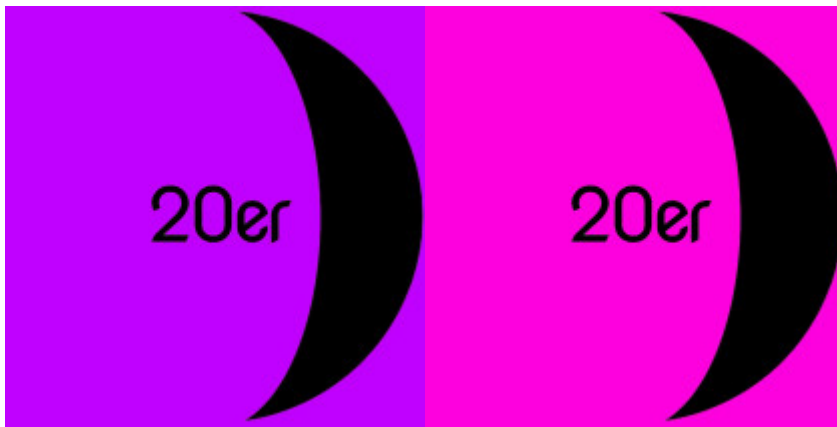
That's a good idea. At least natural colors like hues of red, yellow, blue, etc.

What do you think, @Nate ?

I'm into it! Let me see what I can do.

Post by “Eikadistes” of November 30, 2022 at 7:59 PM





Post by “Cassius” of November 30, 2022 at 8:13 PM

Thank you Nate!!

I see that you liked those Don but i was also going to joke:

[Quote from Don](#)

At least natural colors like hues of red, yellow, blue, etc.

Hows that for a series of "natural" colors -- especially the fluorescent purple! 😊

I was thinking you were asking for maybe some "pale" variations that sort of match the sky? 😊

But no doubt in any way of looking at it any color that brings pleasure to the user fits the bill!
So again thank you Nate!

Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 8:54 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Hows that for a series of "natural" colors -- especially the fluorescent purple! 😊

L 😊 L! Enthusiasm got the best of me

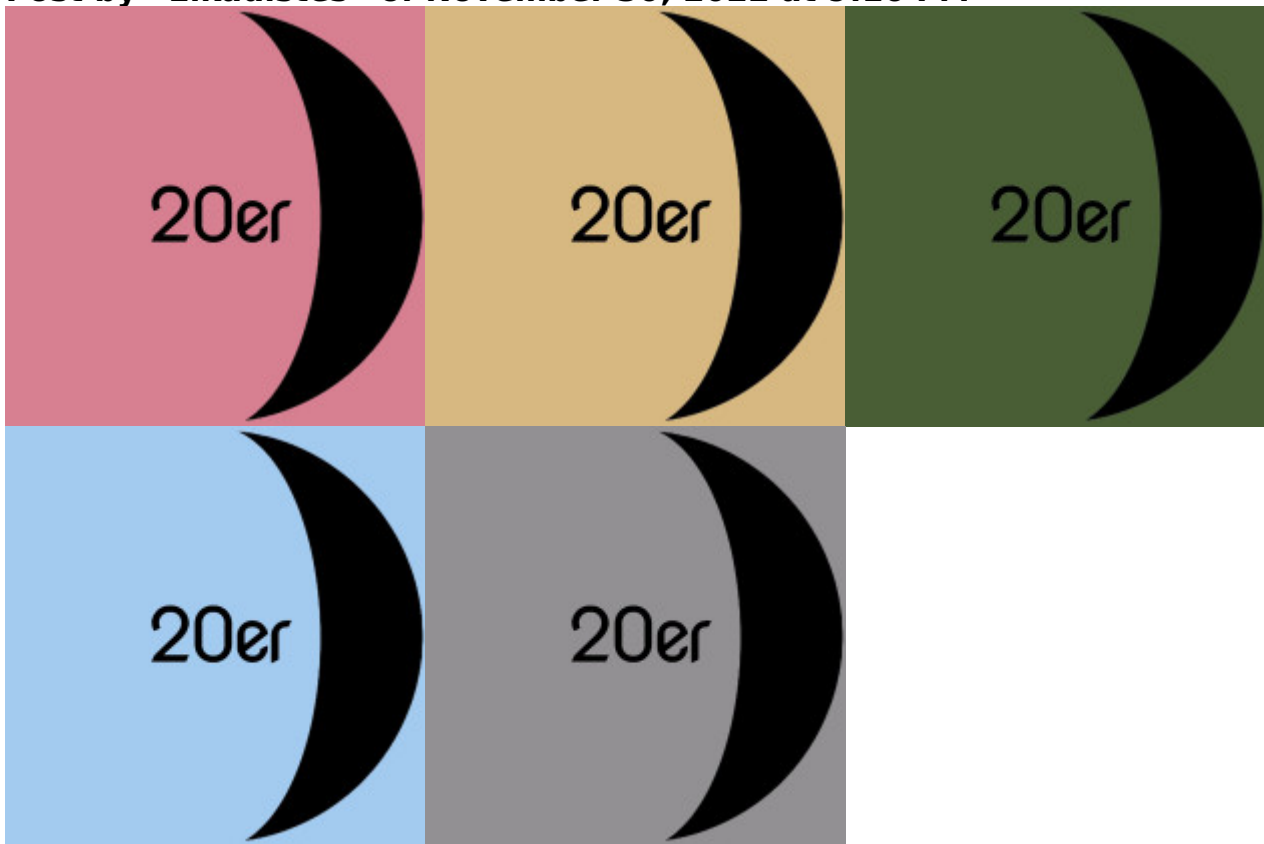
Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 8:54 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I was thinking you were asking for maybe some "pale" variations that sort of match the sky? 😊

That was what was in my mind too

Post by “Eikadistes” of November 30, 2022 at 9:16 PM



Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 10:34 PM

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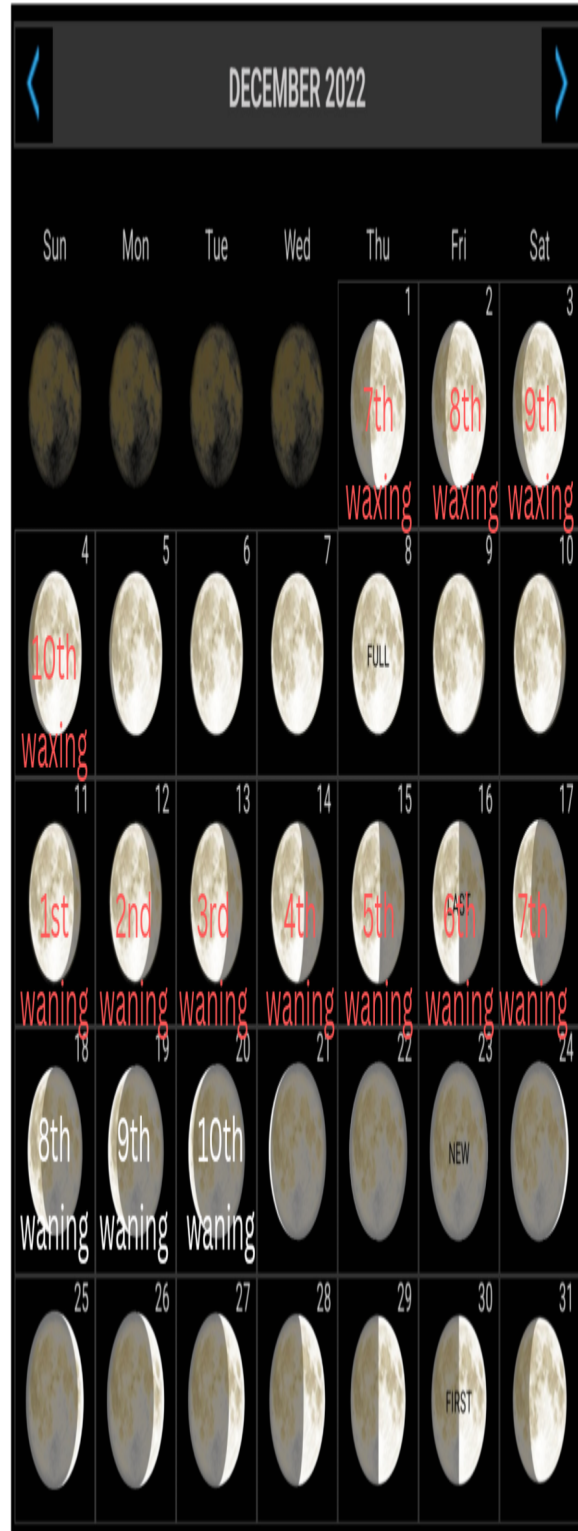
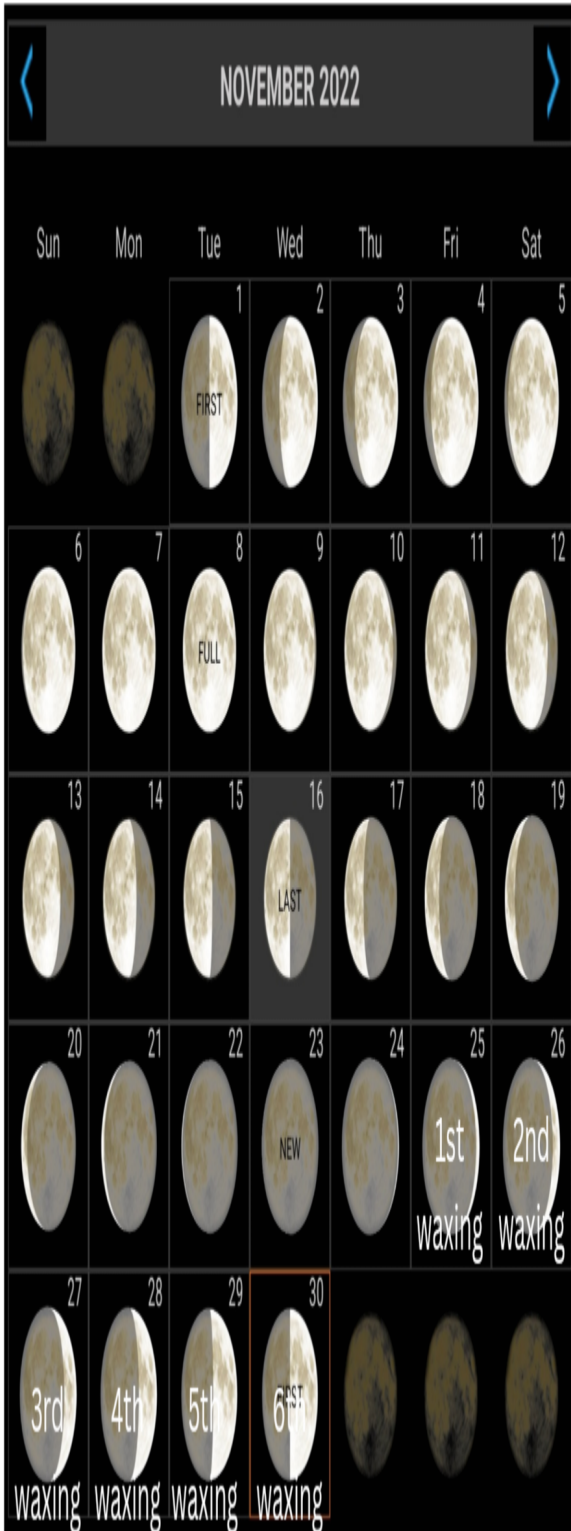
YAY! I took the "early sunset" color! 😊 👍 👍

PS: Changed my mind! I'm taking the blue sky moon!

Post by “Don” of November 30, 2022 at 10:46 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Okay, so even though everyone has the Wikipedia calculations (and I must be clearly wrong) -- I made a graphic to explain (the colored text is only to make it more readable).



What I am saying is that you only count the increase or the decrease of the shape of the moon.

OH! I see what your referring to. Thanks for graphic.

From my understanding the moon is always either waxing full waning or new.

Names of the days of the month

Moon waxing	Moon full	Moon waning
new moon 11/24	11th 12/5	later 10th 12/15
2nd waxing	12th	9th waning
3rd waxing	13th	8th waning
4th waxing	14th	7th waning
5th waxing	15th 12/9	6th waning
6th waxing	16th	5th waning
7th waxing	17th	4th waning
8th waxing	18th	3rd waning
9th waxing	19th	2nd waning
10th waxing 12/4	earlier 10th 12/14	old and new [moon] 12/23

n one new moon to

hart