

# SPAXTON NIGHTS

Hello Spaxton. My name is Steve Page, I live in Fiddington and have been writing this article since October to be included in our village magazine. Some time ago I sent a copy to Richard Lee who thought it would be a good idea to include it in yours too. If you don't like it blame him! I have loved physics and astronomy since I was a small boy and I hope to encourage non astronomers to take an interest in the night sky and 'sleeping astronomers' to dust off that scope and go back outside. These articles are not meant to be sent to New Scientist or Nature and I am by no means an expert so if I write something that you don't think is right please let me know.

The objects I will mention will be mostly visible with the naked eye or a pair of binoculars.

Right, let's get started ...

Leo is one of the big spring constellations. Go out at about 8pm and it's easily visible in the eastern sky ( *look towards Bridgwater* ). Find it by looking out in that part of the sky for a very bright star that doesn't twinkle. That's the planet Jupiter. To the left of that is Leo. I'll come back to Jupiter a bit later. So what to look for in Leo... Firstly grab your binoculars and have a look at Regulus (Latin for little king). Regulus is about 3 times the size of our sun. You will see it is a bright blue/white colour because it is burning much hotter than our sun. Next turn your binos on Algieba. Now Algieba is in fact two stars close together.

Note what a lovely colour it is, a soft orange/yellow, That's because the stars in Algieba are not as hot as Regulus: they're more or less the same size as our sun and so have a similar colour. As a general rule of thumb the bigger a star is, the more blue white it is, the smaller it is the more yellowy it is. There are exceptions to that rule but I'll talk about them in the future.

A tip for using binoculars to look at the sky, is to try resting against a wall or turn a sweeping brush upside down, drape an old towel over it and rest your elbows on it; or lie out on a sun lounger under a blanket ( leave your head sticking out, it makes observing a lot easier).

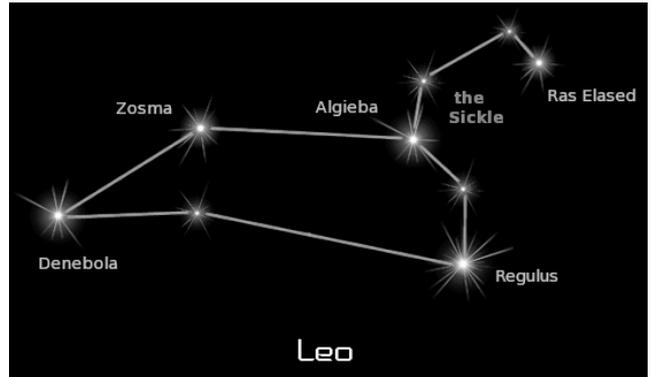


Now to Jupiter. With binoculars you can clearly see a disk, but look out for four little points of light around it. These are the "Galilean moons" - so called because he supposedly saw them first. Jupiter has many moons but these four are big enough to be seen from Earth. If you draw a line from Regulus through Jupiter, just past it you will come to a beautiful open star cluster called Praesepe. It's commonly known

as the beehive cluster and does resemble a small swarm of bees. If you then draw a line from Algieba through Zosma and carry on you will find a wonderful open cluster of stars called the Coma star cluster in the constellation of Coma Berenices.

I'll wind up now but just to quickly point out Venus...a lovely sight at the moment. Look out half an hour after the sun sets and in the south west sky you should see her shining brightly.

Please contact me for feedback or if you would like any more information at [stevepage747@gmail.com](mailto:stevepage747@gmail.com). Cheers for now



## Friends of Spaxton Church (FOSC) - Bedding Plant Sale

It's coming up to that time again when we are thinking about bedding plants. FOSC have ordered a selection of competitively priced quality bedding plants that will be a credit to your garden if last year was anything to go by. Coffee, tea and home-made cakes in the FOSC tradition.



**The bedding plant sale will be in the Village Hall  
9.30 -12.30hrs Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May**

