

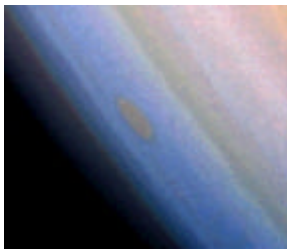


In Roman mythology, Saturn is the god of agriculture. He is known as Cronus in Greek mythology. Cronus was the father of Zeus (Jupiter). Saturn is the root of the English word "Saturday." This is the symbol for Saturn:



Saturn is the sixth planet from the Sun, and the second largest of the nine planets.

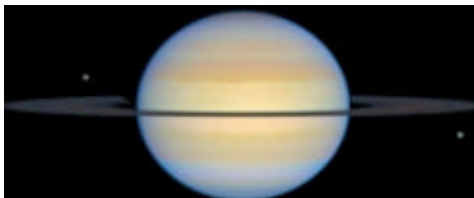
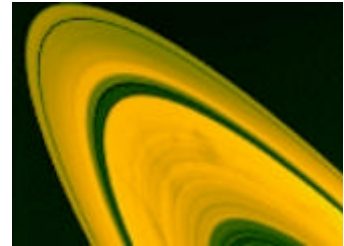
Like Jupiter, Saturn has bands (below). Saturn's bands, however, are much fainter. The bands are also much wider near the equator.



Saturn has long-lived "spots" as well (left). Just like Jupiter's "Great Red Spot," they are areas where big storms are occurring.



Saturn's rings, unlike the rings of the other gas planets, are very bright. Though they look "solid" or continuous from the Earth, the rings are actually composed of many, many small particles circling Saturn at their own speeds. They range in size from a centimetre to several meters. A few kilometre-sized objects are also likely!



Saturn's rings are extraordinarily thin. Even though they measure about 250,000 km across, they're no more than 1.5 kilometres thick. Despite their impressive appearance, there's really very little material in the rings. If the rings were compressed into a single body it would be no more than 100 km across!

When viewing Saturn through a small telescope, it appears a bit "squished." This is because its structure isn't very rigid (it's mostly gas and liquid), and it becomes slightly "compressed" as it spins very quickly.



Look for Saturn! When it is in the nighttime sky, Saturn is easily visible to the naked eye. Though it is not nearly as bright as Jupiter, it is easy to identify as a planet because it doesn't "twinkle" like the stars do. The rings and the larger moons are visible with a small astronomical telescope.

- Saturn is a giant gas planet which is made up of about 75% hydrogen and 25% helium. It's most famous for its thousands of beautiful rings.
- Saturn was first visited by the Pioneer 11 spacecraft in 1979. Saturn has also since been visited by Voyager 1 and Voyager 2.
- Saturn's rings are made up mostly of water ice, but they may also include rocky particles with icy coatings. The origin of the rings of Saturn is currently unknown.
- Saturn is made up of materials which are lighter than water. If placed in a big pond, Saturn would float much like an ice cube does in a glass of water.
- Saturn has 18 known moons - more than any other planet! There may very well be several small ones yet to be discovered.