



Image of Uranus courtesy of NASA.

### A dramatic discovery

The planet Uranus (pronounced YOOR-uh-niss) takes its name from an ancient Greek deity, but it was not actually recognized as part of our solar system until the late 18th century. While early astronomers had seen this glowing white speck in the sky many times, it was not until 1781 that William Herschel was able to verify that Uranus was indeed a planet, not a distant star. Thanks to Herschel's discovery, we now know that Uranus is the seventh planet from the sun (farther than Saturn but closer than Neptune), the third largest in diameter (behind only Jupiter and Saturn), and the fourth largest in mass (behind Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune).

For more information about Uranus, click on one of these links.

[Everything you ever wanted to know about Uranus](#)

[How the planets and their moons got their names](#)

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Like all planets except Earth, Uranus has a Greek name. However, what makes Uranus unusual is that most of its 21 moons are named after characters from the plays of William Shakespeare. If you've already seen or read "A Midsummer Night's Dream," you may remember the characters Puck, Titania, and Oberon. And if you've seen or read "Romeo and Juliet" (or even watched the movie with Leonardo DiCaprio!), then you of course know Juliet! And in case you're wondering what moons have to do with Shakespeare, look no further than Juliet herself as she reflected on her fate:

*O swear not by the moon, th'inconstant moon  
That monthly changes in her circled orb...*