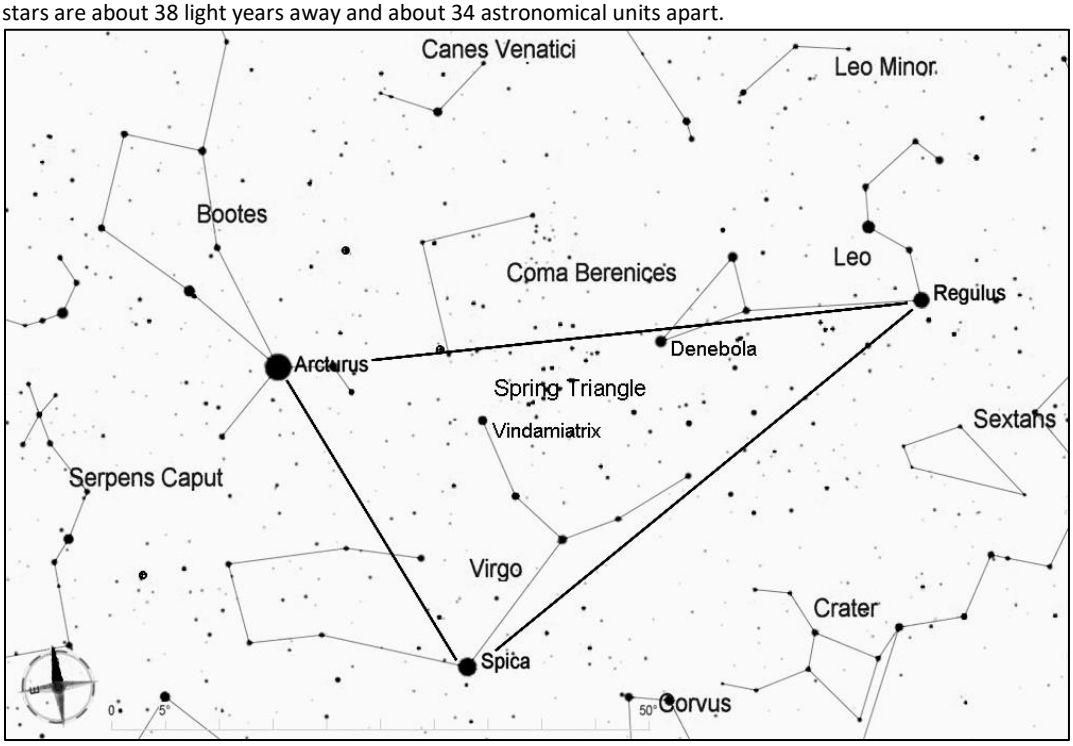
Porrima (γ Virginis), Double Star

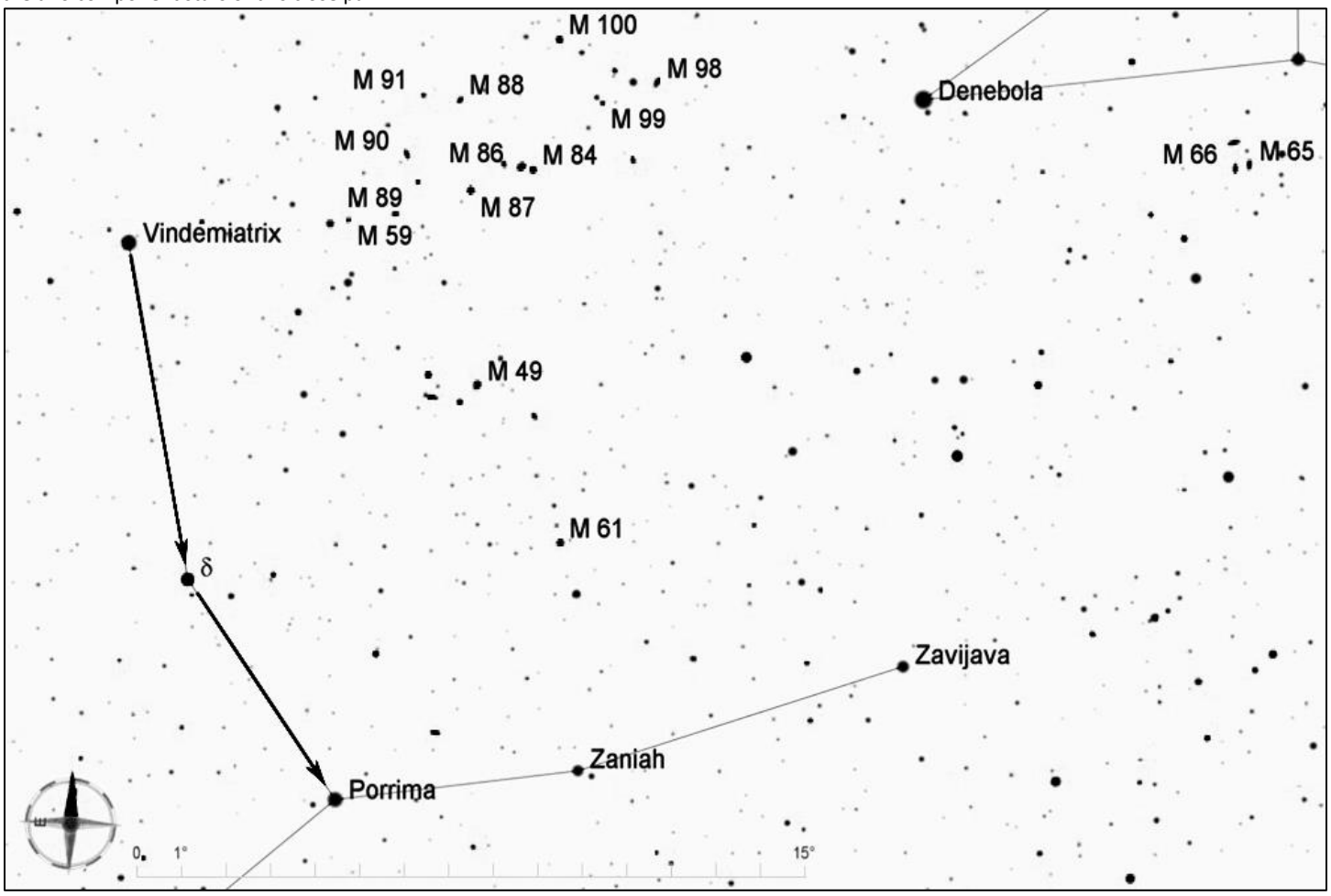
Porrima, or Gamma Virginis, is a bright naked-eye star at magnitude 2.7. Its two components are less than 3 arcseconds apart, so a telescope at high power is required to split them. The components are about equally bright, one yellow and one blue, making a beautiful color contrast. The two stars are about 38 light years away and about 34 astronomical units apart.



Start by finding the Spring Triangle, which consists of three widely-separated first magnitude stars--Arcturus, Spica, and Regulus. The Spring Triangle is high in the southeast sky in early spring, and in the southwest sky by mid-Summer. (To get oriented, you can use the handle of the Big Dipper and "follow the arc to Arcturus").

For this star hop, look in the middle of the Spring Triangle for Denebola, the star representing the back end of Leo, the lion, and Vindemiatrix, a magnitude 2.8 star in Virgo.

From Vindemiatrix, look south past δ Virginis to Porrima, which will be easily visible to the naked eye. Use high magnification, 100x or more, to see the two component stars of this close pair.



Star hop from www.skyledge.net by Jim Mazur. Star charts created with *Cartes du Ciel.*