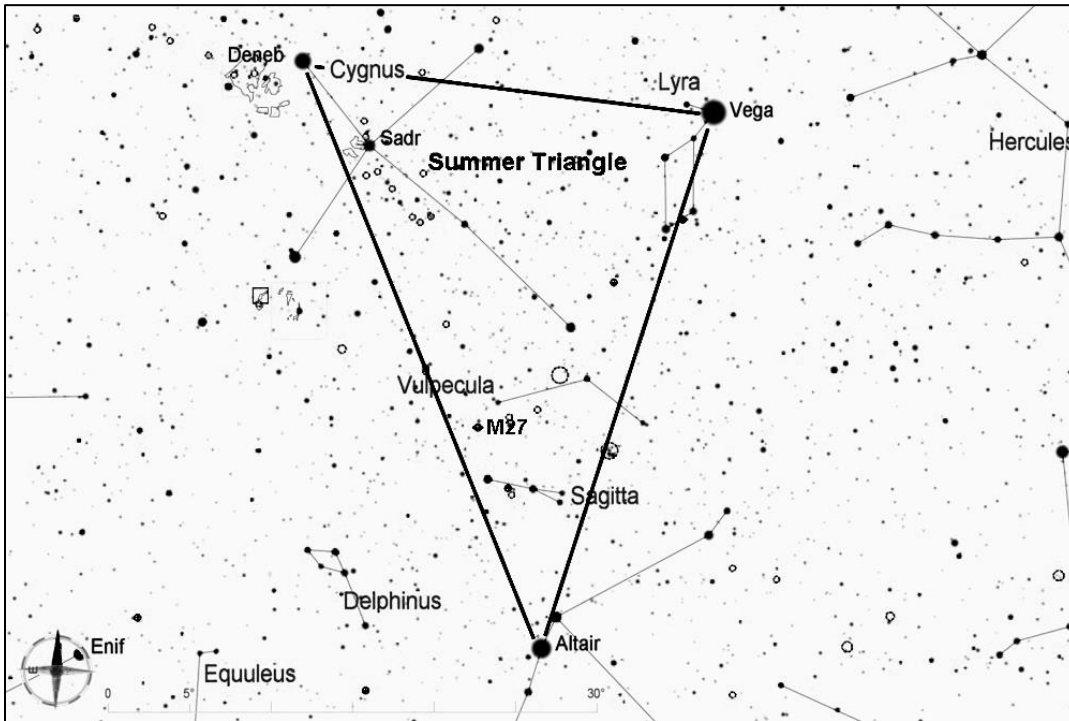


Messier 13, the Hercules Cluster

Messier 13 is one of the most spectacular deep-sky objects. It can be seen as a fuzzy ball through any binoculars or telescope, but to get a good view an aperture of 8 inches or more is needed, because that is large enough to resolve many of the cluster's individual stars. With larger scopes, the view gets even more impressive. M13 is a group of about 500,000 stars, roughly 23,000 light years away.



Start by finding the Summer Triangle, which consists of the three of the brightest stars in the sky--Vega, Deneb, and Altair. The Summer Triangle is high overhead throughout the summer, and it sinks lower in the west as fall progresses.

For this star hop, start from brilliant blue-white Vega (magnitude 0), the brightest of the three stars of the Summer Triangle.

From Vega, look about 15 degrees west for the distinctive 4-sided figure in the center of Hercules known as the keystone. On the west side of the keystone (farthest from Vega), M13 is 1/3 of the way from η (Eta) to ζ (Zeta) Hercules. Point your scope there, and M13 should be clearly visible through a low-power eyepiece.

