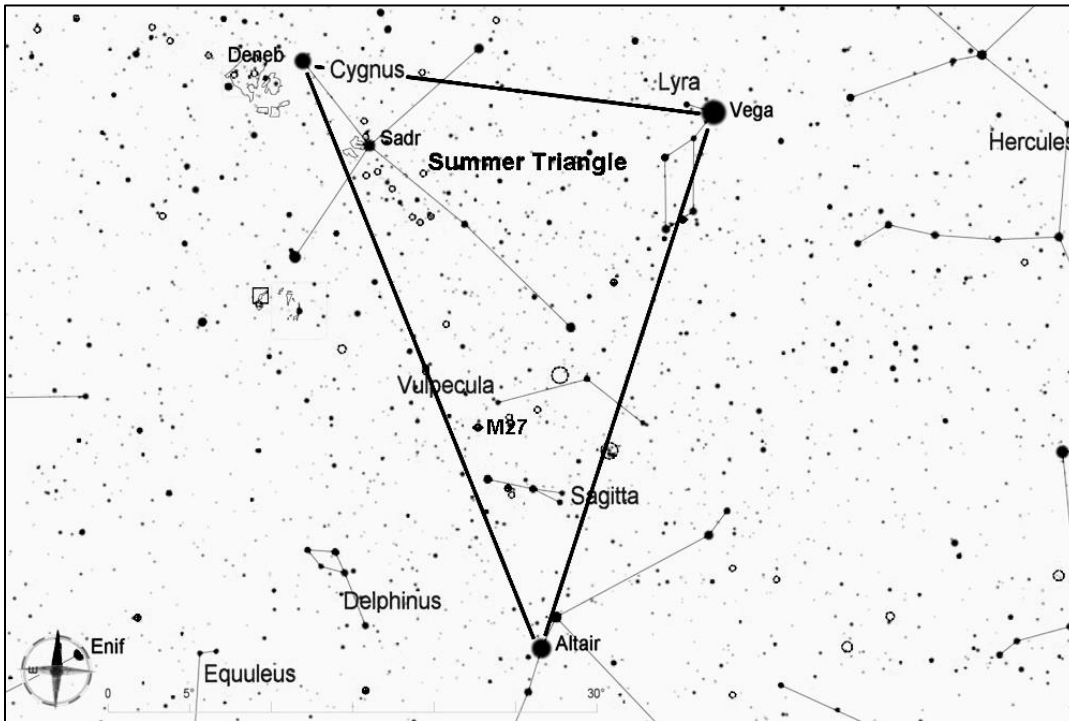


Messier 27, the Dumbbell Nebula

The Dumbbell Nebula is one of the largest and brightest examples of a planetary nebula. It is high overhead during the evenings throughout the summer and fall. It can be seen as a dim patch through binoculars, and a telescope will reveal its hourglass shape. This nebula is about 3 light years in diameter and about 1360 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.

Look inside the Summer Triangle, to the north of Altair, to find the small constellation Sagitta, the arrow. Its four brightest stars do indeed form the shape of an arrow.

From Gamma Sagittae, the star that forms the tip of the arrow, move your telescope 3 degrees to the north to find Messier 27, as shown in the chart below.

