

Can People Live on the Moon?

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Image of Astronaut Edwin Aldrin walks near the Apollo 11 Lunar Module (1969-07-20). Released into public domain by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.



What might it be like to walk or even live on the moon? In 1969, astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. He said, “That’s one small step for a man. One giant leap for mankind.” Although astronauts have taken many steps since then, scientists still have much to learn about the moon.

The moon is quite different from Earth. The

moon’s ground is covered in 10 to 50 feet of dust. There is no air that people can breathe. A day and a night there each last two weeks, and the temperatures are extreme. Can people live in such a place? Some scientists think they can answer that question when they learn if plants can survive there.

On Earth, plants help humans survive in many ways. People eat plants. Plants also produce the oxygen that people breathe. But to grow, plants need food and water, which are not present on the moon.

On the International Space Station in 2010, scientists

discovered that the roots of plants grow away from the seed and toward moisture and food, just as they do on Earth. Scientists now want to use plants to discover if the conditions in space could harm people. If plants are harmed when they live in space, people could be, too.

NASA, which builds space craft and studies space, designed an experiment to test if plants can live on the moon. In 2015, NASA will try to grow basil and turnip seeds on the moon. They will plant the seeds in containers that have everything plants need to live for five to 10 days. Their growth will be recorded by cameras and other devices that allow scientists to see exactly how the plants react.

The results of this experiment might help scientists learn about how space might affect Earth’s plants and animals. It might also help them decide if people can live there, too.



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