

Moondance

Quick Start

A short walk through the basics so you can plan and image your first target tonight.

Build collections methodically · Plan tonight's session · See it on the dome

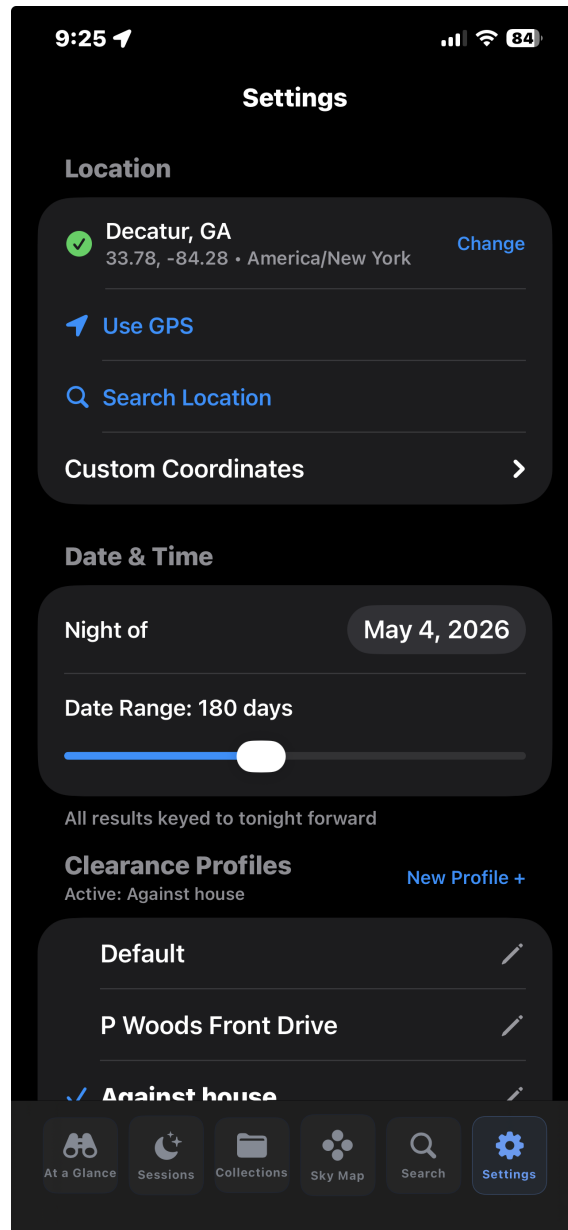
1. Home Screen

The first thing you see is At a Glance — tonight's moon phase, sunset and sunrise (AD↓ / AD↑), the active session, and a rotating astronomy quote. The settings gear lives in the bottom-right tab bar.



2. Set Your Location

Tap Settings (bottom-right). Pick your observing location from the list, or enable Custom Location to enter exact coordinates. Everything else can stay at defaults for now — Moondance will use sensible Horizon and Moon profiles out of the box.



3. Sky Map — Tonight's Sky

Bottom menu → Sky Map. The dome shows tonight's constellations laid out as you'd see them from your location. Cardinal directions are labeled around the rim, and tick marks every 20° help you orient.



4. Watch the Night Roll

Drag the clock hand around the dome to scrub time across the night. Constellations move as they would in the sky, so you can see what's up at any hour from dusk to dawn.

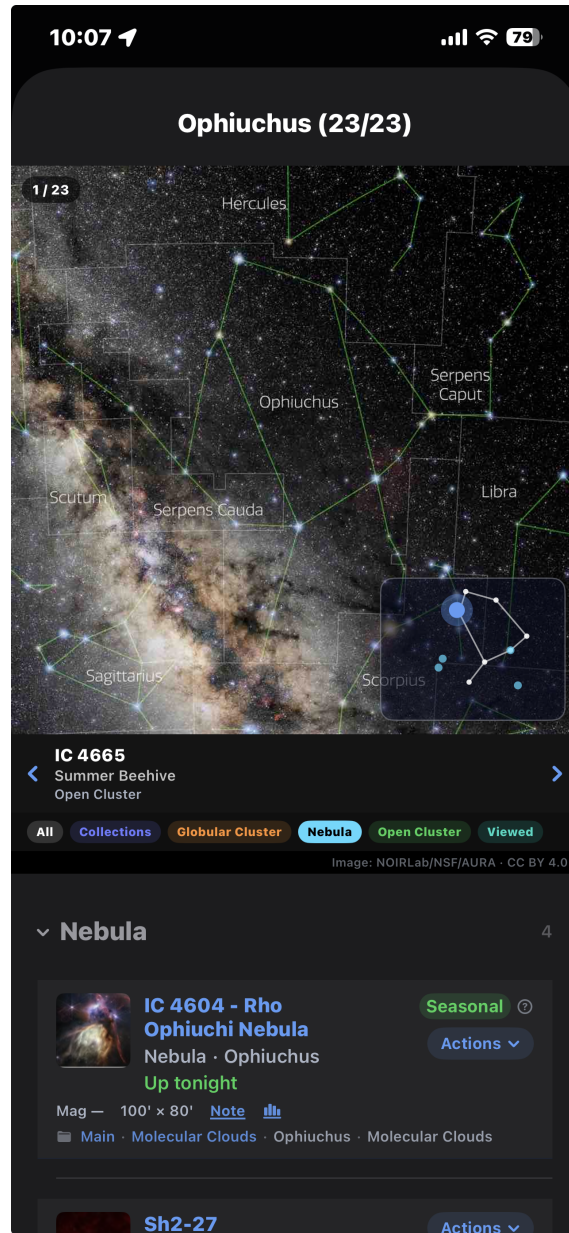


Same view a few hours later — the dome has rotated, new constellations have risen, others have set.



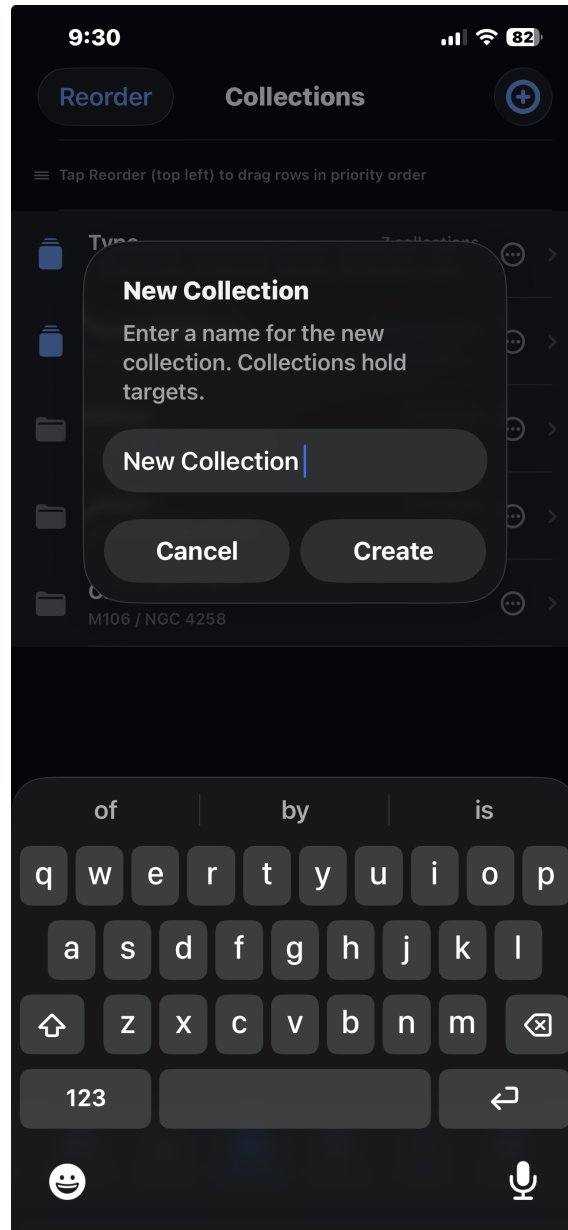
5. Drill Into a Constellation

Tap any constellation pin to open its target list. Each row shows the object's type, brightness, opportunity tier, and tonight's rise/set times.



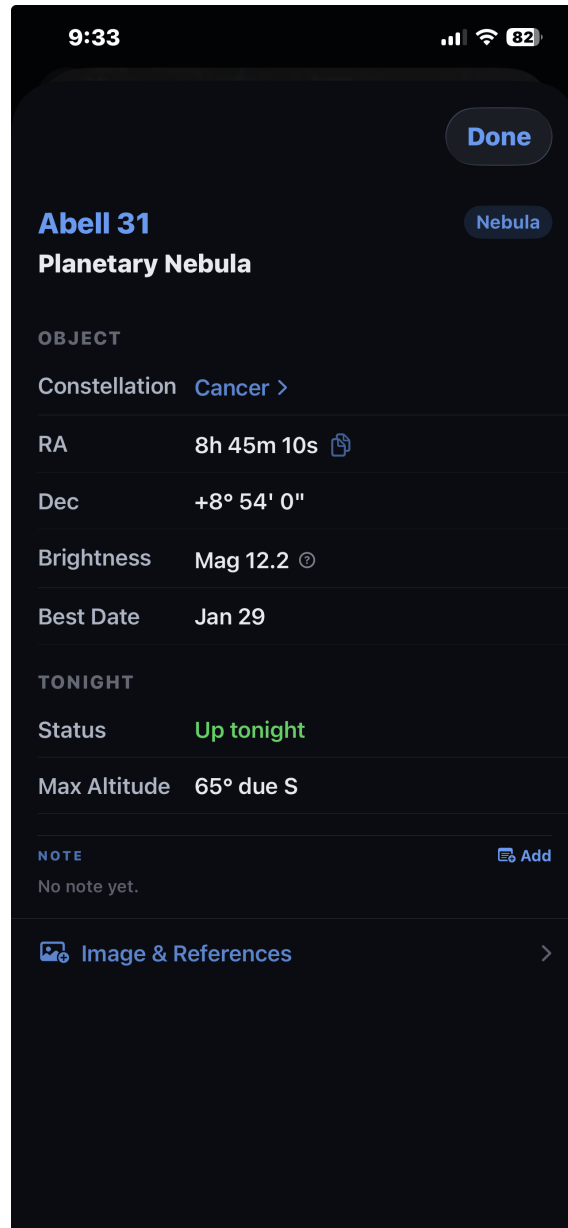
6. Add Targets to a Collection

Tap a target's Actions menu and choose Add to Collection... — you can create a new collection on the fly or add to an existing one. Build up a wishlist this way.



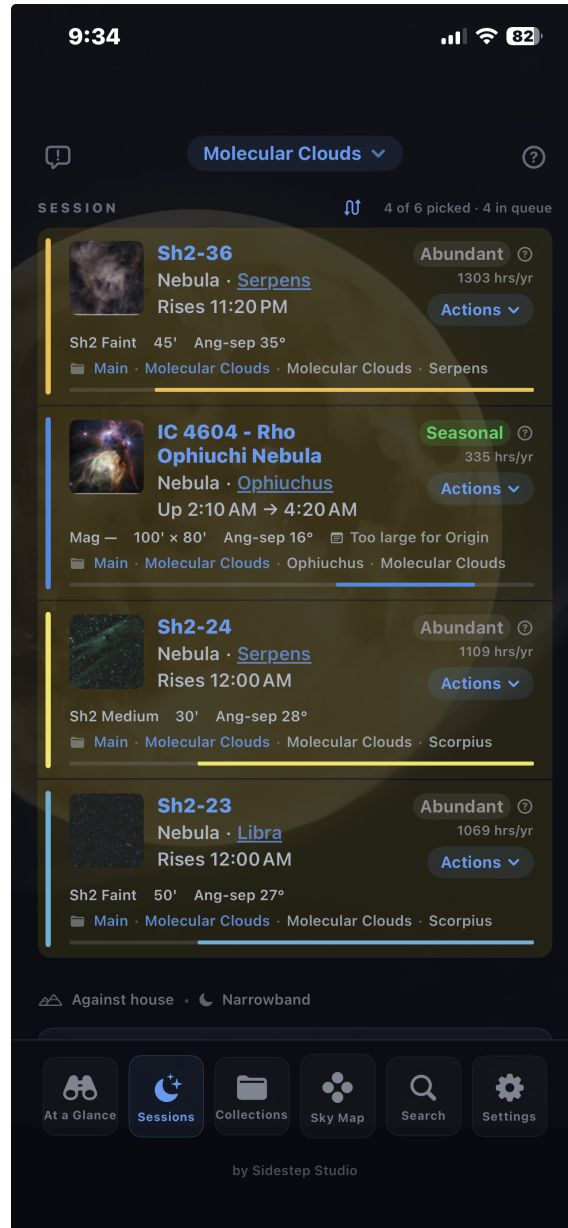
7. Attach Images, Notes, and More

Each target has a rich detail page. Attach your own images, write notes, mark captures, rate them (Great / Okay / Redo), open Wikipedia or AstroBin, and more.



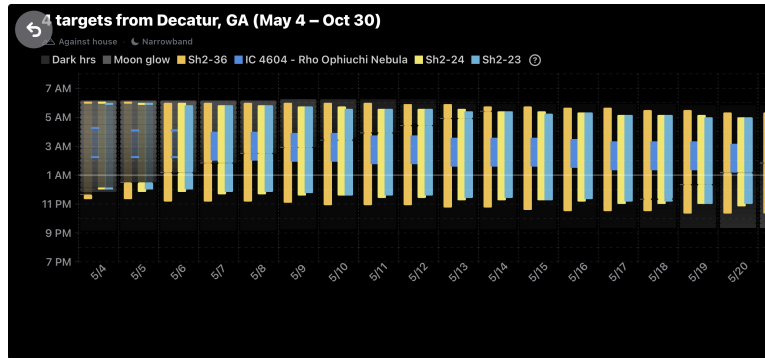
8. Load the Collection into a Session

Bottom menu → Sessions. Tap the chevron next to the session name and load your new collection into the active session. Sessions are your tonight's-plan planning units — separate from the Collections list.



9. Run Moondance

In the session, star up to four targets to pick them for the chart. Tap Moondance — the chart shows night-by-night visibility for each pick across your date range, color-coded for moon and altitude conditions. Rotate to landscape on iPhone, or view in place on iPad.



Beyond the Quick Start

A non-exhaustive tour of what else Moondance can do.

Sessions and Planning

- Multiple sessions — keep separate plans for different nights, scopes, or moods. Switch via the chevron menu.
- Session history — every Moondance run snapshots your picks; restore any time.
- Per-row star pick — pick up to four targets per session for the chart; the rest stay in the queue.
- Active session badge — sessions you've added a target to are flagged on the row's membership tags.

Collections

- Folders + nested collections — organize wishlists; drag to reorder by priority.
- Seed with Suggestions — let the engine generate a starter collection from tonight's conditions: types, moon separation, hours visible, rareness.
- Add to active Session — one-tap promotion from any list view.
- Bulk membership view — see at a glance which sessions and collections each target is in.

Sky Map

- Filter pills — All, Session, Collections, by object type, Messier (with X/108 progress).
- Constellation Status List — every constellation grouped by Above Horizon, Above Clearance, Below Clearance, Below Horizon for tonight.
- Clock-hand scrub — interactive time slider that updates every constellation, the moon, and the night arc.
- Tick marks — azimuth ticks every 20° around the rim for quick orientation.

Search

- Find any DSO — search by common name, catalog ID (M, NGC, IC, Sh2, LDN, LBN, Abell), or constellation.
- Visibility info inline — every result shows tonight's status without needing to drill in.
- Add to collection or session — directly from search results.

Target Detail

- Coordinates and brightness — RA/Dec, magnitude, surface brightness, Sh2 brightness class, LDN opacity class.

- Tonight info — rise/set, transit altitude, moon separation, best date this year.
- Charts — per-night altitude over your full date range; how the target rides through your sky.
- Image attachment — drop in your own viewer-copy image; it shows on every row and in the dedicated viewer.
- Wikipedia + AstroBin + Web search — one-tap research links from the image page.
- Per-target moon-filter override — broadband / narrowband choice on a target-by-target basis.

Opportunities

- Annual scoring — every target gets an opportunity score based on how many hours per year it meets your horizon and moon profiles.
- Tier badges — Ultra Rare (<30 hrs/yr), Rare, Uncommon, Seasonal, Common, Abundant. The ? next to any tier badge explains the ranges.
- Sort by rareness or popularity in the seeded-collection browser to surface obscure targets you'd never find by browsing.

Capture Tracking

- Mark captured — tag any target you've imaged.
- Rate it — Great, Okay, or Redo so you know which ones to retry.
- Messier tracker — automatic X/108 progress on the Sky Map's Messier pill.
- "My image" star — yellow star badge on any target you've attached your own photo to.

Notes

- Per-target notes up to 1000 characters — first-light memories, gear settings, processing reminders.
- Inline previews in session rows; full text on tap.

Settings

- Location — preset list, custom coordinates, or Search.
- Date range — 30 to 365 days for the Moondance chart.
- Horizon profiles — directional altitude minimums for each compass direction (your trees, your buildings, your hills).
- Moon profiles — minimum target/moon separation by moon phase tier; switch profiles for broadband vs narrowband nights.
- Visibility filters — hide objects dimmer than X, smaller than Y, or with unknown magnitude.
- Sound effects — togglable taps, captures, etc.
- Walkthrough videos — link to the videos hub on sidestepstudio.com/moondance/quickstart.html.

- Export & Import — full backup JSON: collections, sessions, captures, notes, history, thumbnails, and user images. Restore everything from a single file.

Conveniences

- Shake to undo — restore deleted collection members, collections, or history snapshots.
- Tonight button — fast-jump back to today's date from anywhere.
- Tab persistence — Moondance remembers which tab you were on between launches.
- Dark mode by design — built for night-time use without blowing out your night vision.