



The Controversial Cauldron

Email Witches Yahoo Group Newsletter



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Edition 1:2
Issue: Lammas
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Welcome to the Email Witches newsletter

Email Witches is a pagan friendly email group attracting people from all walks of life, from all spectrums of society and from all around the world. Most are individuals seeking a personal practical religion that can be adapted to their own needs and criteria, and Wicca is a wonderfully diverse religion that meets these needs. Email



Witches (Yahoo Group) is set up as a place where those of same interest can meet, discuss, share and gain more information about their chosen paths. All visitors to my website [Controversial.com](http://www.Controversial.com) are welcome, so feel free to join us and make new friends.

Best Wishes,
Georges Knowles

<http://www.controversial.com/>

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Email_Witches/



The corn (wheat) of Lammas

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Group Information

- Members: 684
- Founded: Jul 17, 2002
- Language: English
- Countries Representing:
Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, England, France, Greenland, Hawaii, Hungary, India, Italy, Kuwait, New Zealand, Nova Scotia, Panama, Scotland, Slovenia, USA and Wales.

Lammas/Lughnassadh 2008

Written and compiled by George Knowles

Lammas is one of the greater Sabbats of the Witches calendar and in the Northern Hemisphere is celebrated on the 1st August (in the Southern Hemisphere the equivalent Sabbat is Imbolc). Traditionally Lammas is a celebration of the first fruits and first corn harvest of the year, when as a result of the union between the Goddess and God the land gives up its bounty. As summer turns to autumn and the plantings from spring begin to wither and die, they drop their produce for our use and seeds for a future harvest.

In the mythology of the Sabbats as daylight decreases and nights grow longer, God grows old and his strength becomes weaker. The Goddess looks on in sorrow and watches God dying, but knows he lives on inside her, a child to be re-born again at Yule in the never-ending cycle of life, death and re-birth.

Lammas is commonly known by several other names: Lughnasadh (named for the Celtic sun god Lugh), August Eve, Feast of Bread and Harvest Home. The name Lammas comes from an old Christianised Saxon term "hlaf maesse" meaning "loaf mass", which reflects the importance of bread



Lammass (con't)

at this time. When Christianity arrived many pagan traditions were incorporated and adopted for use in their churches. One such was Lammass. On the first Sunday of August home grown produce and baskets of fruit were donated to the local church, and loaves of bread made from the first corn harvest placed on the church alter to be blessed and consecrated. After the service the food was distributed among the old folk and the homeless, or given to hospitals and other charitable organisations.



The Hay Wain by John Constable (1821)

Lammass is the first of three autumnal festivals each year, the others being Mabon (21st Sept) and Samhain (31st Oct). Corn, grain and barley, including wheat in the UK, oats in Scotland and Ireland, and maize in the USA, as well as fruit, berries and grapes are all crops harvested at this time of the year. As bread was one of the main staple diets of our ancestors, and with the success of the harvest being so important to the survival of the people, so the preparation and making of the first loaves of breads was often followed by ceremonies and sacrificial offerings to ensure the re-growth of crops for the following year.

While the hottest days of summer are still upon us and temperatures remain high, the climate slowly changes as we enter the harvest time. Each day as the shadows grow longer, squirrels and other small animals of the woods get busy gathering and storing food for the winter to come. Likewise for the people, this is a time to start canning and preserving goods ready to sustain us while the land recovers and nature sleeps.

In a continuation of the theme from the Summer Solstice, when the Holly King defeated God in his guise as the Oak King, at Lammass he takes on the guise of the sacrificial "Corn King". As the earth's bounty is reaped and cleared for the harvest, so his death is necessary for the rebirth of the land. The Corn King is also known by many other names such as: "John Barleycorn", the "Green Man" and the "Wicker Man", whose spirits having sustained the crops through growth to maturity are now sacrificed to ensure that new growth will return in the spring.



The Green Man

In some traditions Corn dollies would be made from the last cut sheaves of corn and fashioned into stick like figures representative of the "Spirit of the Corn". These would be used as attractive table decorations at banquets and feasts, then saved until the following spring. Many believed that with the cutting of the last sheaves of corn, the "Spirit of the Corn" retreated into the soil, there to sleep throughout the winter. At the start of the new planting season, the Corn Dollies would be returned to the fields, burned and mixed with the new seed being ploughed into the ground. It was hoped that the "Spirit of the Corn" would then awaken and ensure the next harvest.



Corn Dolly

After the labour intensive work of bringing in the harvest, then preserving, packing and storing enough stocks to last through winter, it was time to relax and take a break. Lammass was traditionally a time for family re-unions, and a perfect time to arrange handfastings aimed at strengthening links and alliances with neighbouring clans and their families. With the prosperity afforded by a successful harvest, many attended Markets, Craft Fairs and Festivals to show off their wares and party.

During the day Marching bands and Morris dancers led parades around the villages followed by giant effigies of "John Barleycorn", the "Green Man" or the "Wicker Man". Younger members of the family would compete in games designed to show off skills needed for working farms and raising livestock, proving their abilities to provide food, shelter and protection. Women folk also competed showing off their skills in cooking and sewing, hoping to impress prospective mates.



Morris Dancers

"Lammass was traditionally a time for family re-unions, and a perfect time to arrange handfastings aimed at strengthening links and alliances with neighbouring clans and their families."

Lammas (con't)

The highlight of many such festivals was the lighting of a bonfire in tribute to the fading powers of the Sun, during which the giant effigies paraded earlier would be burned in a symbolic sacrifice of the Corn King. To finish the celebrations a large wagon wheel (Catherine wheel) would be taken to the top of a near-by hill, smeared with tar and set alight, then ceremoniously rolled down the hill in a representation of the Sun's decline into the autumn of its year. Remnants from the bonfire would later be taken home and kept throughout the winter as protection against storms and fires caused by lightning.

Lughnassadh

Similar to Lammas is Lughnasadh a Celtic tradition named after the Sun God "Lugh", which incorporates many of the old English Lammas practices. Lugh, known as the "God of all Skills" and the "Lord of Light" was an early chieftain of the Tuatha de Danaan. After the death of his foster-mother Tailtiu, Lugh dedicated his festival "Lughnasadh" to honour her memory.

In Irish mythology Tailtiu was a revered Goddess of the Land, the last Queen or chieftain of the Fir Bolg who had been defeated during the invasion of the Tuatha de Danaan. After the invasion Tailtiu was placed in bondage and became the surrogate foster-mother of Lugh. Shortly after the people suffered a bad harvest and famine spread quickly throughout the lands. Seeing her people starving Tailtiu took up an axe and began to clear a great forest, by doing so she enabled the land to be re-cultivated and planted with grain, the harvest of which saved the people. However the effort put too great a strain on Tailtiu's heart and she died from exhaustion. Lugh then instituted the "Óenach Tailtenn" or "Tailtiu Games" in her honour at the festival of Lughnasadh in August.

As a favoured chieftain of the Tuatha de Danaan, Lugh's festival quickly evolved into an annual gathering of the clans and tribes, and attended by all their major chieftains. Peace reigned over the games while assemblies were held and differences discussed, laws passed and marriages arranged in efforts to strengthen alliances. A feature of the festival was sporting prowess, and competitions were held to test the courage, strength and skill in battle of the competitors.

Held on the 1st of August the date of his foster-mothers death after her battle with the land and the first harvest. The common people ascended on the games to trade and display their wares, to sell food, animals, crafts and clothing. Actor's re-enacted the Tailtiu drama and Bards told their stories, musicians played music while singers sang and dancers danced, and everyone else joined in and made merry.

The old town of Tailtiu (now Teltown, between Navan and Kells) in County Meath was named in her honour, and is where the festival of Lughnassadh was traditionally held in early times. The Lughnasadh games continue to be celebrated in Ireland, but more today in recognition of the skills needed to raise livestock and farm a successful harvest.

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Harvested Field



Bonfires are traditional at Lammas festivals.



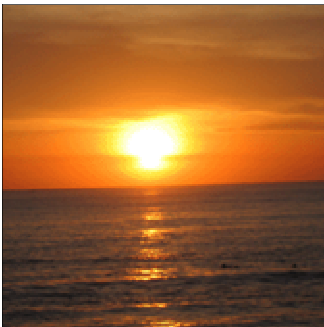
"Peace reigned over the games while assemblies were held and differences discussed, laws passed and marriages arranged in efforts to strengthen alliances."

Plant a kernel of wheat and you reap a pint; plant a pint and you reap a bushel. Always the law works to give you back more than you give. ~Anthony Norvell



Muse-Kissed

by TJ



Sunset
Photo by: **Lillian Norman**
(EW member since 2005)

Grain Harvest Gods

Cailleach~ Irish corn
Mother

Dagon ~ Phoenician Grain
God

Tammuz/ Dummuzi ~
Sumerian grain god

Demeter ~ Greek Grain
goddess

Plutus ~ Greek god of
bountiful harvests.

Persephone ~ Greek grain
maiden

Athena ~ Greek goddess of
agriculture

Apollo~ Greek god of
agriculture

Ceres ~ Roman grain
goddess.

Vertumnus ~ Roman grain
God

Faunus ~ Roman God of
agriculture

Seelu ~ Cherokee Barley
Mother

Xilonen ~ Aztec goddess of
young maize

Xochipilli ~ Aztec young
maize god

Yum Kaax ~ Mayan maize
god.

Lughnasadh

From the hills of Tara and Book of Kells
A myth is born from ancient realms
Let tale be told of summer's end
When some Gods die to live again

In Irish, Lugh, great son of Cian
Blessed by Tuatha de Dannan
Tailtiu will sacrifice herself
To gift, for all, a mother's wealth

Lugh loves his foster mother well
And orders games to bid farewell
For thee, the beauty Tailtiu bleeds
to purify the land for seed

A festival is set in place
to celebrate his mother's grace
We gather fruit, its taste so sweet
We bake bread for this joyous feast

The sun setting upon the path
Brings forth the dark one's future wrath
in time the Autumn sings to sleep
The seedlings of next season's wheat

Rejoice Tailtiu, her bravery rare
And call all children to the fair
For soon the celebration ends
Until Lughnasadh comes again

© July 19th 2008 Tamra L. Consbruck

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TJ has been an EW member since 2003.



Celtic Cross
from the Book of Kells
ca. 800 C.E.

Altar

Photo by: **Ralph Natal**



Legacy~ The Tides of Life

by Ardriana

All that begins must end.
All that lives must die.

In this season of joyful abundance, it is also a season of goodbyes. As we begin to move into the dark half of the year, we say goodbye to the green season. We say goodbye to the dazzling Sun. Sleepy summer drifts into austere fall as we harvest and bank our stores against the looming cold ahead. We feast. We dance. We celebrate our good fortune. Yet, the wheat dies to become life-giving bread.

The spokes of the Wheel of the Year divide the eight seasons cleanly into feast days of sowing and reaping, of joy and sorry, of illumination and darkness. Life does not so cleanly divided these seasons of birth, death and rebirth in our personal experience.

The season of transformation is always within us and around us, but it is often hard to see the joy in sorrow and the life in death. The unborn child does not wish to leave his warm watery bed to be forced into the blinding glare of the cold wide world. Yet, look what astounding beauty awaits him. His fear and sorrow is our joy and delight. The snake cannot grow without shedding her old skin. The caterpillar must sacrifice her entire knowledge of self to gain the wider world of wings. The ocean stretches out, far reaching to the shore and slowly pulls away, only to reach out again. Those tides are within us too. We are a part of this transformation...not just witness to it. We seek, we find and kept or lost, we seek again. We die to our old selves and are born anew with every harvest of wisdom and beauty.

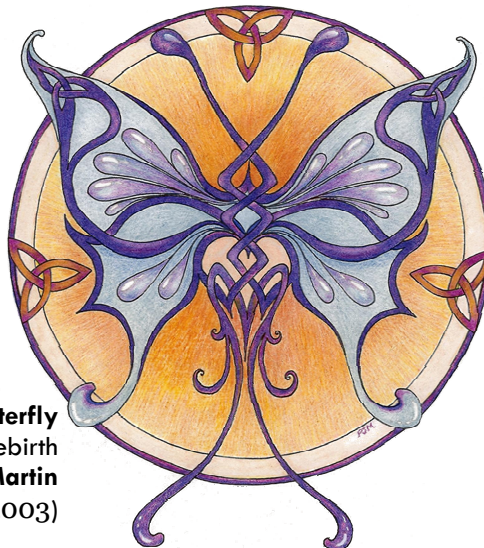
We empathize with how difficult it is to say good-bye to the familiar. For surely we all have been in the position of the man in the Taoist story who fell into the rapids of a river. He grabbed onto the safety of a rock amidst the rushing water. He was afraid of the unseen future of the river, whether there was a waterfall ahead or calm eddies.

He clung to the rock until his fingers bled and his body was crushed against it by the battering current. Weary of the struggle, he found the courage to let go of the rock. He decided to ride the white water to its conclusion, what ever that might be. It doesn't matter how the story ends because if we live long enough there will be both crashing waterfalls and calm eddies in our future. We will go from laughter to tears, from sacrifice to bounty, from simplicity to complexity and back to simplicity again. By saying goodbye to the familiar, we embrace the possibilities. Now, anything can happen. It's more likely that it will be...interesting.

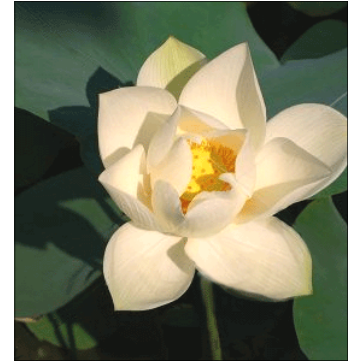
At Lughnassadh, we celebrate the smallest of blessings...a grain of wheat. We celebrate this by taking stock of what we have sown in ourselves. We are grateful for the gifts of kindred, nature and spirit that we feast on now, knowing that what we reap today will stay the coldest tomorrow. So, let us take joy in other small blessings; things that are warm, fresh, kind, thoughtful, gaudy, fragrant, furry, cool, soft, tasty, euphonious, sweet...

As the old Sun prepares for his journey to the Summerlands we begin to say goodbye to the light half of the year knowing that inevitable darkness will come. But not today. Today, we will celebrate the light not because of the darkness, but in spite of it. And that is the promise of Lughnassadh...

All that ends, will begin again.
All that dies will live again.

**Celtic Butterfly**

Celtic symbol of rebirth
© 2008 Patricia J. Martin
(EW member since 2003)



Asian symbol of Rebirth

Sacrificial Gods

Lugh ~

Sacrificial sun & corn god

John Barleycorn ~ Anglo
Saxon sacrificial grain god.

Chrom Dubh ~

Irish sacrificial god

Cromm Cruaich ~

Irish sacrificial god.

Maris ~

Roman savior grain god.

Tammuz ~Sumerian sacrificial grain
god**Osiris ~**Egyptian sacrificial harvest
god**Adonis ~**



Corn Dollies

by TJ

Directions For Corn Husk Dolls:

You will need approximately....



- Ten corn husks previously dried, and soaked in warm water for ten to twenty minutes to make soft for wrapping and twisting etc.
- A spool of natural cord/twine or string. (I have learned by trial and error that nylon cord is too slick and does not hold well.)
- A pair of scissors.

You can gather and dry the husks yourself, but it takes four days to dry in the sun and you won't get a good size husk. I buy them already dried and packaged at the local supermarket. They are sold for tamales.



Take four corn husks:

Arrange them one on bottom, one on each side and one on top. All pointed ends up.

If you want your doll to have hair, you can either save the corn silk from the corn husks you picked yourself. Or you can use the natural string/cord:

Cut and use as much cord as you want for the right amount of hair. Tie one side of the cords at one end. Insert the long ends inside husks, between top and bottom husk. Tie pointed husk ends with cord inside, together tightly.

Peel the leaves outward and down to form the head. Hair should sprout out the middle on top. Choose size of head and tie a cord to form the neck. Tighten securely.



For the arms and legs:

Take three husks (for thinner limbs, use one whole husk, divide into three parts.

The middle piece should point to top to make the limb even width.

Tie one end of husks together.

Place tightly between teeth and braid to the end.

Tie end. This will be the doll's arms



Corn Dollies

Photo by: Tamra L. Consbruck
(EW member since 2003)



Let children walk with Nature, let them see the beautiful blendings and communions of death and life, their joyous inseparable unity, as taught in the woods and meadows, plains and mountains and streams of our blessed star, and they will learn that death is stingless indeed, and as beautiful as life.

~ John Muir



Corn Dollies ~ con't

by



Repeat two more times till you have three braids.
One for arms, two for legs.

Insert arm braid inside husk body and push up under the neck.
If you want your doll to be more filled out, roll up a husk and stuff inside just under arms to form the belly.

Make leg braids as even as possible.
Insert them, one end each, into the belly area (or just under the arms if your doll has been working out! <g>) Tie tightly with cord to secure legs inside.

Wrap and tie one strip of husk around top of legs to form hips:

If you would like to dress your doll, just use your imagination.

You can also add eyes and/or face with small twigs and glue, or anything else you might think will work. (I bought some small eyes from the craft store, but have not decided whether or not I wish to use them.)

Your doll is complete!

Beautiful and all natural. (Unless, like me, you bought the eyes!)

Enjoy your doll.

Use in ritual, burn in sacrifice, or just decorate your altar.

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TJ lives on the West Coast, USA and is an
Eclectic/Metaphysical Witch.
She has been an EW member since 2003.



Wheat weaving or the making of "corn" dollies has been a harvest custom since ancient times. Traditionalists and neo-pagans still practice this tradition all over the world.

At harvest time, a small portion of the grain is left in the field and twisted into the shape of a hero, god or goddess.

Corn dollies can be made from wheat, oats, rye, corn, barley, rushes, even palm leaves.

*Before the reward there must be labor.
You plant before you harvest.*

You sow in tears before you reap and enjoy. ~ Ralph Ransom



On The Rocks ~ Tree Agate

by Pari

There are many different types of Agate, but I chose Tree Agate for Lammas ~ the First Harvest. Not only is there a connection with the symbolism of the Green Man, but the properties of this particular form of Agate are strongly connected to the growth and well-being of plant life and agriculture - something which was extremely important to the survival of our ancestors. Known as the "Stone of Plentitude", Tree Agate brings prosperity and abundance, especially in the form of bountiful crops and generous yields...and that is very much what Lammas is all about.



Tree Agate, also known as Dendritic Agate or Moss Agate, is an opaque cryptocrystalline variety of Chalcedony Quartz. As its alternate name Dendritic Agate suggests, this unique stone's Chlorite, Manganese or Hornblende inclusions make it appear to have distinctive mossy or tree-like markings. These markings are called dendrites, a name derived from "dendron", the Greek word for "tree". Agate gets its name from the river Achates in Sicily where it was first discovered.

Today, the dealers of ornamental stone have segregated Tree Agates into several categories and have given each a different name to designate their slight differences. Whereas Tree Agate is usually an opaque and mostly white stone with its characteristic green mossy inclusions, Moss Agate is differentiated as the mostly green translucent type. Dendritic Agate is often marketed as either variety.

Tree Agate

Photo by: **Patricia J. Martin**
(EW member since 2003)

Agate is formed from silica rich deposits in veins or within cavities of basaltic rock and occurs mainly in nodular massive forms. Being a form of Quartz, it's hardness is 7 on the Mohs Scale (Talc being 1 and Diamond 10), and it's streak is white. The Tree Agate variety is found primarily in western U.S., Scotland, Brazil, India, Russia and China.

Myth & Lore

Wearing Tree Agate is said to bring favor of the gods. The ancient Greeks noted Tree Agate as a stone of abundance and would sow some into their fields to ensure a good and plentiful harvest. Placing Tree Agate in your own garden is said to help increase the fertility of your plants and produce healthy vibrant flowers and foliage. Small agates were hung in fruit trees to bring about a more prolific yield. And often used as a talisman by shamans, Tree Agate was also used to predict weather, guard against natural disasters, and for locating food and water. It was used to divine the degree of strength or weakness of their sick. Afterward, it would be used as an elixir to dispel the sickness.

"The ancient Greeks noted Tree Agate as a stone of abundance and would sow some into their fields to ensure a good and plentiful harvest."



*Stones of small worth may lie unseen by day,
But night itself does the rich gem betray. ~ Abraham Cowley*



On The Rocks ~ con't

by Pari

This sturdy stone encourages communication with the deities of the plant kingdom and can deepen your knowledge of their realm. It will also prompt you to renew and revitalize your own personal connection to the Earth and her life-giving powers. As the other two Harvest Festivals approach (and especially Samhain), Tree Agate can be used to connect us with our ancestors...our roots...providing for an uncanny openness to communication with the spirit world.

Agate is said to have been one of the stones used in the breastplate of the Judaic High Priest. Early Egyptians fashions drinking vessels out of this versatile stone. Tree Agate was a favorite stone used in jewelry in the Victorian era. And more currently, children's marbles were once made of Agate and subsequently called "aggies".

Metaphysical Properties of Tree Agate

Tree Agate brings strength and stability, the power to persevere, and the ability to meet a challenge of working one's harvest with greater stamina. As these qualities become rooted in your being, you will find yourself much more open to receive the prosperity and abundance that is likely to manifest all around you through the influence of this stone - a stone which helps you bring your 'harvest home'.

Tree Agate will also bring the intricacies of life into better focus, encouraging you to be able to better see the connectivity of the branches within life's web, and will then help you keep from getting too caught up in all its details. Tree Agate tells you not to miss the forest for the trees. It pushes you to enjoy the busyness of any season of harvest without getting overwhelmed by it, by asking you to remember just what truly is important.

Use Tree Agate to enrich your life, to bring expansion yet stability to your surroundings, to enhance your own growth and feelings of self-worth, and to branch out and discover the unique treasures of family and friends.

*For health, Tree Agate has been used to help heal disorders of the nervous system, and relieves exhaustion. It aids in bone structure problems in the skeletal system, and vein and capillary degeneration within the circulatory system. It is useful for relief from general pain, but has also been used to squelch hypochondria, as the stone carries a strong calm and centering influence.

***NOTE:** Stone therapy should NOT take the place of medical evaluation and procedures, and should be used merely to enhance one's health and well-being. Magickally, you can use Tree Agate in growth and expansion workings. This stone excels at attracting abundance, prosperity, and fruitful "crops" of all kinds. Its

con't →

"As these qualities become rooted in your being, you will find yourself much more open to receive the prosperity and abundance that is likely to manifest all around you through the influence of this stone - a stone which helps you bring your 'harvest home'."



Tree Agate sphere
Photo by: **Ardriana Cahill**
(EW member since 2004)

*What is harder than stone? What is more soft than water?
Nevertheless hard though the rock may be, it is hollowed by the wave.
~ Proverb*



On The Rocks ~ con't



powers are in vitality, strength, family and tradition. Tree Agates are often used in empowerment rituals and in health and protection spells. It excels as a talisman, and can bestow ancient forest wisdom. This stone's primary Element is Earth, and it is associated with the astrological signs of Taurus and Capricorn. To charge and cleanse these fruitful beauties, place them back into the earth's soil for a day and a night, then rinse in a stream of free-flowing water.

May your walk through the garden of life, and what seeds you've planted there, come to fruition in a most beautifully abundant way! Blessed Be.

© Patricia J. Martin, July 10, 2008

Pari lives on the East Coast, USA and is a Shamanic Witch. She has been a member of EW since 2003
<http://www.peacefulpaths.com/>

references:

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<http://www.davesdowntoearthrockshop.com/agate.htm>

Tree Agate itself



Pipestone

by Lil

"Pipestone is the stone that Native Americans use to construct their ceremonial pipes."

In the distant past, a northern European pagan people celebrated at the beginning of August. They celebrated their first harvest, that of grain. It was called Lammas, or loaf-mas. They celebrated the god Lugh, and their celebration was called Lughnasadh.

Meanwhile, across an ocean in North America, a different kind of harvest was occurring. This pagan people did not cultivate the land in order to harvest grain. They were hunter-gatherers. Their goddess was Mother Earth, and their god, Father Sky. And in August, they harvested stone, Pipestone.

Pipestone is the stone that Native Americans use to construct their ceremonial pipes. It, as well as the land on which it is quarried, is held Wankan, or sacred by the Native American people.

Minnesota has a cold, unforgiving climate. In the late spring and early summer, the quarry is still saturated with water from the melting snows. In modern times, the runoff is siphoned off of the quarries so that quarrying can be accomplished later in the season. This is why Pipestone is harvested in August. It is the driest of the summer months.



Pipestone Quarry
Photo by: **Lillian Norman**
(EW member since 2005)



Pipestone ~ con't

by Lil

Way, way back in the day, when the earth and its people were young, Unktehi, a water monster created a big flood. All of the people went to higher ground to escape the flood, but it was so all encompassing, all but one of the people were overtaken and drowned, covered by water, rock and stone. Their blood gelled in a vast pool and became Pipestone.

According to this legend, the Pipestone quarry in southwestern Minnesota is the gravesite of the ancient ancestors. Thus, the red bowl of the pipe is the flesh and blood of the ancestors. The stem of the pipe is the backbone of the people, and the smoke that issues forth from the pipe, their breath.

The pipe was given to the people by White Buffalo Calf Woman. She herself describes the pipe thusly, "The bowl of the pipe is of red stone; it is the earth. Carved into it and facing the centre is the buffalo calf, who stands for all the four-leggeds. The stem is of wood, which stands for all that grows on the earth. These twelve hanging feathers from the Spotted Eagle stand for all the winged creatures. All these living things of the universe are the children of Mother Earth."

Pipestone is a soft stone made from clay that was compressed by oceans when they covered most of America millennia ago. It rather resembles soap stone in texture. It is the stone the Native Americans use to make the bowls of their ceremonial pipes.

The 'generic' name for Pipestone is Catlinite, after George Catlin, an American Indian sympathizer in the early to mid 1800s who traveled among many different tribes and claimed to be the first white man to explore the Minnesota Pipestone quarries. Although the primary sacred quarrying site is in western Minnesota, in a town, in a county, both aptly named Pipestone, it is also found in Ohio, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and Canada.

Little is written about the metaphysical properties of Pipestone. What I did find, it didn't ring true to me. Below is a meld of Oglala legend and my perceptions of Pipestone.

Energy: Healing, Communication, Unification, Power; a spiritual building block. When the ancestors died to become the Pipestone, it healed relationships between people and between people and the gods. It became part of the conduit of communication between the people and the gods. It brought people together in peace. It also is a power stone because it holds the power, the life blood of the people.

Planet: I can see where the red color would suggest Sun and Mars, but having held the stone, it is all about the Earth. In ritual, when we need the power of red, it will be available in Pipestone. It is a stone of human passion and where there is passion, there is power. But it is an earth stone of the ancestors, there to remind us that we are all part of each other. A reminder to stay grounded.

Element: White Buffalo Calf Woman said, "this is the Earth." If we look at it in the broader perspective of being the flesh and blood of the people, we can draw upon Air, their intellect, Water, their life's blood and emotions, and with its red color, Fire, their passions.

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Lil lives in northeast Ohio and is a solitary pagan witch. She has been a member of EW since 2005



Pipestone

Photo by: **Lillian Norman**
(EW member since 2005)



"...it is an earth stone of the ancestors, there to remind us that we are all part of each other."



Finished Pipestone Pipe

Photo by: **Lillian Norman**
(EW member since 2005)



The Holly Tree

~ Written and Compiled by George Knowles



The Holly tree (*Ilex aquifolium*) is one of the sacred trees of Wicca/Witchcraft, and was of old a favoured tree of the ancient druids. According to the Celtic Tree Calendar the Holly tree represents the eighth month of the year (July 8th - Aug 4th), which includes the Celtic festival of Lughnassadh (Lamas) celebrated on the 1st of August. The Holly tree has been called by many different names in England. In Norfolk it is called Hulver, in Devon - Holme and in parts of Dartmoor - Holme Chase, other popular names include: Christ's Thorn, Hulver Bush, Bat's Wings, Tinne and Holy Tree.

growth during the coming New Year. After the advent of Christianity, and during their Christmas and New Year celebrations, a man would be dressed up and covered in Holly branches and leaves, while a woman was likewise dressed in Ivy (the female counterpart of Holly) and together paraded through the streets leading the old year into the new.

As with most other trees, the Holly tree was revered for its protective qualities and was often planted near the home as a guard against lightning and the unwanted attention of mischievous spirits. When confronted by wild animals, throwing a stick of Holly at them would make them lie down and leave you alone. A piece of Holly carried on your person is thought to promote good luck, particularly in men for the Holly is a male plant (the Ivy its counterpart). As a charm to enhance dreams, gather nine Holly leaves on a Friday after midnight. Wrap them up in a clean white cloth to protect against the needles and use nine knots to bind the cloth. Place it under your pillow and your dreams are sure to come true.

Some old stories tell us that when winter came the old Druids advised the people to take Holly into their homes to shelter the elves and fairies who could join mortals at this time without causing them harm, but these stories also tell of a warning, to make sure and remove the Holly entirely before the eve of Imbolc, for to leave just one leaf in the house would cause misfortune. An old Scottish traditions says that no branch should be cut from a Holly tree, but rather it should be pulled free in a method considered fit for sacred tree. It was also considered unlucky to fell a Holly tree or burn its green skinned branches. Yet luck was increased if a small branch was kept and hung outside of the house, there it would continue to protect against lightning.

The Holly tree deity associations are with: Lugh, Tannus, Taranis and Thor, as well as Tailtiu, Habondia and Tina Etruscan. Its gender type is Masculine. Its planetary ruler is Mars and its

"Holly is associated with the life, death and re-birth symbolism of Lughnassadh/Lamas, the first harvest of the year."



In mythology, the Holly tree is associated with the spirit of vegetation and the waning forces of nature, to which he is personified as a mythical figure called the Holly King. The Holly King rules nature during its decline from the mid-summer solstice (Litha - Jun 21st) through to the mid-winter solstice (Yule - Dec 21st). At each of the solstice Sabbats, the Holly King and his brother the Oak King engage in ritual combat for the attentions of the Goddess, from whence the victor presides over nature through the following half of the year.

In his personification as the Holly King, he is often depicted as an old man dressed in winter clothing wearing a wreath of Holly on his head and walking with the aid of a staff made from a Holly branch. This is symbolic of the fertile interaction of the Goddess and God during nature's decline and the darkest time of the year. At Yule, after his battle with the Oak King, the new light of the sun-God again springs forth to encourage fresh renewed



The Holly Tree con't

associated element is Fire. The bird associated with the month of the Holly is the starling. Holly is used to attract the powers needed for: Protection, Consecration, Healing, Peace, Goodwill, Luck and anything to do with the element Fire.

In ritual uses, Holly is associated with the life, death and re-birth symbolism of Lughnassadh/Lamas, the first harvest of the year. Holly also symbolizes holiness, consecration, material gain, physical revenge, beauty, immortality, peace, goodwill and health. Holly water (infused or distilled) was sprinkled on newborn babies to protect them. It can be used ritually to aid and help with a person's ability to cope with death, and to ease their sleep with peaceful dreams. The Holly has always been associated with mid winter festivals and was used in old Celtic traditions for celebrating the Sun Gods re-birth at the Winter Solstice.

Symbolically, as an evergreen tree, it is always "living" even through the harsh winter months when most all the other trees in the forest have lost their leaves and colour. The Holly tree serves to remind us of "life eternal" and the never ending cycle of nature associated with the rebirth of the God through the fertility of the Goddess. On a personal level, it teaches us to let beauty shine within even in times of adversity, to rule the day but let generosity be your legacy, and that the energy of life is ever-present.

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Sources listed on www.controversial.com



"The Holly tree serves to remind us of "life eternal" and the never ending cycle of nature associated with the rebirth of the God through the fertility of the Goddess."

Poison, Poison, Poison

by OwlOak

As the days of summer come and more and more folks are wandering the woodlands or working in their yards they can be exposed to any one, or more, of the 3 poisons. Poison-Ivy, Poison-Oak, and Poison Sumac.

Now just what makes these nasties so nasty? It is an oil called "urushiol" pronounced both (you-ROO-she-ol) and (oo-roo-she-all) a very strong skin irritant which causes itching and a painful rash of blisters in a vast majority of people. People often think that it is the rupturing of these blisters which cause the spreading, but in reality it is any residual oil left on the skin which spreads the rash so it is very important not to touch other unexposed parts of the body.

The urushiol is very potent and can normally remain active up to 5 years (even on dead plants and contaminated items). Specimens several centuries old have been found to be still viable in producing a reaction in highly allergic people. 1 nanogram (billionth of a gram) is all that is needed to produce a rash in many people, while most people need an exposure to 100 nanograms for the effects to be noticed. Urushiol is so potent that the amount contained on the head of a pin could infect 500 people, while 1/4 ounce could produce rashes on every one of the more than 6 billion people on earth. Definitely not a poison to play with. There are even some states, notably California, which include urushiol poisoning under their workers compensation programs. Interestingly, there are some folks (15-30%) who seem immune to its effects, but there is no guarantee that this immunity is permanent. It seems, the more times you are exposed the greater the chance of developing an allergic reaction to it.

The urushiol oil remains on all things that come in contact with it, including clothing, tools, and even pet fur. People coming in contact with these items are just as susceptible to its effects as if they had touched the plant itself. As the urushiol does take some time to penetrate the skin, usually around 24 hours, there is a bit of a window to circumvent the effects of the poison. Because of this it is prudent to immediately and thoroughly wash - with plenty of soap and water - any possibly contaminated garments or other items, as well as yourself.

con't →

NATURAL REMEDIES

Note ***DISCLAIMER

Aloe Vera – The juice from the stem applied to the rash.

Fern – Mature leaves boiled for 10 minutes in 2-cups of water which is then applied to the rash.

Goldenseal Root powder & Aloe Gel – Made into a paste and applied to the rash.

Honeysuckle – The juice from 3-cups of leaves pureed in 1-cup of water and applied to the rash.

Impatiens (Touch-Me-Nots) – The water in which the stems and flowers have been boiled is applied to the skin.

Jewelweed – The sticky fluid from the stem applied to the rash every 2-3 hours stops the spreading the rash. Also, ¼ - cup fresh water, ¼ - cup Aloe leaves, and ½ - cup Jewelweed blended together and boiled in 1 quart of comfrey tea then strained and sprayed on the rash.

Milkweed – The sap from the leaves applied to the rash.

Rhubarb – The juice from the stalk rubbed on the rash 2-3 times a day.

Tea Tree Oil – Applied to the rash.

Poison, Poison, Poison ~ con't

by OwlOak

HOME REMEDIES

Note ***DISCLAIMER

Aspirin & Nail Polish Remover – Applied to the rash as a paste it stops the itching and clears it up.

Baking Soda – 1. Add ½ cup to a bath and soak in it - relieves the itching. 2. Make a paste with vinegar, apply and allow to dry then scrub off under hot water. 3. Mix with oatmeal to form a thick paste, allow to dry and scrub off with hot water.

Banana Peel – Rubbing the inside of it on the rash stops the itching and clears it up in several days.

Buttermilk – Applied as a lotion stops the itching.

Cucumber – A piece rubbed on the rash as often as needed stops the itching and helps clear it up.

Epsom Salt – Rubbed directly on the rash then washed off with hot water dries up the rash, adding 2-3 cups to a bath and soaking in it relieves the itching and helps dry up the blisters.

Glycerin & Rubbing Alcohol – 1 part glycerin to 9 parts alcohol rubbed on the rash stops the itching and dries it up.

Honey – Eating "raw" honey daily has been claimed to offer immunity to the urushiol.

Hydrogen Peroxide – Applied to the rash stops the itching.

Iodine – Applied to the rash stops the itching and dries it up.

Kosher Salt – 1. Made into a paste with hot water and dish soap and applied to the rash, allowed to dry and then scrubbed off stops the itching and clears up the rash. 2.

The 3 poisons are extremely difficult to control or eradicate. Because of their extensive root systems digging them up is normally a futile effort as they propagate through both the berries and the root system. There are chemical sprays on the market, which are effective, if one chooses to go that route. One very important note..." DO NOT under any circumstances try to BURN them out". The oil is carried by the smoke and as a result contaminates a far wider area. Also, the breathing in of the toxic smoke can cause life threatening lung damage. Ingestion of the leaves can cause damage to the digestive tract, airway, kidneys, and other internal organs

There is an old adage, "Leaves of three, let it be." This works well for poison-ivy and oak, which do have 3 leaves in a cluster, however poison sumac can have from 7-13, so the adage does not apply to it but the urushiol sure does. Also, these guys are deciduous so shed their leaves in the winter leaving the oil covered stems exposed, so you can still get urushiol poisoning in the dead of winter by coming in contact with them.

Poison-ivy and



POISON-IVY
Poison-ivy, a name coined by Captain John Smith in 1609, seems to be the most common culprit encountered by folks. It is found in much of the United States and southern Canada. It inhabits fields, forests, and fence lines. Usually found as a vine, either trailing on the ground or climbing trees and rock formations; it can also appear as a shrub. It can be identified by the opposing leaves on each side of the stalk with a single one at the tip. The leaves are red in the spring turning dark shiny green in the summer and/or yellow, orange, and red in the fall. Small greenish flowers are found where the leaves meet the stem and develop into clusters of whitish waxy looking berries as the growing season progresses.

POISON SUMAC

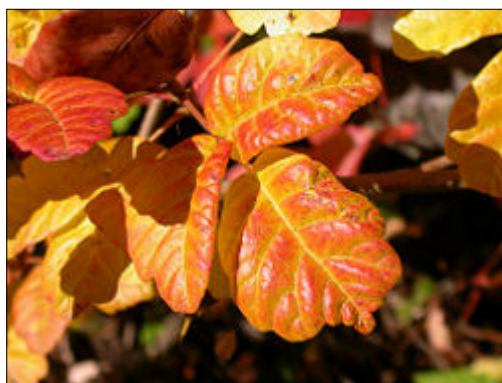
Another nasty found predominately in the Eastern United States and southern Canada is poison sumac that usually grows as a woody shrub but can reach the height of 20 feet. It has been called by some botanists, "the most toxic plant species in the United States." It grows predominately in swamps and bogs on the East Coast of The United States, although it can grow as far west as southern Idaho, and Canada.

It has 7-13 leaflets 2 – 4 inches long branching out on either side of a long thin stem 10-20 inches long. The fruit is a small white or gray berry produced in long clumps. This differentiates it from other species that have the red berries we are so accustomed to seeing dangling from them.



Poison sumac

Western Poison-Oak



POISON-OAK

Poison-oak comes in two varieties, Western and Atlantic. The western variety is exclusive to the Pacific coast of North America and its range extends from southern Canada as far south as the California Baja.

Poison, Poison, Poison ~ con't

by OwlOak

Western poison-oak is quite diverse in its appearance and can range from a dense shrub in sunny areas to a climbing vine in shaded forest environments. The leaves are divided into 3 leaflets from 1 ½-4 inches long with scalloped, toothed, or lobed sides and strongly resemble those of the oak tree. The leaves are bright green in the spring, yellow-green to reddish in the summer, and red to pink in the fall. In the spring white flowers form and later develop into greenish-white or tan berries.

Atlantic Poison-oak grows as an erect shrub about 3 feet tall, or as a vine, with 6 inch long leaf stalks with 3 leaflets on each which closely resemble white oak leaves. They are dark green from spring through summer and turn yellow or orange in the fall. Like the Western variety the Atlantic one produces berries. These are small, round and yellowish in color.

Well, there you have it folks. While definitely not claimed to be scholarly, authoritative, or all-inclusive I hope this article has been of help in giving everyone a better idea as to the nature of these three nasties in nature.

Here's witching you all a fun-filled, safe, and rash-free summer.

Huggs & B*B ~ OwlOak

© 2008 James Rancourt aka OwlOak. OwlOak lives in New England, USA and is a Wiccan High Priest. He has been an EW member since 2003.

Sources: www.poisonivy.aesir.com, www.en.wikipedia.org, www.fda.gov/fdac/features/796_ivy.html, "Jude's Herbal", Jude C. Williams, M.H.; Llewellyn Publications, ISBN 0-87542-869-X



Western Poison-oak
(shrub form)



Western Poison-oak
(vine form)



Atlantic Poison-oak



Atlantic Poison-oak vine

DISCLAIMER

Note: All remedies are intended as interesting information ONLY and are not endorsed by the author, EW, or controversial.com. As with all medical problems, a qualified doctor should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment.

HOME REMEDIES con't

Note ***DISCLAIMER

Adding 1-cup to a hot bath and soaking for 20 minutes every 4-6 hours helps relieve the itching and rash.

Maple Syrup (100% pure) - Applied to the affected areas it stops the itching and clears up the rash.

Miracle Whip – Rubbed on the rash, allowed to sit for a couple of minutes then washed off with dish detergent stops the itching and clears up the rash.

Oatmeal – Made into a thick paste with hot water and applied and let dry stops the itching and dries up the blisters. Also, a paste of 1-cup hot water, 1-cup oatmeal, 2 tablespoons chlorine bleach, and 2 dashes of salt applied and let dry then scrubbed off works the same.

Orange Juice and Pectin – Dissolving 1 package of pectin in 1 pitcher of orange juice and drinking daily has been claimed to offer resistance to the toxic effects of the oil.

Pine Tar Soap – Thoroughly scrubbing the affected areas a couple of times a day stops the itching and eliminates the rash.

Plastic Wrap - Applied over the pastes and ointments speeds up the healing of the rash and keeps it from spreading.

Toothpaste – Mixed to a paste with baking soda and applied to the rash and allowed to sit overnight before scrubbing off eliminates the itching and rash.

Vinegar – Applied as needed helps relieve the itching. Applied as a hot compress it also dries up the blisters.

OVER THE COUNTER REMEDIES

Zanfel™ Poison Ivy Wash – a safe and effective topical solution for poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. .

Tecnu® Outdoor Skin Cleanser – Use after you have been outdoors to remove the rash causing oil, urushiol (oo-roo-she-all).

Johnson and Johnson's Band-Aid® Anti Itch Gel - Immediate Cooling Relief For Insect Bites and Poison Ivy/Oak/Sumac External Analgesic Formerly Ruligel

Ivy Block® – The only FDA-approved product that's clinically proven to help prevent poison oak, ivy and sumac rashes before they start.

Burt's Bee's® Poison Ivy Soap - This mild, cleansing soap contains Jewelweed to help relieve itching and irritation. You'll also reap the antiseptic benefits of Pine Tar and Tea Tree oil.

Calamine Lotion – A venerable topical lotion which dries up the blisters but does little to relieve the itching or spread of the toxic oil.

Animal Wisdom ~ Squirrel

by Pari

Ah, Lammas! The earliest of the three Harvest Festivals, when the first of our plantings have ripened and we are ready to begin reaping what we have sown. Harvesting comes in all shapes and sizes, from physical plant harvesting to harvesting ideas of the mind, and there is no one better than Squirrel to show us the ins and outs of this worthwhile feat. Of gathering and harvesting, and more, they are the masters. There are several types of squirrels, the most common being the gray, red, black and flying squirrel. Each have their own special qualities that make them unique, but all share the following spirit and totem medicine.

Squirrels are members of the rodent family, and can often be viewed scurrying about with a nervous energy that makes us take note of their excellent skills of agility, dexterity and reflex. Bounding quickly but cautiously from tree to tree, or running precariously but adeptly over fence tops and telephone wires, squirrels are the acrobats of the animal kingdom. Learning how to maneuver risky situations without toppling is part of Squirrel medicine. Always having a goal in sight is another aspect of these furry creatures. Squirrels waste no energy, and thus find themselves full of it. But even with all the excess energy, they can suddenly be as still as a statue at a moment's notice. Knowing when to stop and listen, and knowing when to move along, is one of Squirrel's best teachings. Another is to remain curious, but cautious. Squirrel is always up for a challenge, and especially when they feel they will gain something through their efforts. But even with their adroitness and quick reflexes, a squirrel's curiosity and challenging personality can still get them in trouble. At times they fall prey mainly to hawks and owls. For those with Squirrel Totem, it is recommended they also read and study these two animals.

Squirrels are talkative and you'll find them

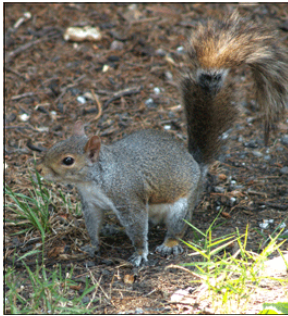
frequently chattering, but use of their body and bushy tails are other ways in which they communicate. Those with Squirrel medicine will find their own instincts and perception will increase, and would do well to pay close attention to another's body language in order to read between the lines and gain insight. Also, under the influence of Squirrel, you will learn that you may need to quiet your own inherent chattering so that you can stop and listen to what's truly being said. But chattering does have its place, as squirrels also

use it to send alerts to not only their brethren but to all animals throughout their immediate vicinity. This shows Squirrel's strong protective trait, and the person who finds Squirrel as their totem will often emulate this same quality. When a squirrel hangs from the bark of a tree by using their sharp back claws, they are not only more invisible to predators but can be ever watchful. At other times, they will cling to the tree and make a loud squealing noise while

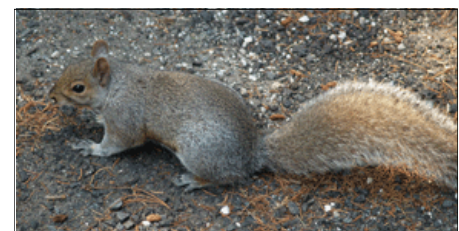
whipping their tails around. These, too, are done to warn others of potential danger. The flicking of a squirrel's tail is how they express emotion.

The most notable trait of the squirrel is his excellence at preparing for the future. At this time of year and for a few months to follow, squirrels busy themselves scrounging and foraging for nuts, grains, seeds and fruit, and will proceed to store much of it away by burying it where they can dig it up later when needed. Meeting the future with readiness will be much easier if you follow the way of the Squirrel. If you are a procrastinator and leave things undone, Squirrel will help you to dissolve this trait.

Although not enjoying strangers in their midst,



Squirrel Photos
This page, by: **Pari**
(EW member since 2003)



"Learning how to maneuver risky situations without toppling is part of Squirrel medicine."

Animal Wisdom ~ Squirrel (con't) by Pari

squirrels are nonetheless social and enjoy hours of carefree time wrestling each other or even simply a dangling leafy branch. Here Squirrel teaches the importance of balancing work and play, and will also help you bring out your own playful side. They show the necessity of striving for a balance between work and play in order to keep healthy in mind, body and spirit.

In conclusion, work hard to prepare for the future, and play equally as hard when enjoying the fruits of your labors. And Summer is an optimal time for both work and play! So enjoy the warmth. Enjoy the fruits. Enjoy your life!
Blessed Be!

© Patricia J. Martin, July 10, 2008

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<http://www.peacefulpaths.com/>

references:

Animal-Speak by Ted Andrews
Squirrel, herself



Squirrel

Photo by: **Ardriana**
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The Tale of the Salmon Knowledge as told by Lyric



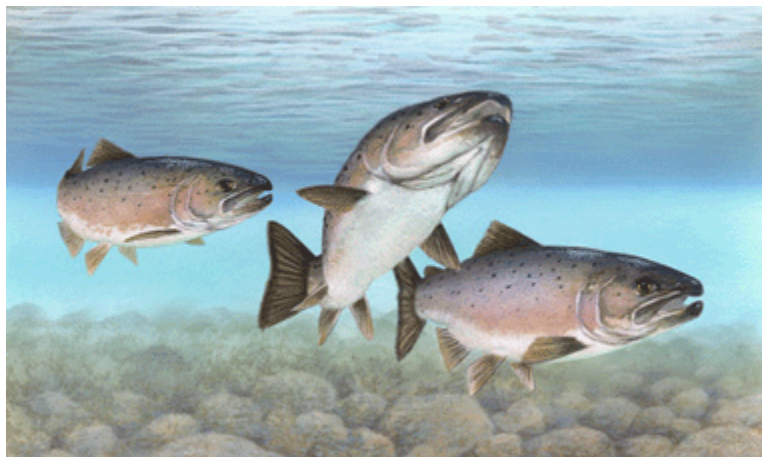
Our story begins on the banks of the River Boyne in Ireland many, many years ago. The Salmon of Knowledge was, at one time, an ordinary salmon until it ate nine hazel nuts that fell into the Pool of Wisdom from nine hazel trees that stood on the bank of the river. By eating these nuts, the ordinary salmon became magical and gained all the knowledge of the world. It was told that anyone who ate the flesh of this salmon would gain this knowledge.

The wise poet and teacher Finn Eces spent many years trying to catch the magical salmon to gain all the knowledge of the world and to be the wisest man in Ireland. Finn had a student, a young boy named Fionn mac Cumhail. Fionn wanted very much to follow in his father's footsteps and to be a great warrior, but for the time being, he lived with Finn who was his tutor. Together, teacher and student were sitting on the banks of the River Boyne resting after their lunch when suddenly Finn caught sight of a giant Salmon swimming up the river. Finn had never seen anything like this huge Salmon with shimmering rainbow-colored skin, golden fins and big black eyes. He knew, at once, that it was the magical Salmon of Knowledge. Fionn had his back to the river and did not catch sight of the Salmon. Finn was very careful not to look into the eyes of the Salmon, as this would cause him to fall into a deep sleep. Finn tried to catch the fish, but in doing so he accidentally looked into the fish's eyes. Finn fell fast asleep.

Fionn saw his teacher asleep and tried to awaken him before the fish could get away. When Finn awoke he told Fionn to bring him a cloth. He used the cloth to cover his eyes and began casting his net with hopes of catching the Salmon. He tried for many hours. He was getting ready to give up his effort as night was falling; when to his delight he caught the Salmon. Finn was tired and spent and told Fionn to cook the fish. He warned Fionn not to eat the fish or even taste it. Fionn promised he would not even taste it and went about building the cook fire. As he sat watching the fish cook, a small bubble appeared on the skin of the fish. It grew bigger as the fish cooked and Fionn became

con't →

"Finn had never seen anything like this huge Salmon with shimmering rainbow-colored skin, golden fins and big black eyes and he knew at once that it was the magical Salmon of Knowledge."



The Tale of the Salmon Knowledge ~con't

"The Salmon of Knowledge was not meant for me. You are the one the old stories spoke of, as he who would know all things."



Fionn mac Cumhail

fascinated by the bubble. Soon, he could not resist poking the bubble with his finger. The bubble burst and sent hot oil splattering onto Fionn's thumb. The oil was very hot indeed and burned, so he put his thumb into his mouth to cool it.

When the Salmon was done and ready to eat, Fionn brought it to Finn. The wise poet knew, at once, that something had happened. Fionn looked different. His eyes were brighter and his face was flushed. Finn questioned the boy about eating the fish and he swore that he had not eaten the fish. Then, Fionn remembered putting his thumb into his mouth when the oil had burned it. He admitted this to his teacher.



Finn knew at once that Fionn had gained the wisdom of the Salmon of Knowledge. At first, the poet was sad that he would never be the wisest man in Ireland. He said to Fionn, "The Salmon of Knowledge was not meant for me. You are the one the old stories spoke of, as he who would know all things." From that day on, whenever Fionn needed to know anything, all he had to do was put his thumb into his mouth. He went on to be a great warrior and a hero of Ireland.

References:

The Salmon of Wisdom – Wikipedia
The Salmon of Knowledge from AllAboutIrish.com
The Salmon of Knowledge from Celtic.org

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Hazelnut Salmon

by Lyric

***Inspired by Lacquered Hazelnut Salmon by Amy Topel

3-4 lbs. of salmon fillet, cut into portions
½ cup teriyaki sauce
½ cup maple syrup
⅓ cup hazelnut oil
1 small shallot, peeled and diced
3 cloves garlic peeled and minced
1 T minced ginger
1 t. Chinese five-spice mix
3 t. ground black pepper
fresh limes cut into wedges
½ c. coarsely chopped toasted hazelnut

Night before:

prepare marinade: in a bowl or food processor combine:
½ cup teriyaki sauce

½ cup maple syrup

⅓ cup plus 2 T hazelnut oil

1 small shallot, peeled and diced

3 cloves garlic peeled and minced

1 T minced ginger

1 t. Chinese five-spice mix

3 t. ground black pepper

puree until smooth.

Place Salmon skin side down on a dish and cover with marinade. Refrigerate overnight.

Preheat grill. Grill fish basting several times with marinade. Grill about 5 minutes per side until fish is done and flakes. Before serving garnish with lime wedges and hazelnuts.

If you don't have a grill, you can bake the fish in a preheated 400-degree oven for 18-22 minutes, basting once with marinade.



The Pagan Kitchen

by OwlOak

Time for another turn of the wheel and the first harvest. Folks often ask me what foods are appropriate for the Sabbats and my reply is always the same...those that are in season and keeping in the spirit of it.

To that end I would like to make a few suggestions. The primary item being honored at this Sabbat is grain, so anything made of grain (oats, wheat, barley, rye, corn, millet, rice, etc.) is most appropriate. Along with the grain we also see the garden's abundance of fresh vegetables and herbs, so dishes including these would definitely be on the menu along with wild mushrooms, berries, and other foraged foods.

As for meats and fish: In the old days they too would be there but to a lesser degree because they would have had to have been freshly butchered or caught as they would not hold well in the hot August weather. Since we are now in the 21st century where preservation is not a problem, and the availability of just about any food item is determined only by the thickness of your wallet, I would recommend you center the feast around the basics and fill out the rest of it with those foods you enjoy. Items like green and red bell peppers, summer squash, pasta salads, tomatoes, beans, tossed salads, greens, fish, pork, fowl, lamb would all fit in. Basically, anything you have available at the time in your neck of the woods...or you can get that is available elsewhere at this time of year.

Here are some recipes you might find interesting. Please remember that these are only suggestions and can be ignored, or modified to suit your taste.

BREAKFAST

Whole-wheat Blueberry Pancakes with Maple Syrup

2 cups milk	1 teaspoon salt
3 large eggs	2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 stick butter, melted and cooled	1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
3/4 cup all-purpose flour	3 tablespoons sugar
1/2 cup whole-wheat flour	2 cups fresh blueberries
	Vegetable oil, as needed

In a large bowl whisk together the milk, the eggs, and butter. Add, one-at-a-time, the all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, the salt, the baking powder, the baking soda, blueberries, and the sugar, continually whisking until the batter is combined. Heat a griddle, or large frying pan, over moderately high heat until it is hot and add enough vegetable oil to lightly coat the surface. Pour 1/4 to 1/3-cup of the batter onto the griddle, or frying pan for each pancake. Cook the pancakes on each side until they are golden brown, about 2-3 minutes per side. Place fresh cooked pancakes in an ovenproof container and place in a warm oven until all have been made. Serve the pancakes with a pat of butter and a generous drizzle of Maple Syrup.



Lammas Harvest
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(EW member since 2007)

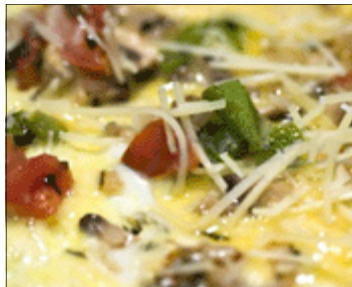




The Pagan Kitchen ~(con't)

by OwlOak

Vegetable Skillet Omelet (fancy name - Frittata)



1 large scallions (or, 1 large sweet onion), coarsely chopped
1 clove fresh garlic, minced
1 red bell pepper, chopped into 1/4 inch pieces
1 green bell pepper, chopped into 1/4 inch pieces
1 medium summer squash, chopped into 1/4 inch pieces
1 medium zucchini, chopped into 1/4 inch pieces
fresh basil, coarsely chopped
fresh thyme, coarsely chopped
2-3 ripe tomatoes, seeded and chopped into 1/4 inch pieces
1 dozen eggs, slightly beaten
fresh parsley, coarsely chopped
salt & fresh ground pepper, to taste
Cooking oil, as needed

Chop the veggies, and lightly whisk the eggs. Heat the cooking oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook until translucent. Add the peppers, squash, zucchini, and gently cook until vegetables are slightly firm, but not overcooked. Add the tomatoes and gently mix in. Remove from the pan and add more oil to the pan if necessary. Add the beaten eggs to the pan. Once the eggs begin to set, add the vegetable mixture spreading it evenly over the top of them. Sprinkle with the chopped fresh herbs, salt and pepper. Cover and cook over low heat until the eggs are no longer watery. Slide onto warm plate, cut into pie sized wedges and serve.

Variations:

1. Any vegetable may be added or omitted. Some options to add might be spinach, eggplant, broccoli, cauliflower, jalapeño peppers, shredded carrots, celery, etc.
2. To give a Southwestern flair, serve with a couple of tablespoons of spicy salsa on top of each wedge.
3. Add shredded cheddar, or jack cheese to the omelet before adding the herbs.
- 4 For Vegans, egg substitute can be used in place of the real eggs.

LUNCH



Mushroom Burgers

** My young granddaughters love these. They would rather eat them than a regular beefburger.

large Portobello mushroom caps; allow 1 for each serving
4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2-4 tablespoons olive oil, to taste (In most cases I "do not" use EVOO as I have found it has too strong an olive taste and usually impairs the flavor of the dish for my liking.)
finely chopped fresh basil
finely chopped fresh oregano
1-2 cloves minced garlic
salt and pepper to taste
1 slice of cheese of choice, optional (Pepper-jack or Swiss work well)
white wine, optional

con't →



The Pagan Kitchen~(con't)

by OwlOak

Place the mushroom caps in a 1-gallon plastic bag. Whisk together balsamic vinegar, olive oil, basil, oregano, garlic, salt, and pepper. Pour over the mushrooms. Shake well. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes, shaking the bag ever 10 minutes. Remove caps from marinade and reserve marinade for basting. Place mushrooms on a preheated (medium heat) grill, liberally brushed with oil, grilling for 5 to 10 minutes on each side until tender but not overcooked, brushing with marinade frequently. Remove from grill and place on toasted buns. Toppings can include your favorite burger ones like lettuce, tomato, sliced onion, relish, ketchup, mayo, or some spicy salsa for an added zing.

* If cheese is used, add just a couple of minutes before the caps are done.

** For the adults you may wish to add a splash of a semi-sweet white wine to the marinade.

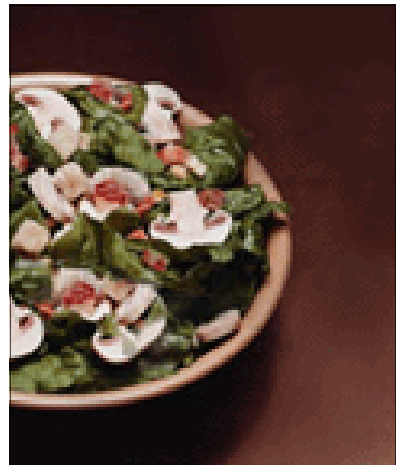
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### Spinach Salad

1 bunch fresh spinach - washed, dried, and chopped into bite-sized pieces  
 1 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced lengthwise  
 1 red onion, cut in half lengthwise, and thinly sliced the same way  
 2-3 tomatoes, chopped (yup, seeds and all)  
 salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste  
 black raspberry vinaigrette dressing, below

Combine the spinach, mushrooms, onion, and tomatoes; sprinkle with salt and pepper and toss together. Prepare the Black Raspberry vinaigrette and pour over salad. Top with your favorite toppings.

\* Toppings might include croutons, oriental noodles, chopped hard-boiled egg, bacon crumbled feta or blue cheese.



### Black Raspberry Vinaigrette

|                                                 |                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 cup fresh black raspberries, cleaned & rinsed |                                  |
| 4 tablespoons olive oil                         | 1 clove garlic, minced           |
| 4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar                  | 1 heavy pinch fresh minced basil |
| 1 tablespoon brown sugar                        | 1 heavy pinch fresh minced thyme |

Combine all ingredients in a blender and process until well blended. Pour over the salad and lightly toss.

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Green Bean Medley

1 pound fresh green beans, cut into bite-sized lengths
 1 red bell pepper, cut into bite-sized pieces
 1/4 cup olive oil
 1 red onion, cut in half lengthwise thinly sliced the same way
 1/2 pound fresh wild mushrooms, sliced lengthwise
 1 clove garlic, mashed
 salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste
 shredded cheddar or crumbled feta cheese, optional

con't →





The Pagan Kitchen~(con't)

by OwlOak



Place green beans in a large pot with about an inch of water. Cover, and cook until al dente, and drain. Add olive oil to a large skillet and bring to temperature over medium heat. (wet your fingers under a faucet and flip them into the oil...if the water sizzles off, you're set to go) Fry the onions, peppers, and mushrooms until almost tender. Reduce heat, cover and simmer a couple of minutes. Stir in green beans and seasonings. Cover, and cook over medium heat until all is heated thoroughly, stirring once or twice. Place in a serving dish and top with the shredded cheddar, or feta, cheese.

Variation: Top with bread or cracker crumbs before adding the cheese and place in a 325 F (163 C) oven until the cheese has melted.

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### Corny Custard Pudding



1 cup milk  
2 tablespoons room temp butter or margarine  
1-2 tablespoons white sugar  
1 heavy pinch of salt  
2-3 eggs (depends on how heavy a custard you like)  
1 can cream style corn  
1 dash of vanilla extract  
nutmeg or cinnamon  
fresh whipped cream, or cool-whip  
fresh mint

Whisk eggs, butter, sugar, salt, milk, vanilla, and cream corn together. Pour into a 1 1/2 Qt. baking dish, and sprinkle with nutmeg or cinnamon. Place dish in a deep pan with enough water to cover it 1/2 way up the side. Bake at 350 degrees F (177 C) for 45 minutes or till mixture is set. Remove from oven and allow to cool to room temperature. Serve with a dollop of fresh whipped cream, and a sprig of fresh mint.

Variations: For a main meal, any type of cheese, or vegetable (such as cooked onion, celery, scallions, mushrooms, red and green bell peppers, jalapeño peppers, broccoli flowerets, etc.), or meat such as ham, can be added. However, it does stand on it's own, as is, as a dessert.

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Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

1/2 cup white sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
1 cup quick cooking oats
1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 cup all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 cup (1 stick) softened butter or margarine---of course I do prefer the butter. :-)
1 egg, beaten
1 splash vanilla extract

con't →



The Pagan Kitchen

by OwlOak

Combine flour, salt, and baking powder (I run mine through a sifter) in a large bowl. Add 1/2 cup of softened butter or margarine, one beaten egg, and one splash of vanilla extract, blending well. Drop 1 tablespoon of mixture 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Remove from sheet and store, if they last that long. (I place mine in a gallon plastic resealable bag to retain the softness and freshness).

DINNER

Grilled Pork Chops

4 large bone-in pork chops
1/2 cup minced red onion
1 heavy pinch fresh minced rosemary
4 tablespoons cider vinegar
4 tablespoons frozen orange
juice concentrate, thawed

1 heavy pinch fresh minced thyme
1 heavy pinch sea salt
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1/2 cup barbecue sauce, your favorite
brand will do nicely

Combine the vinegar, soy sauce, orange juice, onion, rosemary, thyme, salt, garlic and barbecue sauce in a bowl. Place chops in a large resealable plastic bag, add the marinade and refrigerate overnight. Preheat grill for high heat. Grill chops, turning once, until cooked through, about 5-7 minutes per side.



Vegetarian Stuffed Peppers

1/2 cup uncooked white rice
1 cup vegetable broth
1/2 dozen large green, or red, bell peppers
1 large onion, chopped
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon paprika
1 1/2 pounds firm tofu, crumbled
1/3 cup dry bread crumbs

3 eggs, or egg substitute
1 cup chopped fresh mushrooms, chopped
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 large can crushed tomatoes
salt to taste

Combine rice and vegetable broth in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer covered for about 15 minutes. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (205 degrees C). Cut tops off peppers and remove seeds. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat and fry onions, garlic, and mushrooms in oil until soft. In a large bowl combine crumbled tofu, parsley, eggs, breadcrumbs, soy sauce, paprika, salt, pepper, and cooked rice mixture. Stuff the peppers with the mixture and arrange peppers in a large baking dish. Pour the crushed tomatoes over the top of the stuffed peppers. Cover, and bake 45 minutes to 1 hour.

*If you wish to use the cheese, uncover and top each pepper with it after they are done and return to the oven until the cheese is just melted.





The Pagan Kitchen~(con't)

by OwlOak



Wild Rice Pilaf

- 2 cups uncooked wild rice
- 4-6 scallions, chopped
- 1 carrot, grated
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 cups water
- 1 regular can chicken broth, or 2 additional cups of water

In a medium size saucepan combine rice with green onion, carrot, sliced mushrooms, salt, chicken broth and water. Cover and cook on medium heat for 15-20 minutes, or until the rice is tender.

*The key to great rice is to leave the lid on throughout the cooking process, so it can steam. Don't jump the gun and keep removing the lid to check doneness. If you are in doubt as to it's burning..."lower the heat"...DON'T keep lifting the lid.

Fried Green Tomatoes

- 1/2 dozen green tomatoes----more if they're small----figure 1 medium tomato per person when used as a side dish.
- 1/2 handful of salt (1/4 cup)
- 1 tray ice cubes
- 1 dime sized pile of sugar --measured in your palm (1 teaspoon)
- 1-2 handfuls of white flour (1 cup)
- 1-2 handfuls of yellow cornmeal (1 cup)
- Herbs and spices of choice----fresh rosemary, oregano, basil, etc.
- Salt and pepper to taste (a pinch of cayenne pepper adds a bit of a bite for those so inclined)
- Cooking oil



Fill a large sauce pan about 1/2 way with water and add 1/2 handful of salt.... Mix well. Remove the stems from the tomatoes and slice into rounds about 1/4 inch thick. Place the sliced tomatoes in the pan, adding more water if necessary to cover them, and add the ice cubes. Refrigerate for about an hour. This removes some of the bitterness and also crisps them up so they aren't so mushy when fried. In a bowl, or pie pan, mix the flour, cornmeal, sugar, salt, pepper, and any desired herbs or spices. Drain the tomatoes and gently rinse them to remove the brine. Dredge each slice in the coating mix then fry in a large frying pan using the selected cooking media for a couple of minutes per side on medium heat.... Just long enough to get them golden brown. Remove, adjust the seasonings, and serve immediately.

Whole Wheat Roasted Garlic Bread

- 3-4 bulbs garlic (that's the whole enchilada, not the pieces you break off)
- 1 drizzle olive oil
- 1 loaf whole wheat bread
- 1 stick of butter, softened
- chopped fresh parsley
- grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- Slice the tops off of the garlic bulbs leaving the root end intact. Place the bulbs on a baking sheet, and drizzle with olive oil. Bake for 30 minutes, at 350 degrees F (177 degrees C).



con't →



The Pagan Kitchen~(con't)

by OwlOak

(Garlic should be very soft and mushy.) Remove from oven and allow to cool to where they can be handled and squeeze them into a bowl. Stir in the butter and parsley until well mixed. Cut thick slabs of the whole wheat bread and place them on a cookie sheet. Generously spread each piece of bread with the garlic mixture and top with the grated Parmesan cheese and place them under a broiler until golden brown.... watching very carefully as they can burn very quickly.

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### Grandma Little's Black Berry Pie and Ice Cream

1 basic pie dough for a double-crust pie  
 1 cup white sugar  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 2 tablespoons white flour  
 juice of 1 lemon wedge (the rest went into a lemonade, see last issue)  
 4 cups blackberries, picked over and rinsed

Preheat the oven to 350 F (177° C). Line a 9-inch pie plate with 1 crust. Mix together the sugar, vanilla, and lemon juice. Coat the blackberries with the flour and add to the sugar, vanilla, and lemon juice. Gently stir until mixed. Pour into the crust and cover with the top crust, fluting the edges with a wet fork or your fingers to give a good seal. Cut a few slits in the top crust for the steam to vent. Place on a cookie sheet in the preheated 350 degrees F (177 degrees C) oven for 45-50 minutes until the crust is golden brown and the berry juice is bubbling through the vents. Remove and allow to cool. Serve with vanilla ice cream, or whipped cream.

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Remember that the whole purpose of the celebration is the recognition of the turn of the wheel and its significance in terms of available food, and its effect on your life. "Your Life, you ask?" But of course it is. Those dreams, wants, desires, deeds done or undone that you planted last Fall, blossomed at Litha and are bearing fruit now.

Here's wishing you and yours a very merry Lammas/Lughnasadh, with a bountiful harvest of love, family, friends, happiness, and a long and happy life.

Huggs & B*B ~ OwlOak

This article contains recipes of my own, either original or adapted from those I've acquired over the years, and family recipes that have been handed down to me by dearly departed family members. Any duplication of recipes created by others is accidental and unintentional.

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OwlOak lives in New England, USA and is a Wiccan High Priest. He has been an EW member since 2003.



Owl
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*How clean the sun when seen in its idea,
 Washed in the remotest cleanliness of a heaven
 That has expelled us and our images . . .
 The death of one god is the death of all.
 Let purple Phoebus lie in umber harvest,
 Let Phoebus slumber and die in autumn umber.... ~Wallace Stevens*



Seasonal Festival ~ The Night of Sevens

by Graham & Pari

As many of us in the northern hemisphere are busily celebrating Lughnasadh this August, and as many of us in the southern hemisphere continue celebrating Imbolc and the promise it holds, there are other cultures in the world doing a little celebrating of their own. Far from the least of these are those celebrations that will be conducted in China at this time - a country that has a long history of conducting seasonal festivals that are an integral part of the religious and cultural beliefs of its people. Probably the best known of these festivals is the famous Chinese New Year, beginning, not on the first day of our Western Gregorian calendar, but at the beginning of the year according to the Chinese lunar calendar.

Similarly, the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar (typically our mid-August) heralds a special festive time in Eastern culture – the so-called “Night of Sevens” or Qi Xi (pronounced “chee shuh”), similar to our own Valentine’s Day. In Japan this festival is referred to as Tanabata, in Korea Chilseok, and in Vietnam That Tich, and all have the same theme – a Star Festival celebrating true love. And just as both harvesting and rebirth are being celebrated within our own respective Sabbats, so too can The Night of Sevens be seen as both a celestial harvesting of love and the hope of a most glorious reunion.

The mythical love story associated with Qi Xi is based on the position of actual stars in our night sky around this time of year. They are Altair and Vega, in the constellations of Aquila (the Eagle) and Lyra (the Lyre) respectively. This is how the ancient love story goes...

One day, a young shepherd by the name of Niulang (Altair) encountered seven faerie sisters bathing nude in a lake. Spurred on by his mischievous ox and by the sheer beauty of the woven fabrics of their clothes, Niulang steals their clothing and waits nearby, curious to see what the sisters will do. The sisters elect Zhinü (Vega), the youngest, most beautiful and most talented of the seven, to go retrieve their garments...and she does. At first sight of each other, Niulang and Zhinü fall in love, and, of course, since he's seen her naked he must marry her. When the Goddess of Heaven (some say Zhinü's mother) finds out that a mere mortal has married a faerie, she becomes enraged and forces Zhinü to return to the heavens to weave the sky's beautiful tapestries of color. Niulang becomes extremely distraught, knowing that he cannot travel to the heavens to retrieve his wife, but his prize cow tells him of a way. "If you kill me and wear my hide, you will be able to be reunited with Zhinü," the cow says. Tearfully, Niulang follows the cow's instructions and then ascends into the heavens

where he happily reunites with Zhinü. Their happiness is short-lived though, for the Goddess finds out they are together again, and she sees that their passion for one another is interfering with Zhinü's work.

In anger she uses one of her hairpins to etch a long and wide river (the Milky Way) between the two lovers. Such sadness and longing the world has never seen, as Zhinü and Niulang sit apart and yearn for each other from afar. But all is not lost, for all the magpies (some say crows) of the world took pity on the lovers. It is said that once a year they come together and fly up to the heavens to form a solid winged bridge over the celestial Milky Way river by way of Deneb, the brightest star in the constellation of the Swan, Cygnus - an arched bridge of hope that ensures that Zhinü and Niulang may once again come together and bask in their love on the night of the seventh day of the seventh moon.

To celebrate the legend of these two star-crossed lovers, it is traditional to place a suspended garland of flowers, called a “festoon,” outside or in one's home to symbolize the bridge made by the compassionate magpies. Single women are prompted to leave offerings of flowers, fruit or tea to Zhinü and Niulang. Some offer facial powder, sprinkling half on the roof of their home while keeping half for personal use, thus ensuring they too will remain as beautiful as Zhinü.



“The mythical love story associated with Qi Xi is based on the position of actual stars in our night sky around this time of year.”

*I want the lighter of my seven lamps of beauty, honour,
laughter, music, love, life and immortality ...
I want my inspiration, my folly, my happiness, my divinity ...
my light across the sea ... my night's dream, my darling and my star.”
~ George Bernard Shaw*

The Night of Sevens ~ con't**by Graham & Pari**

During this holiday, it is customary to write down one's wishes (often in the form of poetry) and hang them from a stick of lucky bamboo. Girls often wish for greater domestic skills, and boys often wish for greater handwriting skills. Later, the bamboo and wish are burned or sent afloat down a river on or near midnight. Other traditions include weaving one's own piece of clothing or decoration, or testing one's skill in the arts. Young girls divine their skills by tossing a sewing needle into a bowl of water. If the needle stays afloat and doesn't sink, it is a sure sign that they too possess the prolific talents of the beautiful Zhinü.

Within the legend of Zhinü and Niulang, it is interesting to note its similarity to Greek mythology, wherein Orpheus, who is so grief-stricken over the loss of his wife Eurydice to the underworld, wanders aimlessly about playing his lyre. The music of the lyre was so beautiful that many tried to win his heart, but couldn't, as his heart belonged to his one true love. After Orpheus' death, the lyre was thrown into the river of the Milky Way, but was later retrieved by an Eagle sent by Zeus. The recovered lyre was then placed in the night sky in honor of the eternal love between Orpheus and Eurydice.

So, whether you are busy harvesting all the wonderful fruits of summer in the north or listening to the awakening songs of the Goddess as new plants begin to emerge in the south, don't forget to take time to relax under the twinkling stars of our glorious night sky. Look up toward the Milky Way and send a kiss across the bridge to your loved ones, knowing that the spirit of the magpie will be sure to deliver it. Search the beacons of the heavens and make a wish for love, and know that without doubt, the Eagle will hear the call of your Lyre.

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Pari lives on the East Coast, USA and is a Shamanic Witch. She has been a member of EW since 2003. <http://www.peacefulpaths.com>

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Fairy Of The Magpie Bridge

Among the beautiful clouds,
Over the heavenly river,
Crosses the weaving maiden.
A night of rendezvous,
Across the autumn sky,
Surpasses joy on earth.
Moments of tender love and dream,
So sad to leave the magpie bridge.
Eternal love between us two,
Shall withstand the time apart.

(written by Qin Guan of in the Song
Dynasty (960-1279). Translated by Kylie Hsu)



Imbolg in South Australia

by Nan

"...it seems winter has just arrived and is in no hurry to make way for springtime."

It's hard to believe that we could be celebrating the traditional festival of Imbolg here in South Australia on August 1 – it's too soon for spring!

After a year of drought we now have welcome rain, coupled with low temperatures – for Australia – and I'm going to work when it is 3 degrees Centigrade, with rare lifts above 9 degrees. The rain has seen my world turn green, virtually overnight, as the dry and parched paddocks burst with weeds and grasses. But there hasn't been enough rain yet to make much difference to our overstressed eucalyptus trees, which still look dull and unwell.

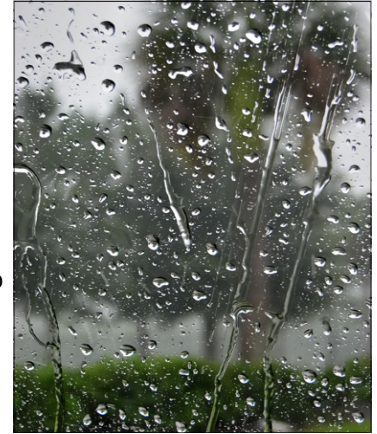
Although Imbolc is traditionally a celebration of the quickening of life – the only stirring seems to be in the grazing paddocks, where the bright green spreads its colour but provides hardly any nutritional value to the stock – empty calories.

It seems too cold for lambing, but it is that time of year and other things are happening which point toward renewal – the grape vines have been pruned ready for the spurt of spring growth, while foxes are on the prowl looking for easy prey in the sheep paddocks and the henhouse. But here, at home, in my cold little valley in the middle of a premium wine growing region of South Australia, it seems winter has just arrived and is in no hurry to make way for springtime.

Because I celebrate the seasons according to what is happening in my own patch of the world, I won't be casting circle or leaving offerings in appreciation of the promise of what's to come just yet.

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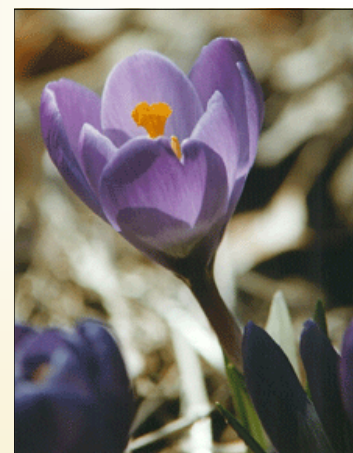
Nan Berrett lives in rural South Australia, is an eclectic Wiccan, hereditary hedgewitch and healer. She has been an EW member since 2008.



The Fifth Season

~ by C.A. Schlea.

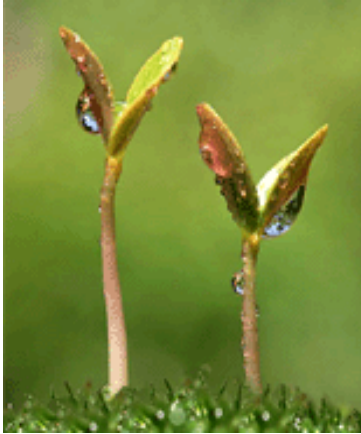
*In the spring of life, in the flower of youth,
Everything is bright and new.
In the summer of life, time of growth and change,
Each day brings new dreams to pursue.
In the autumn of life, there's a settling down -
Contentment and sureness in what we do.
In the winter of life, comes peace and wisdom,
Time to relax and reminisce, too...
But with the passing of these seasons,
Life is still not done, not through,
For there is yet another season,
When each spirit is renewed.
And it is in this calm fifth season,
In this hopeful second spring,
A time of cleansing and rebirth,
A time of new awakening.
Each person's life will come full circle,
Even as the seasons do,*



Spring Crocus
© 2008 Patricia J. Martin
(EW member since 2003)

Imbolc in the Southern Hemisphere

by Frances Billingham



As the first rays of the Sun stretch across the early August morning sky, the dew glistens in its wake. The tender shoots stretch upward and Spring attempts to make its presence known. Imbolc has arrived in the Southern Hemisphere and with it, the promise of the warmer months.

It is in the “Tochmarc Emire,” a 10th or 11th century tale making up the Irish Ulster Cycle, that the word Imbolc first appears. When the hero CuChulainn seeks to woo Emer she sets him various tasks, one of which is to go sleepless for a year. This yearly cycle is not denoted by the cardinal points of the Sun nor by Christian festivals. It is denoted by the opening of the four seasons. Imbolc (pronounced *imolk* with a silent “b”) is when the ewes are milked at the beginning of Spring. Alexei Kondratiev, in “*The Apple Branch*”, further points out that Imbolc coincided with the

first flowing of milk from the udders of ewes, which occurred about a month prior to the lambing season.

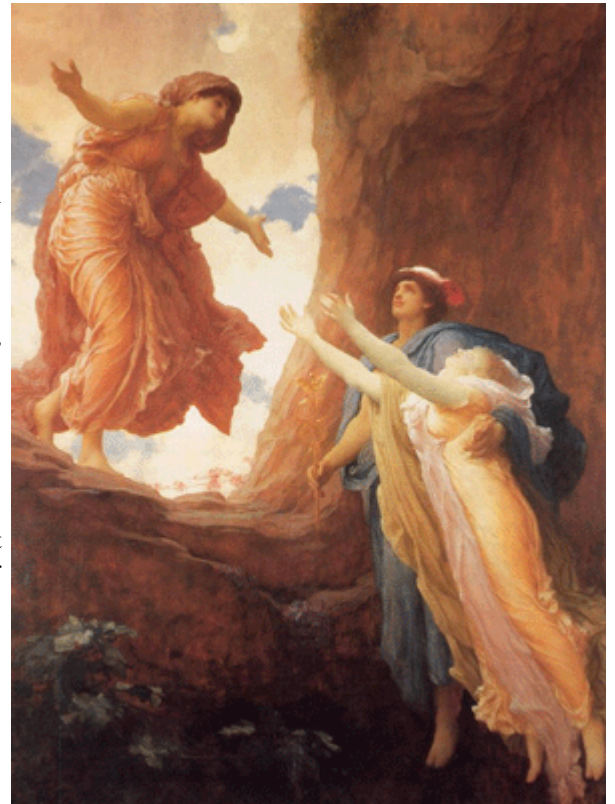
Imbolc is an inconspicuous sign of returning fertility to the earth. An awakening of life in the land and urged the tribe to engage in a new cycle of activities. Also said to mean “in the belly,” Imbolc is the time of the first real stirrings of life and the seeds, who have been lying in the belly of Mother Earth during their gestation, gather momentum to break the chains of Winter.

In traditional Wiccan lore, at Imbolc the Goddess awakes from her slumber in the Underground and emerges youthful, bright eyed and virginal again. While there is an air of innocence about her, this is coupled with a degree of knowing, similar to retaining knowledge of a past life. She is innocent, yet not naïve. It is the young God who tends to be the naïve one.

In the Northern Hemisphere Imbolc coincides with the sacred day of the Goddess Brigid or Bride. However, here in the Southern Hemisphere with Imbolc falling around 1 August, this is not the case. It is for this reason that the rituals my Adelaide based coven usually performs tend to follow a different slant to that of other traditional Wiccan groups. One of my favourite rituals for this time of the year is adapted from Paul Huson’s “*Mastering Witchcraft*”. I was first taught the framework of this ritual over 15 years ago and have performed various adaptations of it over the years.

The God is acknowledged as gaining in strength but due to his infancy and fragility, we assist him by offering our own strength and support by lighting individual candles. The flickering lights help the young God in his task of moving back the Winter months, as well as brightening the path for the

“...the rituals my Adelaide based coven usually performs, tend to follow a different slant to that of other traditional Wiccan groups.”



The Return of Persephone by Lord Frederick Leighton, 1891

*Earth is here so kind, that just tickle her with a hoe
and she laughs with a harvest. ~ Douglas Jerrold*
{said about Australia}

Imbolc in the Southern Hemisphere ~ cont

by Frances



Flaming June by Lord

Goddess to return from the Underworld. The Goddess is also acknowledged in her guise as Mother Earth. It is from her long slumber that she must be woken in order to join with the young God. This action brings together the duality of Divinity, an important aspect that increasingly appears to be overlooked within modern forms of Wicca.

As the light and the strength of the Sun grows, we reflect inward, on what needs to be vitalised within ourselves. What should take root and what we should we remove and send off with the last of the Winter winds? These are written on pieces of parchment paper, which are then burnt with the ashes of which scattered to the winds.

With something removed from our lives, we need to replace it. At Imbolc we plant the seeds of those things we desire to bring into our lives. This is done both physically and mentally. The physical action of planting an actual seed re-enforces our desire. As we do this, we further confirm our desire by stating:

"As this seed grows, so will [whatever our chosen desire is]".

A favourite power chant that is used at this time of the year is:

*"Thus we banish Winter, thus we welcome Spring,
Say farewell to what is dead, and greet each living thing."*

With the approaching Spring, we are entering a time of productivity. Libations of milk and bread are made as these reflect both the productivity we are able to undertake but also the proposed harvest at its end that we anticipate on receiving. In doing so, we are again putting our desires out into the Universe for the Gods to answer in whatever way they see fit.

Imbolc is also about making a fresh start so my coven sets about cleaning the Temple and the implements used. I also go through my notes and copies of rituals, keeping only what is needed. Fresh, uplifting and revitalising scents are burnt to help keep us on focus and these are often mint of citrus based. In doing so, new energy is brought into the Temple.

A further attribution of Imbolc is of it being the traditional time for dedications or re-dedications, where vows and oaths are renew by those of us who still value their importance. My own re-dedication is a much private affair as it is occurs between me and the Gods that I honour, and usually at the end of the cleaning of the Temple.

"Libations of milk and bread are made as these reflect both the productivity we are able to undertake but also the proposed harvest at its end that we anticipate on receiving."



Pottery by
© 2008 Lisa Marie Serafin
(EW member since 2004)

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Frances resides in Adelaide, South Australia and is an initiated Wytch and High Priestess of the Temple of the Dark Moon, a progressive Alexandrian based coven. Her articles have appeared in over 10 publications around the world, some of which can be found on her website - www.templedarkmoon.com. She can be contacted by email at darkmoon@ace.net.au, or by writing to PO Box 2451, Salisbury Downs SA 5108, Australia. Frances has been a member of EW since 2008.

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Sacred Drumming

by Nan

Intro

I have always loved the drums – the primal rhythm and beat of hand drumming – but I never thought I could do it. I'd tap on the table top in time to various songs. I loved Fleetwood Mack's "Tusk" and bought the double album just for that one track.

When I was younger I tried to learn how to play a piano but failed miserably because I found it too complex and couldn't understand those beetle shaped note, with and without tails.

As I approached my mid-50s learning to drum was the farthest thing from my mind, but you know how it is. Just when you really need something in your life, the opportunity will arrive and the teacher will come.

I never thought for one minute though that in a rural town of 4500 people, most of whom were conservative farming and grape growing types, that the teacher would arrive so close to home.

It's funny how one meeting often leads to another. I had met a man playing didgeridoo – a traditional Aboriginal Australian instrument – at a local school concert and struck up a conversation. I work as a journalist and arranged to interview him at his home about his music, and during our meeting he confided he had been learning African hand drumming from a teacher who had just moved into the town.

Because I showed a keen interest he arranged for me to join in. I have been drumming for about five years now and our early lessons developed and expanded with new members joining until we formed a small ensemble which performs occasionally, when the mood takes us, busks and jams. We usually meet once a week, with occasional time off for good behaviour, practise what we know and learn new rhythms and techniques.

Drumming is addictive, and so is drum ownership, which means I have a growing collection of percussion instruments from my pride and joy (a pair of full size shiny black conga drums) and many other drums of shapes and sizes, to wood blocks, wooden temple bells, metal cow bells and other

things which crack and bang.

The discipline of belonging to an ensemble and learning traditional African and Caribbean rhythms and songs has also allowed me to gain confidence in my percussion. This means I am comfortable jamming along to most music, even when I haven't learned a particular rhythmic hand pattern, and more importantly to be able to participate in drum circles and trance drumming.



Nan Berrett, drumming

Sacred Drumming

Everyone can drum – if you can clap your hands – then you can drum – if you have a heartbeat – then you can drum.

Imagine a rural village community gathering around a fire under a star-filled night sky. You hear the driving beat and see dancers moving to the rhythms. People of all ages are clapping, tapping and playing drums, rattles and bells. The whole circle is a thriving, pulsing community beat.

Like smoke rising from the fire, everyone's spirits are being uplifted as they are smiling, connecting, playing, healing.

This drum circle scenario is duplicated in the 21st century in places all over the world – in Australia, in Europe, in Africa in Asia.

Drumming is a way of shifting your consciousness, it can be a meditation, a way of focussing energy and releasing it into the universe – and it can be just plain fun!

It has been associated with spirituality for eons – the large drums in the Buddhist temples of Japan and the drum beating in the sweat lodge ceremonies Native American peoples are reminders that drums are spiritual instruments. Drums have an historic role in communicating with the divine, our ancestors and the "invisible world." Pictorial reminders of the "ancientness" of drums show up in cave paintings going back as early as 15,000 BCE.



Dragon Ritual Drummers

<http://dragonritualdrummers.com>

"...if you can clap your hands – then you can drum – if you have a heartbeat – then you can drum."

Sacred Drumming ~con't

by Nan

"Some of the artifacts found date as far back as the fourth century B.C. and were found in Egypt."



Photo by Beverley J. Knight

Dragon Ritual Drummers

Drumming helps us preserve our connection with the earth and rhythms of its natural cycles. It has been connected with healing since ancient times, and is one of the sacred tools of the Shaman. In our modern society drumming can be used to smooth away stress, reduce pain and even help people cope with grief and tragedy. Just remember that healing has to come from within, and the drum is just a tool to release that ability – it's not a cure in itself!

Tips for drumming include taking off any rings on your fingers, and dangly bracelets, and putting yourself in a comfortable position – no good getting a bad back from crouching over a small drum while sitting on a high chair!

The basic principal of trance or ritual drumming is in finding a rhythm. For those of us who think we don't have a rhythmic bone in our body just reflect for a moment on the richness of our environment and the repetitive sounds we hear in every day life, or the actions we notice as we go about our daily business.

Tapping out a phone number on a key pad, typing when we are at the computer, mixing pancake batter, making love, the beating of your own heart. Once you tune in to all these "rhythms" believing you can transpose them to the skin of the drum is easy!

If you are working in a group then it isn't long before a strange phenomenon occurs – it's a principal of physics called the Law of Entrainment – it's about two separate rhythms lining up and synchronising with each other. Check it out when you are walking with someone – your footsteps naturally fall in sync. It affects the flight of birds – they'll beat their wings in unison; the menstruation cycles of women who live together; and drumming. If several people start drumming but with different rhythms, it won't be long before one rhythm dominates and then everyone else is dragged into the same sound pattern. Don't try and resist this phenomenon when it comes to the drum, as it's better to go along with the flow than struggle against it. When you take your drum to a drum circle don't expect a teacher or a class situation – a drum circle is an organic event which pulses, ebbs and flows, according to who is there and how they choose to be involved. Drum circles are participatory and not done for audiences, and can often result in dancers spontaneously joining in with the beat.

A drum circle involves using your emotions as much as your drums – feel the rhythm.

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Nan Berrett lives in rural South Australia, is an eclectic Wiccan, hereditary hedgewitch and healer. She has been an EW member since 2008.

The Burning and Proper Care of Candles

by Carol Sue (Lady Candlemaker)

What dictates how a candle burns?

First the candle is poured or molded with wax and wick. The shape or size doesn't really affect the burning of the candle. What does matter is the size and type of wicking used in the candle. For proper burning, the smaller the candle is, the thinner the wicking; the larger the candle is, the thicker the wicking. The type of wick that is used is dictated by the type of wax that is being utilized for the finished product. The most versatile of all wicks is the cotton flat braid or square braid. Most often your commercial manufactured candles have cotton flat braid wicking.

Understanding the Properties of Wax

The beautiful soft glow of the candle is caused by a chemical reaction between the wax and the wick. "The candle wax is basic hydrocarbon atoms. When the hydrogen atoms from the hydrocarbons combine with free oxygen to create water, the non-combustible carbon atoms are released. Driven upward on a column (the wick) of hot air the carbon atoms become incandescent as they pass through the invisible fire. This is what is perceived as the candle flame, the soft glow of floating carbon atoms". (*1)



The Burning & Proper Care of Candles ~con't by Carol Sue

How a Candle burns?

"The most interesting thing about candles is that it is a very good example of the four states of matter. The four states of matter are Solid, Liquid, Gas and Plasma. Wax, the fuel source of the candle goes through all four of these states of matter." (*2) Simply put, if the wick is too long it will go out before the whole process can be achieved. Trim the wick to ¼ of an inch. Then light the wick with a flame (the heat source), allow it to burn to the wax (the fuel source), and the dry wick will absorb the melted wax and become the conduit for the combustion or reaction between the wax and the heat from the burning wick. This process will continue until the heat source is removed.

Proper Care of the Candles

We do need to discuss the care of the candle. Do not burn your candle any longer than four hours at a time. If you do, you will find that the wick will not sustain the melted wax, it will bend over and bury itself in the molten mass. Some wicks that have a core, (the paper core, zinc core, and others), will usually hold their shape. A mushrooming effect will form on the wick which distributes the intense heat of the burning process to the outer aspect of the candle for even burning of the candle.

Candles are very volatile and should never be left burning unattended. Candles need to be placed in a stable environment, a dish, container, or stable level area that is not in harms way. They must be out of reach of pets and children. Warning labels are usually placed on the bottom of the product to warn of the fire hazards of a candle burning unattended. Unless you are making your own candles, it is the law that you must have the Warning label on the bottom of the dish, container or covering of the candle being purchased.

Proper storage of the candle is equally important. Candles need to be stored in a cool, dark place for the wax to maintain its shape and state of being. Colored candles, if stored in direct sunlight or strong light, like fluorescent light, will experience fading and actual changing of the color additives. The color blue is especially affected. The color blue is actually a gas injected into the solid to form the color. That is why when blue is not stored in a dark place and fades, it is known as gas fading. Other colors are also affected by the same process. Storing different shapes and styles: Tapers need to be stored flat in a cool place to maintain the round taper shape or columns; pillar candles can be stood straight up if the base is wide enough to support the mass. When the candle is stored lying down, coolness is the key to maintaining its shape. Heat will cause the tapers or other candles to bend over or warp, and flat spots can occur when lying horizontally.

(*1, *2) Encyclopedia of Candles.

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*Knowledge always desires increase; it is like fire,
which must first be kindled by some external agent,
but which will afterward propagate it.~ Samuel Johnson*

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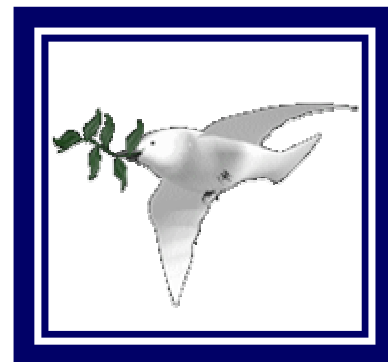
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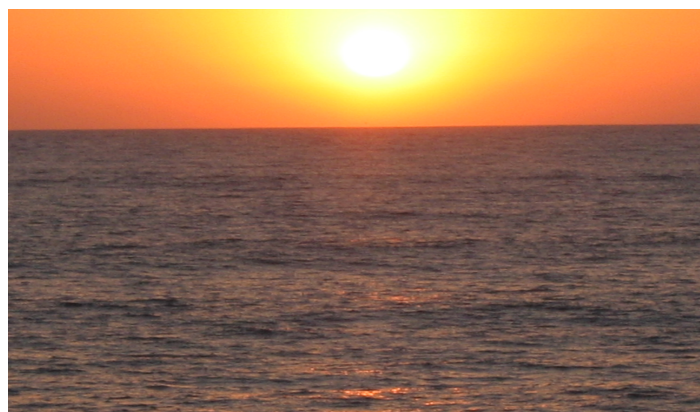
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May (Beltane)

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August (Lammas)

September (Mabon)



Glorious Sun.

Photo by: Lillian Norman
(EW member since 2005)

Next Issue
Mabon/
Autumnal Equinox

