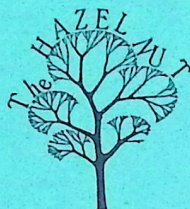


THE HAZEL NUT

A Journal of Celtic Spirituality and Sacred Trees

February/
March
1995
Issue 13



\$2.00



This
Issue's
Feature:

ROWAN
and
ASH MOONS

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Address all correspondence and subscription requests to the editor: Linda Kerr, PO Box 186, Auburn, AL, 36831-0186, 334-821-4683.

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In Celtic legend, the hazel tree drops its nuts into the well below, where they are consumed by the salmon. While cooking one of these salmon, Fionn accidentally tastes it, and instantly gains all knowledge. As such, the hazelnut has come to symbolize wisdom in a nutshell. **THE HAZEL NUT** attempts to bring you this wisdom in a small package every issue, with historical research, herbal information, viewpoints, poetry, artwork, and reader submissions. We also explore, in depth, one or more trees of the Celtic tree calendar/alphabet (Beth-Luis-Nion system) as researched and explained by Robert Graves in The White Goddess. This includes its herbal uses, folklore, esoterica, lunar energies, psychology, mythology, symbolism, and other aspects. In this we hope to make the sacred trees a real, and positive, part of your everyday life.

Rowan is the second tree in the Celtic tree calendar. It usually occurs in January or February, and this year it runs from January 30-February 28.

Ash is the third tree in the Celtic tree calendar. It usually occurs in February or March, and this year it runs from March 1-March 29.

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Staff:

Muirghein uí Dhún Aonghasa (Linda Kerr)	Editor & Layout, Publisher
Brigid MoonFire	Staff Writer
Imré K. Rainey	Staff Writer
Stormy	Staff Writer & Artist
Lark	Poetry Editor

Contributors: Miriam Carroll, Chrisailes, M.T., Nion, Norhala, Nancy Passmore
 (The Lunar Calendar), Sherlock. Cover art by Stormy.

Out On a Limb...

From the desk of the editor

We've been publishing The Hazel Nut for over a year now, and most of you probably have no clue who we are or what we do. So I think a few (belated) introductions are in order.

My name is Muirghein uí Dhún Aonghasa (yes, I can actually remember how to spell it and pronounce it), or Linda Kerr. I'm the editor, producer, manager, and publisher of The Hazel Nut, and I do a lot of the writing. I've been a Pagan for about eight years now; my tradition is Faerie Faith (no, that's not Fairy, as in the various homosexual groups, but Faerie, as in nature spirit). My training was formal (so to speak); a group situation with a High Priestess and High Priest. I received my 5th Solar at Winter Solstice 1992, which in most traditions is referred to as the 3rd Degree, and became High Priestess of my own group. Two of my students have received their 2nd Degree initiations, and are well on their way to graduating, or getting their own 5th Solar.

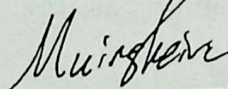
In addition to putting out The Hazel Nut, I also organize a pagan festival every year around May, called MoonDance, that draws about 70 people. This May will be its 5th year. On the more mundane side, I have just started a desktop publishing business, and am starting an event and conference planning service. I also hold down a

full-time job as a secretary at a university, in the forestry department, of all places! I am pursuing (slowly) a business degree; I hold a real-estate license, and I am an ordained Minister. I take Scottish Highland dance lessons every week, and compete frequently at Highland Games. My husband and I are buckskinners; we go camping at pre-1840's rendezvous several times a year, and we are also part-time members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, where I teach dance. We also like to go canoeing whenever we can find a free weekend.

About all of us: Collectively, my group of students, the members of my old coven, and several of our friends who are also on the path, are called The Garden Club. This was the name of our original coven from which I graduated, and when it was dissolved, we took the name to be an umbrella name for the lot of us. When we first chose the name, back several years ago, we decided no one would ever figure out that we were a group of witches! It was not only innocuous, but smacked of our sense of humor. So if you hear or see references to The Garden Club, in Atlanta or Auburn, AL, that's us.

Next issue: more bios on our writers and members.

Until next time, party on, dudes!



From BRÍGHID's hearth

Spring Cleaning

by M.T.

Spring Equinox! The earth is Opening and showing us her beauty. This area (the South) is the most beautiful place to be in spring. Enjoy Mother's art work this season.

This is the time in Traditional Chinese Medicine of the liver and gallbladders. Many of our grandparents would take liver tonics in the spring. The maladies of the liver show up in spring, often from eating all the heavy foods of winter.

Native Americans cleanse their bodies with herbal tonics and foods with the different seasons. They ate foods in season and lived close to Mother.

Many of the greens and herbs in their young phase help nourish the liver. The plants can be found in your yards and fields; young violet leaves, dandelions and plantains. They can be eaten in salads after a thorough washing.

The cycles of the seasons are important in medicine. The Traditional Chinese have charted these for thousands of years:

Spring - Wood: liver, gallbladder

Summer - Fire: small intestine,
heart, triple heater,
parcardium

Late Summer - Earth: spleen,
stomach

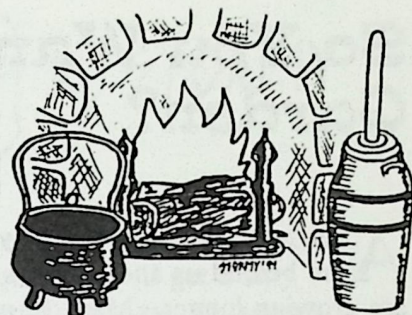
Fall - Metal: lungs and large
intestines

Winter - Water: kidney, bladder

During these seasons we see more problems associated with these organs. Many of the bladder and kidney problems are seen with cold weather; the colds and flus in the fall, and the digestive ailments in the summer.

Listen and enjoy this season. Open your hearts, clean your liver and enjoy the Spring.

Peace!



So You Want to Start a Garden?

by Brighid MoonFire

Ah, yes. The winter holidays are behind us and the days are growing longer. Many of us begin to long for the outdoors and being able to communicate better with Nature. We long to see the buds of Spring and the new growth of the year. For many of us the urge to grow a garden hits now. Whether it stems from wanting to grow our own plants, wanting organic, unpoisoned food, or to save money, it all leads to garden fever.

If you've decided that you want to give it a try, remember that planning is the key. Start small. Decide whether you want to grow a vegetable, flower, or herb garden. If you have many other responsibilities, as many of us do, pick one and then go from there. Remember gardens are beautiful and enjoyable, but they are also work. You don't have to make your garden huge. Pick a few plants and go with them. Plant your garden in an area where you can expand a little next year if you want to. Gardening can be addictive!

Once you have decided where you want to plant, it's a good idea to get a soil sample tested.

Many home improvement stores sell these kits, or your local county extension agency may do these tests for a small fee, or know of a place that will. Once the test comes back, you will need to nourish the soil, depending on your results. While you wait for the test—if you have to send it off—you can decide what plants you want to grow. Some plants need to be planted in the cooler season, and some can grow in the heat of summer. And of course, you will need to know what planting zone you are in and your growing season. Your local nurseries will be able to help you with that information. Also, many seed catalogs will be helpful. Once you know the season and zone, you can order seeds, which are cheaper, or buy transplants from your local nurseries (or grow your own). If you have a short growing season, you may want to go with the transplants.

Plan out where you want your plants in the garden. Tall plants should be in the back. You'll need to know how much space is needed for each one.

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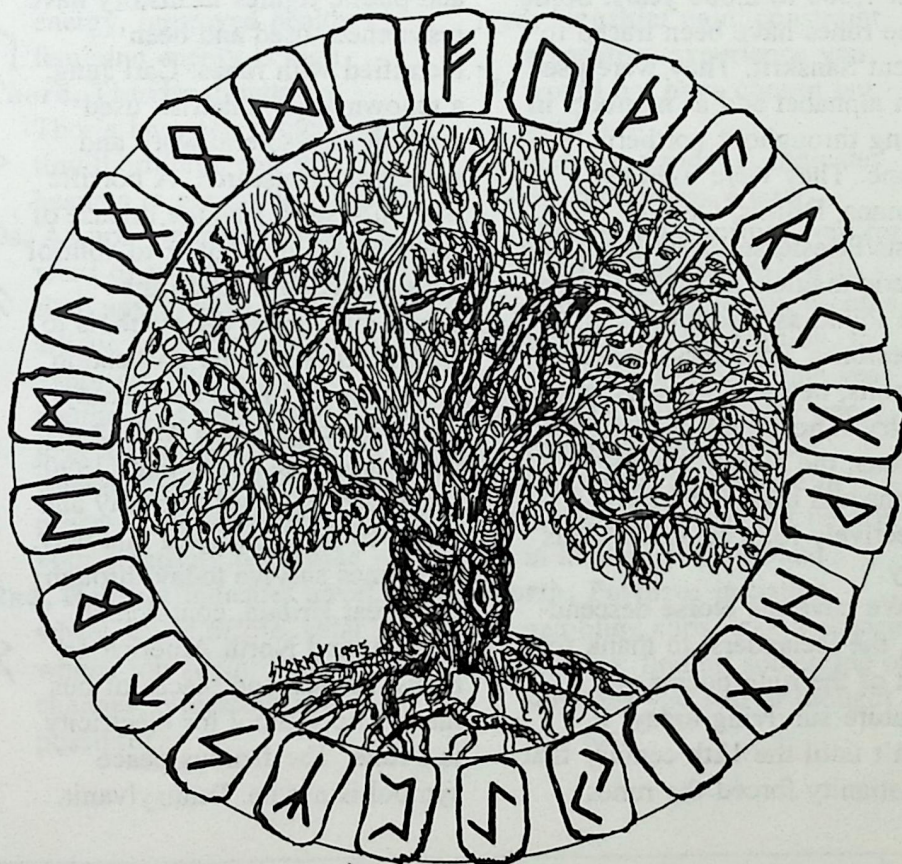
RUNES By STORMY

YGGDRASIL TREE OF LIFE RUNE GAME

First, think of a specific question you would like the answer to, e.g., "Will I get a raise?" or "Should I change jobs?" You can use this method to get general advice for the day, e.g., "What do I need to know or be aware of?" Do not ask foolish questions or questions concerning life or death situations. Be

practical in asking questions. A silly question will get a silly answer! Do not ask the same question twice in the same day just because you did not like the answer.

Next, pick a number between nine and 36. On the figure, put your finger on the rune you are most attracted to. Count clockwise around the figure until you have reached the number you



Runes

picked. If you are attracted to
X Ing/Inguz and you pick the
number 23, you will land on
M Eh/Ehwaz. Check the listing
below for the advice and/or
intuitive inspiration for
Eh/Ehwaz.

Note: In the listing, the
symbol for each rune is
indicated. The first rune listed is
Anglo-Saxon, the second rune
listed is Germanic, followed by
the general meaning of the rune
and things to be aware of.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RUNES

Runes have been around for
about 1,000 to 2,000 years. Some
of the runes have been traced to
ancient Sanskrit. They were used
as an alphabet and as numbers in
trading throughout northern
Europe. They were used by
Shamans, Druids, Odinic
Priests/Priestesses in divining and
esoteric magick. Historically they
were found as inscriptions on
gravestones, boundary markers,
weapons, helmets, utensils, and
jewelry. They were used by the
Teutons, the Norse, Anglo-
Saxons and many tribes we
collectively refer to as the Celts
today.

We have the Norse descend-
ants, the Icelanders, to thank for
most of the rune poems and
literature surviving today. It
wasn't until the 12th century that
Christianity forced the runes

underground from public use in
Iceland. That sort of thing had
already happened as early as the
5th century in continental
Europe. Intelligent archival of the
runes by high-ranking pagans and
religious historians aided in their
preservation. Bits and pieces of
the legacy and historical use of
the runes have been found in
artifacts from Iceland, Ireland,
Wales, Scotland, England,
France, Germany, Holland,
Spain, Switzerland, Sweden,
Norway, Russia, Yugoslavia,
Canada and the United States!

Many well-known scholars
and public figures in history have
researched, used and been
identified with runes. Carl Jung,
a renowned psychiatrist, used
them in his esoteric work and
archetypal research. A horrific
time in history was the misuse of
runes by Adolph Hitler to control
the population through the
subliminal use of the symbols to
further Aryan ethnic unification
in Germany. I have been study-
ing, researching, and writing a
book about the runes since 1990.
I use them in a positive way and
prefer to see them used that way.

Runes survive today through-
out Great Britain, continental
Europe, and North America on
barns, homes, and places of bus-
iness. The symbol for electricity
is a rune. The famous peace
symbol is a rune. Pennsylvania

Runes

Dutch art is a combination of two or more runes put together to form a geometric symmetrical design interwoven with birds and/or tulips as hex symbols used for protection, fertility and good luck.

The word 'rune' means secret and comes from the old Germanic word 'rune' which also means secret.

THE RUNES:

Fehh, Fehu: refers to moveable

possessions, money, cattle, nourishment; business opportunities are possible

Ur, Uruz: strength, aurochs, wild

energy, improved health;

feminine energy is high

Thorn, Thurisaz: gateway,

Thor's hammer, protection; a

tiny thorn/problem, don't hesitate to get needed help

Os, Ansuz: signals, messenger,

word of mouth, communica-

tion; anything to do with

artistic creativity and

expression through the

mediums of radio, film, TV,

journalism, the occult,

teaching and learning;

proceed with confidence,

your creativity will shine

Rad, Raidho: indicates travel, a

wheel, cycle of life, solar

wheel, job and/or career

changes; relocating is a

possibility

Ken, Kenaz: torch, opening,

fire, able to see the way, to experience, be open

Gifu, Gebo: gifts, partnership,

love, a kiss; partnerships in

marriage, love or business

improve with the right kind of attention

Wynn, Wunjo: joy, happiness,

something you must work at;

if we didn't experience

sorrow, we wouldn't know

what joy was

Hagal, Hagalaz: disruptions,

hail, can overcome eventu-

ally, fire & ice; brings

harmony and balance to our

lives eventually

Nyd, Nauthiz: pain, constraint,

mandatory experience you

would not have chosen but

need now

Is, Isa: ice, standstill, indicates

the time when Winter

changes into Spring; wait for

a thaw then proceed, will

improve in about six months

Jara, Jera: cycles, fruition, to

complete a project; one year

Yr, Ihwaz: defense, yew tree,

crossbow, strength and

flexibility; be flexible in

making decisions but be firm

in holding your ground

Peorth, Perthro: initiation,

gambling cups, take a chance,

a secret; finding something or

someone you lost or thought

was lost

Runes

Eolh, Elhaz: protection, elk, be on guard, lock up when you leave, no exceptions; be careful, do not go out alone if you pick this one

Sigel, Sowilo: wholeness, sun, light; be positive, improved health indicated, better outlook indicated

Tir, Tiwaz: victory, able to overcome an obstacle, the God of Victory

Beorc, Berkana: family, fertility, growth, birch tree; new beginnings are indicated, throw away outmoded ideas; fertility goddess

EH, Ehwaz: movement, horse, progress, journey; possible changes are indicated in your life, can be job changes, a spiritual journey

Mann, Mannaz: mankind, self, self esteem improves, relationship you have with yourself and/or others improves

Lagu, Laguz: moon cycles, rhythms; go with flow, water, tides, listen to your emotions; indicates women's cycles and changes

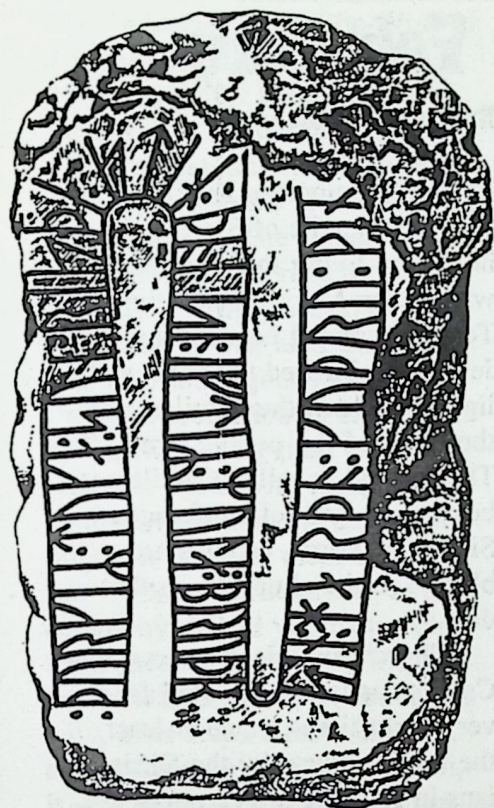
Ing, Inguz: fertility, family, relationships, marriage, fertility god; indicates man's sensitive side for growth and improvement with any or all of the above

Odal, Othila: indicates inheritance, ancestral home, spiritual source; a legal matter needs attending to, justice is needed; getting what is yours, that which you are entitled to, get advice if needed from the proper source; attend to details

Daeg, Dagaz: day, 24 hour period; breakthrough is indicated, can be different tomorrow; to make a complete 180 degree change; can represent the death of an old idea or way of life

Wryd, Odin: sometimes answers are unknowable; karma rune of past, present, future; indicates having to step out into the unknown and trust your instincts, take a leap of faith

Stormy is Carol Thompson's pen name. She resides in Auburn, AL with her husband and three daughters. She is employed by Auburn University, is a staff writer on The Hazel Nut, a Palmist, a Rune Vitki, and a Solitary Practitioner of Celtic Studies.



Spring Clean

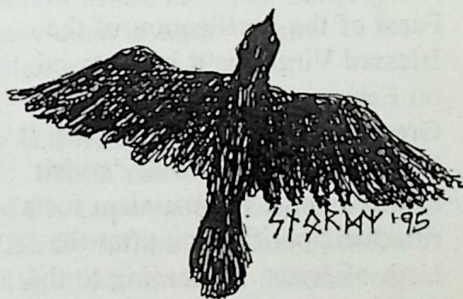
Something's changing—
 Spring is in the air
 April comes early
 trying to shed
 last winter's weight
 dusting away old memories
 opening creaky attic trunks
 to find love folded tidy
 ready for airing
 Cobwebs fly apart
 permitting light
 fresh new delights
 to sparkle in rebirthing sun

- by Miriam Carroll

Spring Equinox

Full circle this spring of witch fire
 Second time around
 So much to learn
 of Power
 Earth spills forth her loveliness
 emboldens fervor
 bursting life
 bud into bloom
 growth marked by girth
 another ring around the tree
 Another mark upon
 my face

- by Miriam Carroll



Festivals of February

by Muirghoin uí Dhúin Honghasa

February is named after the Roman goddess Februa, mother of Mars. Also known as Juno Februa and St. Febronia, she was the goddess of the passion or fever (*febris*) of love¹. While her festivals were orgiastic rites of fertility, February was also a time for purification. This was as true in the Celtic world as it was in ancient Rome. We see remnants of the purification festivals in Candlemas, and the fertility and love rites in Valentine's Day. February was also a very important month agriculturally to country folk; thus the Imbolc lambing festivals and the weather divinations of Groundhog Day.

CANDLEMAS

Candlemas is also called the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, and is observed on February 2 by the Roman, Greek, and Anglican churches. It is in celebration of Mary's visit to the Temple in Jerusalem for a ritualistic purification after the birth of Jesus². According to the Judeo-Christian rule of that time, women were required to "purify" themselves forty days after the birth of a son, or eighty days after the birth of a daughter, since females were supposed to

be twice as unclean as males³.

A story tells of Simeon, a holy man living in Jerusalem, who, when Mary entered the Temple, greeted her and the child Jesus, and blessed the child as "a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."⁴ The festival is called Candlemas because in symbolic reference to Simeon's words, candles are blessed in the churches on that day⁵.

Church historians believe that Candlemas was celebrated from very early times, since at least the fifth century, by the Christians in Jerusalem. For many years the festival was on February 14, as Jesus was supposed to have been born on the day of the Epiphany. But when it was later decided that his day of birth fell on December 25, the Feast of Purification was moved to February 2⁶. The Council of Trullus once tried to abolish the festival of Candlemas, claiming that Mary "suffered no pollution, and therefore needed no purification," after giving birth to Jesus⁷.

There is a theory that Candlemas is a Christianized form of the ancient Roman festival Lupercalia, which was celebrated in mid-February⁸.

Festivals

Lupa was the sacred She-Wolf of Roman legend, who nursed the foundling twins Romulus and Remus. Her temple harlots were *lupae*, sometimes called queens or high priestesses in the outlying Roman towns. The Lupercalia featured orgiastic rites to insure the year's fertility⁹. Christina Hole tells us that after sacrifices of a dog and a goat were made "for the protection of flocks and herds, two young men of high rank ran about with thongs of goat-skin, striking all the women they met to make them fruitful."¹⁰ After participating in the ceremony, naked youths traveled from town to town to 'purify' them. Walker says perhaps this is why, after Lupa's festival was adopted by the Christian church, it was renamed the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin¹¹.

In another Roman festival, very similar to the Lupercalia, Roman pagans honored Juno Februata on February 2 as the virgin mother of Mars. She was the Goddess who engendered the 'fever' of love; the patroness of love. Christian authorities say that the pagan people went about Rome with 'candles burning in worship of this woman Februa.' Pope Sergius renamed the holy day as Candlemas 'to undo this foul use and custom, and turn it onto God's worship and our Lady's...so that now this feast is

solemnly hallowed through all Christendom.'¹²

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says that Candlemas was certainly not introduced by Pope Gelasius (Pope from 492 to 496) to suppress the excess of the Lupercalia. However, a sermon exists that is supposedly by "Pope Innocent XII (1691-1700) in which he says: 'Why do we in this feast carry candles? Because the Gentiles dedicated the month of February to the infernal gods, and as at the beginning of it Pluto stole Proserpine, and her mother Ceres sought her in the night with lighted candles, so they, at the beginning of the month, walked about the city with lighted candles. Because the holy fathers could not extirpate the custom, they ordained that Christians should carry about candles in honor of the Blessed Virgin; and thus what was done before in the honor of Ceres is now done in honor of the Blessed Virgin.'¹³"

VALENTINE'S DAY

While some of the traditions of the Lupercalia became associated with the Christian Candlemas, others attached themselves to St. Valentine's Day, on February 14; most notably the custom of choosing lovers on that day and presenting gifts to each other.

Festivals

There are different theories about how the name of Valentine came to be connected with the day on which lovers send tokens to one another. One is based on the belief throughout Europe in medieval times that birds began to mate on February 14. English literature, including Chaucer, contains frequent references to the day as sacred to lovers. Another explanation is that the association grew out of the similarity between the Norman word 'galantin,' meaning a lover of women, and the name of the saint. Some think that Galantin's Day, with the 'g' often pronounced as 'v,' led to confusion in the popular mind¹⁴.

However, the most popular theory says that Valentine's Day actually grew out of the Roman festival Lupercalia, a festival of sexual license. The names of young men and women were written on 'billets'—small papers—and put into a box, from which they were drawn by chance. In this way the people chose partners for erotic games. Churchmen denounced these early valentines as 'heathens' lewd customs,' and tried to substitute the names of saints for the names of the young people and put short sermons on the billets, but people soon reverted to the old love-notes¹⁵.

According to Barbara Walker,

the church replaced the goddess, Juno Februata, with a mythical martyr, St. Valentine, "who was endowed with several contradictory biographies. One of them made him a handsome Roman youth, executed at the very moment when his sweetheart received his billet of love."¹⁶ In Roman Martyrology there are two martyrs named Valentine. One is a Roman priest who died in 269; the other is an Umbrian bishop who was executed in 273. Hole says it is not clear which of the two is really the lovers' saint, and that there is no historical reason why either of them should be considered such. Hole goes on to say that the death-dates of the two saints, rather than any incident in their lives, may account for the tradition: both are said to have died on February 14, the eve of the Lupercalia¹⁷.

St. Valentine thus became a patron of lovers, since the festival remained dedicated to lovers in spite of all attempts to change it. Many of our modern Valentine's Day customs are directly derived from the Lupercalia festival. Douglas tells us that by drawing billets with names on them, the young men became the 'gallant' of a young woman for the next year¹⁸. If either party was unwilling to commit to the other for a period of a year, a gift could be given to help make

Festivals

the commitment more enticing¹⁹. Thus young people who were paired by this method formed the habit of giving presents to each other; later only the young man gave a gift to the girl²⁰. Then came the custom of sending or giving a 'valentine' to a favorite person. The intent behind the valentine or billet was still clear centuries later: in 1725, H. Bourne, in The Antiquitates Vulgares, wrote of "a ceremony, never omitted among the Vulgar, to draw lots which they term Valentines. The names of a select number of one sex are by an equal number of the other put into some vessel; and after that, everyone draws a name, which for the present is called their Valentine, and is also look'd upon as a good omen of their being man and wife afterwards."²¹ By Victorian times, the once-sacred customs had become mere party games and frivolous means of match-making, and by the early twentieth century, were observed mainly by children.

But in centuries past, and even in its Christianized form, the Valentine's Day festival "involved secret sex worship, called 'a rite of spiritual marriage with angels in a nuptial chamber.' Ordinary human beings engaged before witnesses in an act of sexual intercourse described as the marriage of

Sophia and the Redeemer. A spoken formula said, in part, 'Let the seed of light descend into thy bridal chamber, receive the bridegroom...open thine arms to embrace him. Behold, grace has descended upon thee.'²²"

ST. BRIGID'S DAY

The ancient Romans were certainly not the only ones in the pre-Christian world to have a special festival in February. Christina Hole says that Candlemas took the place of the pre-Christian Feast of Lights, which fell on February 1, when people carried blazing torches about the streets, and also the customs of the Roman Lupercalia²³. Hole does not tell us, unfortunately, where the Feast of Lights originated, but she does emphasize the fact that the Lupercalia is *Roman*; therefore, we can probably assume that the Feast of Lights was a Celtic festival.

We do know that February 1 was celebrated in the British Isles as St. Brigid's Day, or Imbolc. According to Frazer, the Scottish Highlanders represented the forthcoming revival of vegetation in spring on this day. "The mistress and servants of each family take a sheaf of oats, and dress it up in women's apparel, put it in a large basket and lay a wooden club by it, and this they

Continued on page 47

to Diana

mighty goddess of the Bow,
who guides the hunter's dart.
silver maiden, crescent horned,
move inside our hearts.

you walk amidst the stars by night,
when sol has fallen sound asleep.
all things born wild and free
are yours to guard and safely keep.

you bring enchantment at midnight,
to the rough music of the hunter's horn.
remember us, oh lovely goddess,
without whom we are forlorn.

- By chrisailes

to CERNUNNOS

lord of the kingstag,
of rocky cliff and mountain crag,
lord of the greenwood tree,
hear these words and
come unto me.

you take your flight on wild goose wing.
your voice is heard in the bubbling spring.
into the night we call your names,
amidst the blaze of the flames.

CERNUNNOS, horned one,
lord pan, midnight sun.
you who are the sabbat's lord,
open for us the forgotten door,
and move upon us here.

- By chrisailes

A Menarche Ritual

by Norhala

This is a ceremony to recognize a daughter's first menses; her menarche. It is attended primarily by women, but the men should be present throughout part of it, as they are a part of the household and community. Note: in the text I use 'daughter,' 'sister,' and 'mother' in the larger sense of the word—in terms of the community of women—rather than necessarily indicating literal blood relationships—any other title can be substituted as appropriate. This is an outline—please change, adapt, and customize it as you feel guided for each individual and circumstance!

Attended by one or more sisters and/or her mother, the daughter is bathed or showered, and is anointed with fragrant oils (chakra points are perfect!), then dressed in a white dress and shawl, with a white ribbon 'crown' in her hair, while the purpose of purification and the symbolism of the white clothing is explained to her. As well, all the women of the community or household should dress in white, red or black (or combinations), according to their individual

phase of life.

The members (male and female) of the community or household gather in an area, which can be decorated with any combination of white, red, and black, with red predominant—candles, ribbons, etc. Frankincense can be burned in the purification and gathering areas, and soft music adds to the special effect.

The mother escorts the daughter into the gathering area, where the other members of the community or household are present. She who presides explains the symbolism and meaning of the colors of the Goddess (white, red, and black), and briefly shares the importance of the physical coming of age that the daughter has reached with her first menses. It is the beginning of her journey into full fruitfulness as a woman, and the first of many steps she will take toward realizing her female potential. An apple is cut crosswise to reveal the seed star, and given to the daughter as she who presides explains the symbolism of the apple. One of the women replaces the white shawl with a red one, and the other replaces the white 'crown'

Menarche

with a red 'crown,' symbolizing the daughter's change from 'she who waits' to 'she who bleeds yet does not die,' and as a mark of her physical fertility and maturing.

Each male member of the community or household gives a red rose (or other red flower) tied with a red ribbon to the daughter, and expresses their continuing love, support, and willingness to protect her as they acknowledge her as a woman in their community or household.

A special dessert which reflects the white, red, and black theme is served by the daughter to the members of the community or household (black forest cake, Neapolitan ice cream, etc.)

After the dessert is served and eaten, the women of the community or household can excuse themselves to a separate area, where candles and frankincense are burning, and a chalice sits filled with dark red wine, representing the menstrual flow. Here the daughter will be anointed and consecrated to the Goddess. She who presides, or the mother, says to the daughter:

"This is a special time in your life and marks your passage into the fellowship of all women. Not only have you become part of womankind—you have become as one with the Great

Goddess, the Divine Mother. You are beginning to go through bodily changes on a monthly basis with the red fluids of your womb waxing strong, flowing and ebbing only to begin growing again. You ebb and flow like the sea—a symbol of our Goddess/Mother. You are reminded nightly of the flux of your body and Hers as you look up to the sky and see the ever-changing phases of the Moon."

"You are a woman grown and now able to bring forth life from your body just as the Goddess brought forth the plants, animals, and first people of this Earth—even giving birth to the Earth itself. You are a daughter of the Divine Mother and a vessel of creation, and as such, are thrice Blessed."

At this point, the daughter's third eye is anointed with wine from the chalice, while she who presides says:

"First, as your blood has begun to flow, so now will your intuition and psychic ability grow."

Now her heart is anointed with the wine.

"Second, now that your body has proclaimed its maturity, so, too, will your heart begin to be filled with a nurturing kindness and love that only a woman can give."

Next her solar plexus, or the

Menarche

region of the stomach or womb, is anointed with the wine.

"Third, because your body is now fertile, the gift of life is yours to give. Use it wisely, as this gift can be given into your care before you are ready to accept it graciously and before you are ready to care for it like the priceless treasure that it is¹."

The daughter drinks of the wine, and shares with the others present. She is then presented to and accepted by the women, with hugs, kisses, etc.

Everyone sits on the floor or in chairs, as comfortable and practical, and shares, as appropriate, wit and wisdom, advice, etc., on the practicalities of menstruation, how to dispose of sanitary napkins, how to carry and deal with them at school and work, misconceptions and fables concerning menstruation and what the facts are, importance of sexual responsibility and possible risks, how to keep a cycle calendar, etc. Small gifts of red are given to the daughter at this time, and every effort is made to encourage her to be open and frank about her menses, her developing womanhood, and her role as a woman in the community or household. Lots of good, positive vibes and feedback from everyone!

Notes:

¹ Ritual words in quotes are taken from an article by De-Anna Alba about moving into womanhood.



Sister

Born miles apart in time and place,
Yet borne of Mother same, by
Blood and water, we entered this
Earthly plane as sisters.

Kindred souls, spirits twinned in the ethereal realm
Where all substance spins and twirls in never ending dance,
Glowing personalities, individual, eternal,
Awaiting the call to this sphere, these forms.

You first, to begin the learning, to take first
Steps along the Path, gathering knowledge and light
As a honeybee gathers nectar from roses, delighting
In sweetness and promise, enduring thorns.

Not easy, those early lessons of this life,
This frame—but learning, you grew strong in heart,
Body, mind, vision—"insatiable curiosity"
Led to knowledge, wisdom, understanding, compassion.

"Such a strange, different child," I heard them say,
And looking within, I knew the truth—the
Dull amusements and blind acceptance of those
Around me galled, pushing me to ever seek within, beyond.

Challenges, trials, opportunities to grow, to
Expand heart and soul and mind came also—while
Not easy, leaving as their mark greater empathy,
Capacity for love, a hunger for inner light.

We met—by chance, perhaps, or perhaps by design of
She who is all-wise, and like recognized like—

As kin long parted, so much to say, to share, to give—
Words and emotions trip over themselves in the flood.

So different—so much the same! Neither fitting the expected
Mold, the assigned niche—strength, pride, independence
Prevents that servitude so oft demanded, often misunderstood
Even by those whom blood requires we should name 'sister.'

While our separate Paths, Traditions converge, diverge, move
Onward and upward, we feed and nurture and teach each
other,
Our communities, finding in our roles dignity, fulfillment,
Easing frustration, sharing joy, sorrow, weight of
responsibility.

So often I stand in awe, overwhelmed by your depth of
knowledge,
Your commitment, your soul-deep caring for those in your
charge—
I hunger, thirst for our sharing, realizing the magnitude of
my
Own ignorance, longing to fill my own cup that I may succor
others.

I treasure our friendship, and feel greatly blessed to have
you
A part of my life. May we go on, Sister, and continue that
which

Has been—which shall yet be—something very special!
Happy birthday, Pat, may your every wish be realized!

Blessed Be!

- by Norhala

Night Stalking: Star-Watching

by Stormy

The constellations to watch for from the late fall, through winter and into spring are Orion, Canis Major, Canis Minor, Monoceros, Gemini, Auriga, Pleiades and Lepa.

The easiest constellation to find is Orion. Orion is known as the handsome Roman hunter that Artemis, the moon, was in love with. Her twin brother, Apollo, the sun, was jealous and sent a very large scorpion to track Orion. Orion was no match for the scorpion and went into the sea. Apollo tricked Artemis by telling her that the man down by the sea was the one who was harassing one of her priestesses. Artemis, the great huntress, aimed her bow and killed Orion. Her skill was legendary and she could aim with accuracy at great distances. When she realized her error, she turned Orion into a constellation in the sky to be permanently chased by a scorpion.

Orion is also known as Spider Woman by the Hopi Indians of North America, and the belt of Orion is known as Frigg's Distaff by the Viking Norsemen. Hopi Indian mythology says that Spider Woman was responsible for

unraveling the moon when it wanes and then rewinding the thread when the moon is waxing.

The brightest star just above the southern horizon is Sirius, which is part of the constellation Canis Major. The next brightest star above that to your left looking south is Procyon, which is a part of Canis Minor. Above that you will see two more bright stars which make up Gemini. These are probably the easiest stars to see, unless you are way out in the country where street lights and car lights are scarce! Then you just might make out each constellation. Near a big city it is also very difficult to make out the knife on Orion's belt, but usually the rest of the seven distinct stars are easy to see.

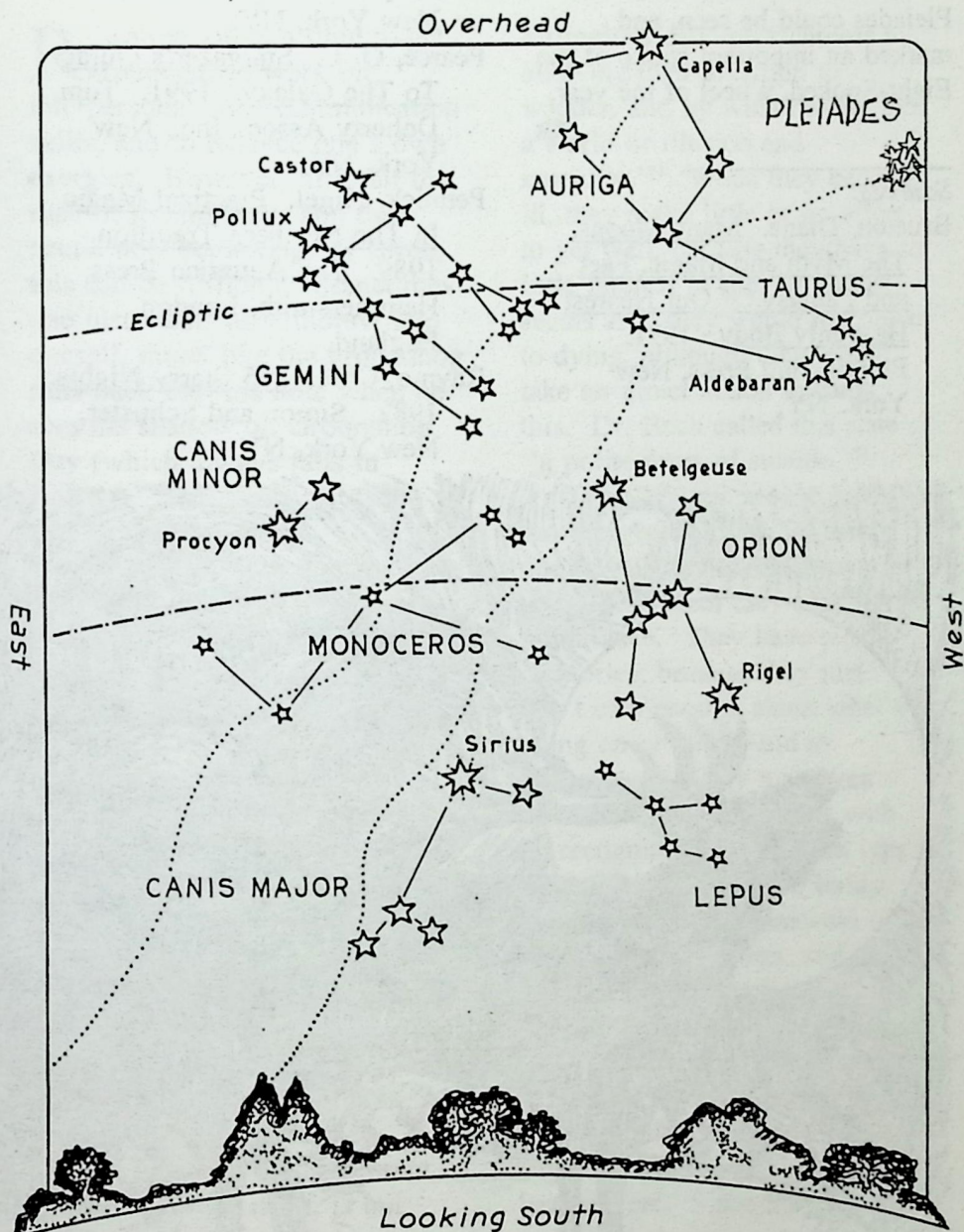
The stars in this southern section of the sky are really unique because they are also colorful. Some see Sirius as bright blue instead of bright white. The stars of Orion's Betgeuse are red, and Rigel is blue-white. Procyon of Canis Minor is yellow.

Last but not least are the Pleiades, known as the Seven Sisters or as the Muses. Get to know and recognize especially

Night Stalking

Orion and Pleiades. Orion is seen in the night sky in the fall late at night towards the East. As fall and winter come and turn

into spring, the constellations move through the southern sky from the East all the way to the West. We celebrate Beltaine in



Night Stalking

May, and this is the last time the constellations of Pleiades and Orion will appear until late next fall. The true day of Beltaine always fell on the last day that Pleiades could be seen, and marked an important spoke of the Eight-Spoked Wheel of the year.



Sources:

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Bach Flowers:

ROWAN

by Muirghein úí Dhún Aonghasa

Rowan moon is a time to get grounded, to work on interpersonal and communication skills, and to balance one's own energies. However, after all the rush of the holidays and the hectic new beginnings of Birch, this can be difficult. Sometimes one just wants to withdraw into oneself, much like the groundhog runs back into his hole when he sees his shadow on Groundhog Day (which always falls in Rowan). The pressures of the real world can seem overwhelming, and a person who is normally strong can begin to feel exhausted. Fortunately, there are Bach Flower remedies for just these feelings: Clematis and Elm.

Clematis types show the following symptoms, in varying degrees: a vacant, faraway look; indifference; inattentiveness; preoccupation; dreaminess; and drowsiness. Clematis people are absent-minded daydreamers, and live more in their thoughts than in their actions. "They lack concentration because their interest in things of the present, and often in life itself, is but half-hearted. They avoid

difficulties or unpleasantness by allowing their attention to wander, and by withdrawing into a world of illusion and unreality."¹ When they become ill, they make little or no effort to get well, because they have so little interest in life. It almost seems as if they would not object to dying, although they would take no direct action towards this. Dr. Bach called this state "a polite form of suicide."²

The Clematis people prefer to run their own 'films' in their minds, rather than participate in reality, to which they attach little importance. They have poor memories, because they just don't care enough about what's going on or being said to remember it. They may even pass a friend on the street with no recognition. A Clematis type may run to the kitchen, bump into the door frame because of poor body orientation, and then be unable to remember what he wanted. Usually Clematis folks are heavy sleepers, and may be very pale. They enjoy napping, and can fall asleep almost anytime; while watching TV, in lectures, etc. Since they use up most of their energy on the inner

planes, there can be too little physical energy. A Clematis person will never become violent, or show aggression or anxiety. "Good news is often received with the same irritating indifference as ill-tidings."³

The Clematis state can occur in any of us whenever the mind is occupied with problems; joys or worries can also draw our attention away from the present. Upon taking Clematis, one will begin to have a lively interest in things. The mind will be under control, and one will be able to bring imaginings to a physical reality. Clematis strengthens the bonds between the physical body and the other levels.

Clematis (*Clematis vitalba*) flowers in the summer, and is prepared by with the sun method. Gather flowers by their stalks from as many different plants as possible, and cover the surface of the water with them⁴.

Elm is for those who at times feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of their work. Sometimes one feels that his efforts are inadequate; this can cause feelings of despondency and exhaustion. Elm types are very capable, efficient and intuitive, and often hold positions of great importance and responsibility. They may be doctors, teachers, community

leaders, or mothers. Other people rely on them to make decisions, and they may be the only persons suited to a particular job; even to the point of being indispensable. Elm people know that they are capable of doing what is required of them, and they know they can do it well. Yet there may be times when the magnitude of the responsibility makes them feel it is humanly impossible for one person to accomplish it, and they may feel they aren't up to the task. Sudden exhaustion, physical and mental, can occur from an over-striving for perfection, and can cause a temporary loss of self-esteem.

Elm people sometimes forget that they are only human, with personal needs and physical limitations. They may feel driven to shoulder up their responsibility, regardless of their personal situation. "What he is forgetting is that everybody is in the first place responsible to himself, and must first of all meet the demands of his soul, and only then the expectations others may have as to his role."⁵

"The Elm Flower energy has aptly been termed 'psychological smelling salts.' Elm will lend strength to the strong in moments of weakness. It will rouse them from their dream of impotent inadequacy, making sure they

have both feet on the ground of reality again. This will provide clear vision again, to see problems in the proper proportions and be aware of one's capabilities. One knows who one is again, and that one will cope again."⁶

Elm (*Ulmus procera*) flowers in February and April, and is prepared by the boiling method. Pick the twigs with the flower-clusters about 6" long, from as many trees as possible, enough to fill the saucepan about 3/4 full.⁷



Notes:

¹ Chancellor, Dr. Philip M. Handbook of the Bach Flower Remedies. 1971. Keats Publishing, Inc., New Canaan, CT, pg. 76.

² Ibid, pg. 76.

³ Scheffer, Methchild. Bach Flower Therapy - Theory and Practice. 1981. Munchen, West Germany, pg. 73.

⁴ Weeks, Nora, and Bullen, Victor. The Bach Flower Remedies - Illustrations and Preparation. 1964. C.W. Daniel Co. Ltd., London, England, pg. 40.

⁵ Scheffer, pg. 83.

⁶ Ibid, pg. 83.

⁷ Weeks and Bullen, pg. 60.

Garden, cont. from pg. 6

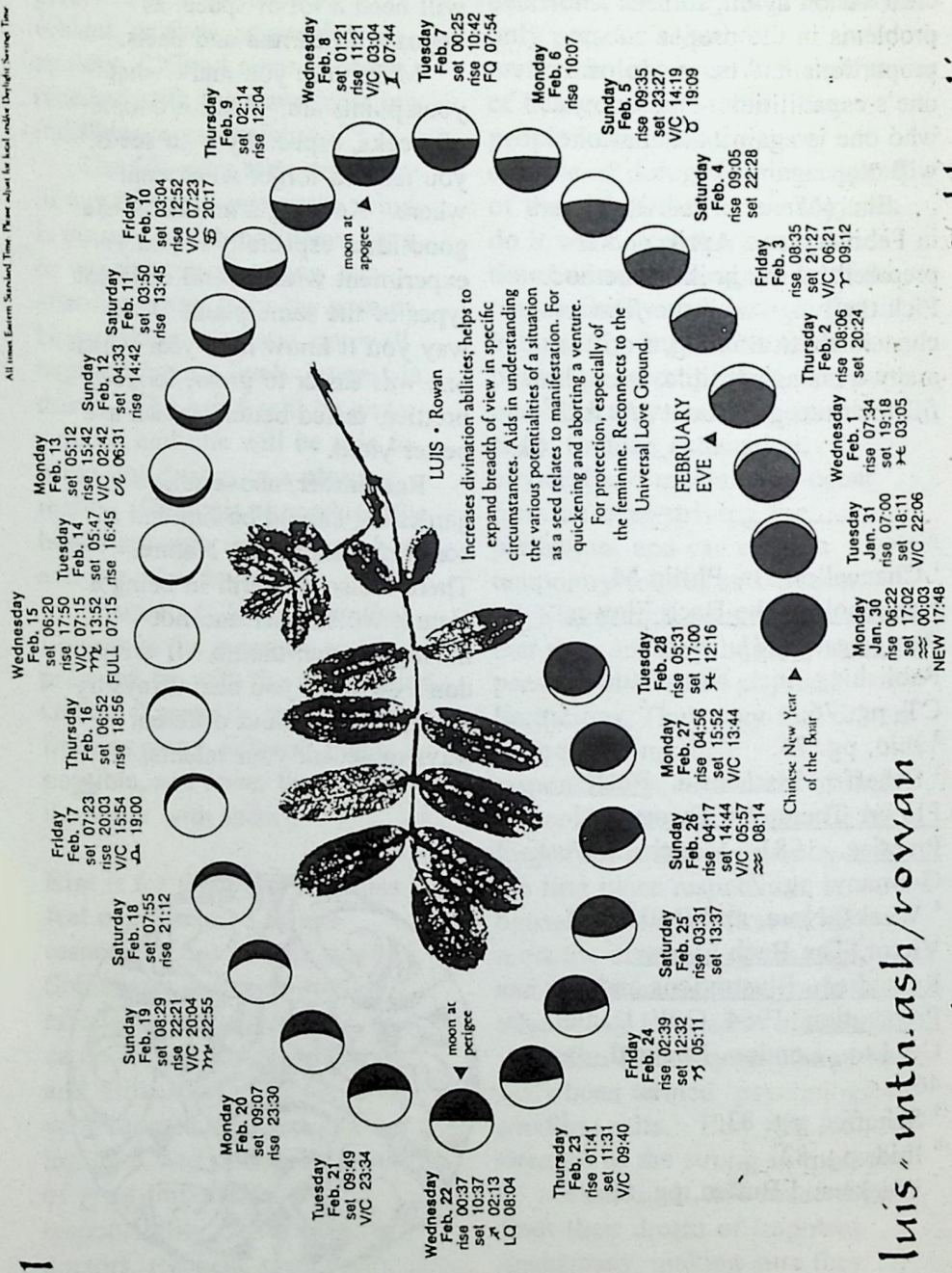
Plants like cucumbers and squash will need a lot of space, as opposed to carrots and beets.

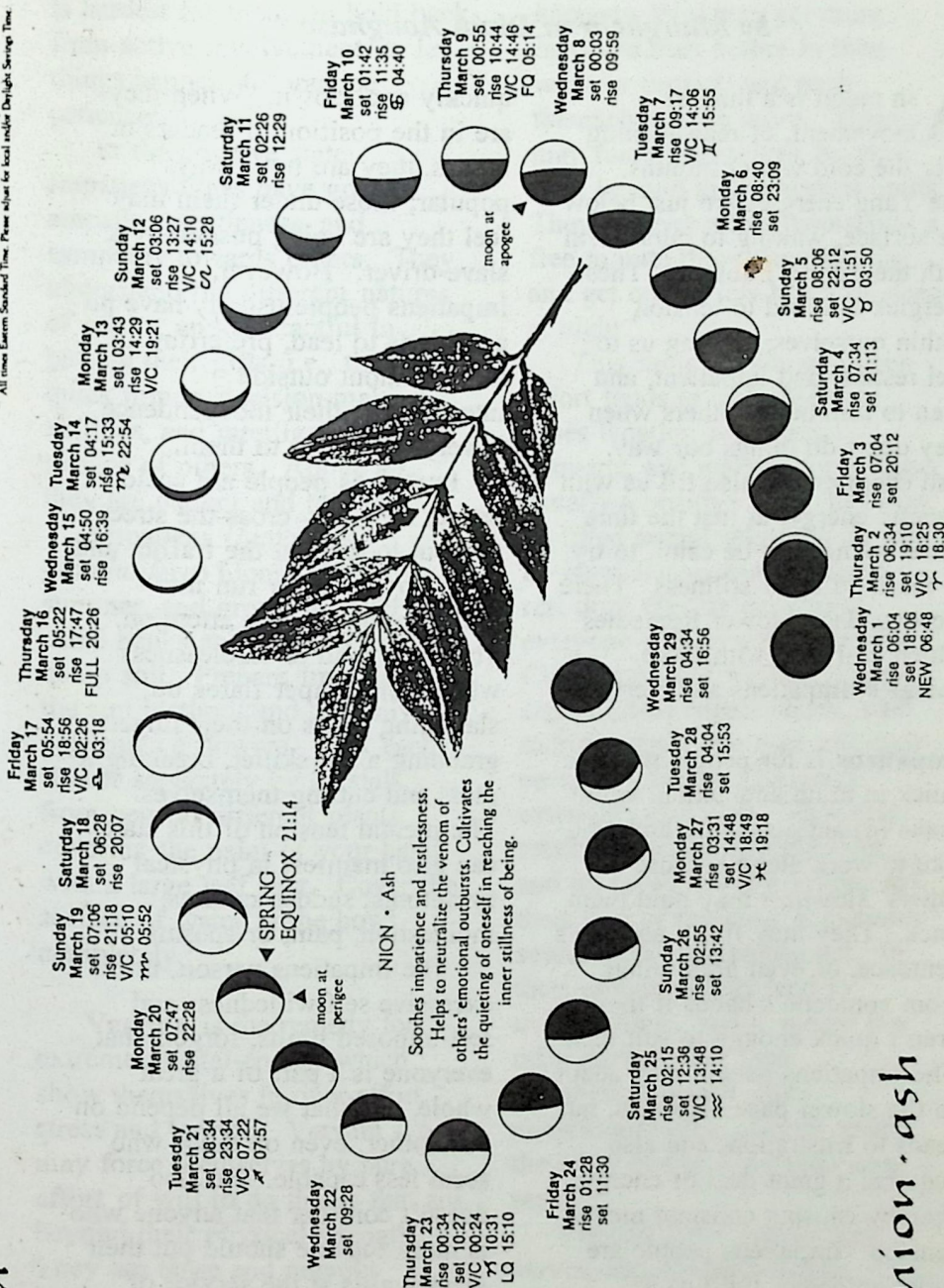
Make sure you mark what your plants are. After a couple of weeks, especially with seeds, you tend to forget what went where. Keeping a notebook is a good idea, especially if you experiment with several different types of the same plant. That way you'll know next year which one was easier to grow, looked prettier, tasted better, or had a better yield.

Remember, above all, gardening should be fun and a communication with Nature. There's also no harm in being a Nature worshipper and not having a green thumb. If things don't do well, you can always try again, or search out different ways to accent your talents.



All times Eastern Standard Time. Please adjust for local sunrise, sunset, and time.





3rd lunation

nion • ash
march 1 - march 29

Bach Flowers:

ASH

by Muirghein uí Dhún Aonghasa

Ash moon is a time of movement, of reawakening after the cold winter months. The Yang energies are just below the surface, waiting to burst forth with the Spring Equinox. These energies can lead to tension within ourselves, causing us to feel restless and impatient, and even to lash out at others when they don't do things our way. Ash energies can also fill us with frenetic energy, at just the time when we need to be calm, to try to reach an inner stillness. There are two Bach Flower Remedies which will help with these energies: Impatiens and Vervain.

Impatiens is for people who are quick in mind and action, who make instant decisions, and who like to work alone because others' slowness may hold them back. They may finish another's sentence, or even grab things from someone's hands if they aren't quick enough to suit them. The Impatiens person may adapt to the slower pace of others, but leads to frustration, and also requires a great deal of energy, thereby causing constant mental tension. Impatiens people are quick to anger, but just as

quickly cool down. When they are in the position of leaders or bosses, they are not always popular; those under them may feel they are being pushed by a slave-driver. However, Impatiens people usually have no ambitions to lead, preferring to work without outside interference; their independence is very important to them.

Impatiens people are accident prone; they may cross the street without looking at the traffic, and get hit by a car, or run into things by not paying attention. They also tend to carelessness when their temper flares up; slamming doors on their fingers, grabbing a hot skillet, breaking a glass and cutting themselves. The mental tension of this state can also manifest in physical symptoms; sudden cramps, indigestion, pain, or spasms.

The Impatiens person, in his excessive self-willedness and self-imposed limits, forgets that everyone is a part of a great whole, and that we all depend on each other, even on those who seem less capable. He also doesn't consider that anyone who is more capable should put their greater gifts at the service of

others, and help them in their own development. "Impatiens people have to learn to do what is hardest for them: to hold back from active involvement, to let things happen, to practice patience¹."

In the positive state, Impatiens types have great empathy, gentleness, and sympathy towards others. They understand the different natures of others, and are tactful in putting their gifts, i.e., their quick minds, decision-making abilities, and intelligence, at the service of others. Above all, they are patient and tolerant.²

Impatiens (*Impatiens glandulifera*) blooms in late summer, and grows on river and canal banks and in low-lying damp soil. Prepare Impatiens by the sun method, and use only the pale mauve flowers. Pick each flower separately by its stalk from several different plants, covering the palm of your hand with a large leaf first. Cover the surface of water in the bowl completely.³

Vervain is the remedy for extreme mental energy which show themselves in over-effort, stress and tension. Vervain types may force themselves by pure effort of will to do things that are beyond their physical strength. They are tense and nervous

inside and out, and flare up with anger when things don't progress as well as expected. When this happens, they may get more involved than before in their work or project, and push themselves even more. They may force themselves, by pure will, beyond their physical limits. They'll never allow themselves a free minute throughout the day, and get only a few hours of sleep at night.⁴

This same tension and over-effort tends to make Vervain types fanatics, reformers, converts, and martyrs for a cause, usually a positive one. They may be filled completely with an idea, an inner flame, and be unable to rest until they've convinced everyone else around them of it. Chairpersons of welfare, social and political organizations, who sacrifice their free time and their energy to the 'good cause,' exemplify this type. They feel totally dedicated to their roles, and try to win over everyone to their way of thinking, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. In their eagerness they tend to overdo things, and bombard the other person with their arguments, usually quite undiplomatically, without letting the other person have their own say.


Vervain folks live on their nerves, and are high-strung.

Usually they are quick in their speech and movement, and thin and wiry in body. Sometimes they are so keyed up that, even if they wanted to, they wouldn't be able to relax. This nervous and muscle tension is seen in their excess of physical energy; sometimes gripping a pencil so hard that it almost snaps, and pounding up and down stairs quite loudly. They are not so accident-prone as Impatiens types, but their mind may be ahead of their body, causing them to literally fall over themselves.⁵

The person in the negative Vervain state, while filled with positive energy, has not learned how to use this energy effectively and efficiently, but rather squanders it indiscriminately. They need to spend some of their energy taking care of their physical selves. They also must understand that they don't need to over-sell an idea, which will often turn people away, but let the idea carry itself. It is much more convincing if one embodies the idea, if one 'is' the idea, rather than simply and constancy extolling it.

Upon taking Vervain, the person become calmer and wiser, and is able to know his own mind. He realizes that others have a right to their opinions.

The positive Vervain type has a fluid mind, and is ready to listen to others, and even change his opinions when convinced of the need to do so.⁶

Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*) flowers from July to September, and grows by roadsides, in dry waste areas and sunny fields. Gather the flowering spikes above any fading or dead flowers; choose the younger plants so there aren't too many unopened buds above the fully opened flowers. Prepare by the sun method.⁷ 

Notes:

¹ Scheffer, Methchild. Bach Flower Therapy - Theory and Practice. 1981. Munchen, West Germany, pg. 112.

² Chancellor, Dr. Philip M. Handbook of the Bach Flower Remedies.

1971. Keats Publishing, Inc., New Canaan, CT, pg. 122.

³ Weeks, Nora, and Bullen, Victor. The Bach Flower Remedies - Illustrations and Preparation. 1964. C.W. Daniel Co. Ltd., London, England, pg. 34.

⁴ Schefer, pg. 166.

⁵ Chancellor, pg. 191.

⁶ Chancellor, pg. 192.

⁷ Weeks and Bullen, pg 38.

REFLECTIONS ON A LIFE'S JOURNEY OR HOW I BECAME A PAGAN

by Nion

Hi ya'll; Nion here. I thought I would share with you my perspective on how I became a Pagan. Why, you may ask, would I want to do this? Well, my reasoning was that by putting my spiritual meanderings on paper, I can better understand and internalize my own present path.

I, as many Pagans have done in the past, started out in the Judeo-Christian faith, being brought up Roman Catholic. I even made altar boy for a while (ha!). My schooling was in parochial schools until my high school freshman year, so having the Brothers and Nuns (who, by the way, didn't believe in sparing the rod for infractions to authority) drum in the ever-present catechisms along with the three R's was a daily occurrence.

But, about 4th grade and beyond, my religious utterances were really by rote with no true belief behind them. I just didn't feel anything inside when I said my 'prayers' or thought about 'sin' as a good little Catholic boy should. In fact, when confession time (a Catholic rite to become cleansed of willful sin) rolled around, the many many instances

of juvenile self-abuse along with a little exaggerated story telling here and there made me well-acquainted with spouting acts of forgiveness and endless rosaries for penance. BUT IT DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING to me. I just didn't feel or believe any of it, and since lightening didn't strike me down or the earth open and swallow me up, I guess I spiritually evolved as an agnostic.

When I became 18, I graduated from high school, and within three months joined the military to see the world. Uncle Sam gave me two years' paid vacation (which I couldn't even take) in sunny, muggy, and grubby Vietnam, where I very quickly lost what little I had left of religion and became thoroughly atheist. In my mind, there AIN'T NO GOD with all the blood, gore, death, and man's inhumanity to people that I saw those two years, and to me, NO all-mighty and everpresent deity could ever permit those or any other acts of violence and death in a religion's name or a god's name, no matter what faith it was from.

Reflections

Well, I survived the military and actually stayed in for 20 years. I retired older, and probably not too much wiser, still muddling along life's pathways. In the 20 years of military life and service here in the United States and many other countries, I have gone to other religious services to see what everyone had to offer. But I never found a niche that I found comfortable or spiritually 'filling.'

Nonetheless, there has always been some void that needed to be filled with something. Through the years, the closest I have come to peace was sitting on the oceanside sand with the waves lapping at me; or running naked in the foam of the sea; or sitting on a rock contemplating the sunrise or sunset. Or listening to nature's constant chatter in a forest glade or a meadow, the wind rustling in the leaves and branches, the insects' buzz and drone, the birds or squirrels at play; or in observing the Southern Cross or the Milky Way on a crystal clear moonlit night. All of those instances have drawn me to Mother Nature as an entity that I could relate to and that I felt right with.

I guess I have always been a daydreamer, an avid science fiction nut, and a sword & sorcery fan. (Robert Heinlien


was, is, and ever shall be, my hero, whose writings of lifestyles seemed to mirror how I wanted to live.) I always seemed to be somewhere else when I was supposed to be doing chores or classwork. I'd be the first one to go if E.T.s wanted our species for a goodwill exchange, or to live in space when it came time for everyone to be able to do so. Over the last 5 to 10 years, I have been reading more and more of New Age philosophy, the Occult, and other alternative lifestyles; and the writings of Raymond Buckland, Scott Cunningham (in particular), Margot Adler, Silver Ravenwolf, Amber K., the Farrars, and Starhawk have fascinated and appealed to me as a way of living and a way of relating to the environment, to others, and most importantly, to myself.

About 18 months ago, I was browsing through the local weekend flea market, and a particular booth caught my eye. A young woman was selling pentagrams, ankhs, jewelry, bumper stickers, and weird books. I stopped and became fascinated with her wares, and took about 30-45 minutes working up the nerve to try and talk with her about my interest. (You must understand that I am smack dab in the middle of Bible Belt country). She was amiable

Reflections

for discussion, and in the course of conversation gave me a phone number for a more extroverted and vocal Pagan who talked with me at length, and who eventually invited me to an ongoing open circle where I saw first hand what a lunar celebration was all about. I loved it. After about 10 months of going every month, talking with the various participants of different traditions, I decided that I wanted to be a part of it all. So, last June's rainy, muggy, steamy full Dryad moon, in the woods, standing naked within a stone

circle in front of an oak tree, I dedicated myself to our Triple Goddess and Her Consort, in the presence of the elders of the Church of Rhiannon (C.O.R.)

As I travel the path that I have chosen, I would like to give my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for those who had patience and understanding, and who were always willing to talk with me. I want to thank Shadowcat, Coll, Oak, Ailem, Raincrow, and all the others who helped guide me on this new path. Blessed Be. 



What's in a Name?

by Brigid MoonFire

Recently, I was accused of living in the 13th century. This was a statement that quite puzzled me, and at the same time infuriated me. But to fully understand the situation, you must first have a small history lesson.

Back in the days before my husband and I were married, he approached me with the question of telling his siblings that I was a Witch. After much discussion, it was agreed upon with certain conditions. The top priority was that neither set of parental units, both being Catholic, would be told. The last thing we wanted was to be dragged out of our beds and be exorcised to expel the demons among us, or to lose a family member due to a serious heart condition.

The problem began when one sibling told her spouse. While very much open-minded, he does have the tendency to talk quite a bit, so we informed him of the need to keep quiet on this issue. Months later, in a public restaurant, he blurted out to one of his friends that I am a Witch. After hard kicks to his shinbone from the entire table, there was a long discussion of why I am secretive about my religion.

Then, two weeks ago, my father-in-law watched a program about Witchcraft, its history and how it fares in the 20th century. He remembered my very unusual wedding, put two and two together, and asked ol' loudmouth if I was a Witch. Now while it was never my intention to have someone point-blank lie, a little discretion here with an "I don't know," or "It's none of my business," or a few other phrases here would have been better than "Uhm, yeah."

Well, I was told about this indiscretion, and needless to say, I was quite upset. This is when I was accused of living in the 13th century and not standing behind what I believe in. After all, if I am not ashamed of being a Witch, then why don't I just stand up and announce it to all?

Why? Because there is a very good chance I would lose my job. There is an even better chance my husband would lose his job. I also live in an area where my house, my land, or my animals could very well be harmed or destroyed. Why indeed. In many ways, people haven't changed much in their ideas of prejudice and bigotry since the 13th century.

This leads me to the question of morals and ethics, and questions regarding the fine-tuning of the Three-Fold Law. Now while most Witches rely on the Three-Fold Law that says, basically, whatever you do, be it good or bad, will come back to you three-fold, I have always understood it to include self-defense as the only exception ("Unless in self-defense it be, ever mind the rule of three"). Granted, most of us would agree easily that if someone is trying to kill you, of course, you're going to fight back and try to stay unharmed and alive. That would be self-defense. On the other hand, does self-defense include you protecting your mate, your home, your land, or your animals from the same harm? Where exactly does it end? For some, the casual tearing down of trees to put in, say, a new phone line is nothing, while some of us are out there instructing the workers exactly where they can and cannot dig, so as not to cause harm to the trees. Is this a type of defense? Some say yes, others no.

For many of us, secrecy is mandatory among much of the community. It has to be until certain stereotypes change and a greater level of understanding and neighborly love has been achieved by a greater number of

people. The trick is we are the ones who will bring about that change in people, but to many people we will blow that chance if they are met first with the announcement "I am a Witch," instead of getting to know us and respect us. Then when we reveal ourselves to them, they begin to question their own stereotypes. Many will change, yet some will be too set in their own ways and refuse to. You must be ready for this denial and for the rejection.

The best way to decide if it is right to tell someone is to ask yourself and ask for the Mother's guidance. Search out how you really feel about this person. Take a completely unbiased perspective of the person. Are they gossips? Do they feel they gain power by sharing secrets? Are they respectful of others? Would you be willing to enter a Circle of Perfect Love and Perfect Trust with this person? If this last answer is no, you might be better off not telling this person.

One thing you must think out, though, is this: somewhere along the way you'll probably tell someone you shouldn't have—are you ready to deal with those implications now?

For me, I have yet to discuss things with my father-in-law, mainly because we just can't

Continued on page 41



Where Has All the Water Gone?

by Sherlock

Water: one of the four Elements, and the life blood for almost every organism on our Mother Earth. It's no wonder that we think of it as sacred. Most of us can turn on a tap and experience the miracle of water on demand, but mankind's misuse of water is coming back to haunt us all. I'm sure everyone is aware of the need to use our natural resources wisely, but few are aware of the magnitude of the problem. Our Mother needs our help. Here are a few examples why.

The Colorado River, which carved the Grand Canyon, was once a mighty watercourse. Its waters pour through the Rocky Mountains, and they once emptied into the Gulf of California; however, they no longer make it that far. The Colorado now empties into thousands of bathtubs, farms, and casino fountains across the West. What are the consequences to our Mother Earth? Ask the Cucapá Indians. They were once known as the River People, back when the river still made it to them.

Their once-rich land is now filled with garbage and occasional swamps of filthy water. The tribe has only 85 families left.¹

The Suwannee River in Florida is suffering from extreme pollution due to dairy cattle and unsafe septic tanks. The pollution reached such high levels that oysters taken from the river caused food poisoning, and the Food and Drug administration was forced to shut down the area's oyster trade.²

Florida has a lot of very unique qualities: one of them is its wetlands; another is its rapidly



Water

growing population. The population of southern Florida grows by about 1,000 people per day. Each of these 1,000 people use about 200 gallons of fresh water daily. This means that the state of Florida has to find 200,000 more gallons of water per day. Staggering, isn't it? In some areas of Florida, residents can receive a \$45 ticket for illegally watering their lawns, but the demand for water is not the only problem facing Florida's waters. Another is the massive amount of pollution, much of which stems from agriculture. There is runoff from fertilizers and insecticides, as well as waste from the dairy cattle industry. Lake Okeechobee is the recipient of waste from about 45,000 cows, each of which produce the same amount of waste as that produced by 22 humans. Lake Okeechobee is contaminated by about 1½ tons of phosphorus each day from cattle and other sources.

Another of Florida's water problems is that its natural cycle of water has been almost completely rerouted by technology. Around 1900 the Everglades covered almost every bit of land south of Lake Okeechobee. More than 60% of these wetlands have now disappeared. The reason? Man wanted to tame the swamp and

make it livable. Around the turn of the century, Florida's governor, Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, promised to drain the Everglades. People didn't think of things the way that we do now—his promise to drain the Everglades probably helped his political standing. Unfortunately, it was one of those rare political promises that actually got fulfilled. Using canals, dams, dikes, and other technology, southern Florida's wetlands became farmland and cities, and much of the native flora and fauna became endangered. It seems beyond solution now.³

The war in the Persian Gulf was more a war against Mother Earth than a war between people. When it was over, about 600 square miles of the sea was covered with the largest oil spill in history. The spill covered about 300 miles of coastline. About 6,000,000 barrels of crude oil were deliberately spilled, but what most people don't know is that before the war, about a quarter of a million barrels of oil were spilled into the Gulf each year. Beaches there are paved for miles by "tar mat," a crust of previously spilled oil and sand which forms a sort of pavement, so hard that one can actually drive on it!⁴

In the former Soviet Union, there is a lake known as the Aral

Water

Sea. It was once almost as large as America's Lake Superior. Between 1973 and 1989, the Aral Sea dropped from the fourth largest enclosed body of water in the world, to the sixth largest in the world, losing the equivalent of 1½ times the volume of Lake Erie. By the year 2000, it will have shrunk to two-thirds its current size. In the vast areas that were once a part of the Aral Sea's lakebed, all that remains are immense salt wastes. In towns that were once on its shoreline, one can see boats sitting in a sea of dry salt that extends as far as the eye can see. The water that is left is much too high in salt content to support much life, and every one of the Aral's 24 native fish species is gone. The people in the villages speak of the times before the water went away, and now that it, along with the fishing that came with it, are gone, the people are poor and hungry. The land is plagued by storms of salt, similar to dust storms, that bring with them throat cancer, malnutrition, and a host of other maladies. Why did all of this happen to the Aral Sea? So that the USSR could become self-sufficient in cotton production. The two rivers that fed the Aral Sea were drained to water cotton fields in the name of self-sufficiency and export profits.⁵

The former USSR was guilty of much more than just the draining of the Aral Sea. In the race for power, the Soviet government pushed technology to its limits while ignoring the consequences to our Mother Earth. The total damage may never be known, but we now know some of the things that were done behind the Iron Curtain. A small bomb's worth of radioactivity was knowingly dumped into a river that supplied many peasants with water. There was wholesale dumping of nuclear waste into the sea. In order to build underground gas reservoirs, the Soviet Union detonated 15 atomic devices underground; some were detonated near villages. "The Soviet Union pulled the nuclear trigger 116 times for peaceful purposes such as mines and canals⁶." The Kola Bay is the earth's most nuclear region. In this Arctic region, 14 reactors were dumped, one disabled nuclear sub sank, and 17 other vessels which were contaminated were sunk. According to Norwegian scientists, the food chain in the Arctic Ocean may be radiation-contaminated. The Earth will not recover from its bout with the Soviet Union for many generations, if ever. In the former Soviet Union, a clean glass of water is not easy to

Water

come by.⁷

While we as individuals cannot remove the radioactive waste from the Arctic Ocean, or refill the Aral Sea, we still need to be aware of the damage that has been done to our Mother. All we can do is learn from these examples so that we can see what is going on around us, and unlike the Soviet peasants, who were misled by the propaganda of a government that they were forced to trust, we can fight to keep our planet healthy.

There are also things that you can do on a smaller scale to help. Do you know where the water in your tap comes from? Are you draining a river when you leave the garden hose on? Are you contaminating your local water table when you pour out that extra flea dip? Does your septic tank meet safety standards? Are you doing what you can? Our Mother provides us with everything that we need to thrive. Do not take more than she can give.

Sources:

¹ "Water and the West, The Colorado, a river run dry" by Jim Carrier. National Geographic; June 1991; Volume 179, No 6.

² "Blackwater Country" by Richard Conniff. National

Geographic; April 1992; Volume 181, No 4.

³ "Florida Watershed" by Nicole Duplaix. National Geographic; July 1990; Volume 178, No 1.

⁴ "The Persian Gulf, After The Storm" by Thomas Y. Canby. National Geographic; August 1991; Volume 180, No 2.

⁵ "A Soviet Sea Lies Dying" by William S. Ellis. National Geographic; February 1990; Volume 177, No 2.

⁶ "Pollution in the Former USSR" by Mike Edwards. National Geographic; August 1994; Volume 186, No 2; pg. 81.

⁷ Ibid.

Name, cont. from pg. 37

seem to get schedules cleared at the same time. My brother-in-law doesn't really want to talk to me because I had to first take some time to calm down so I would be able to discuss things rationally. Now it appears it's too late; he insists he did nothing wrong. And I learned that whatever is told to my sister-in-law in the strictest confidence will be told to her husband. For now, I will tread the waters of family conflict and turmoil, and work for protection for my home and those who live there.

THE EIGHT-SPOKED WHEEL OF THE YEAR

by *Muirghin uí Dhún Aonghasa*

The Eight-Spoked Wheel of the Year consists of the eight sabbats which modern witches celebrate. The Equinoxes and Solstices, while the most well-known to the general population, are actually the minor sabbats. The Cross-Quarter days are the major sabbats, and are halfway between the Equinoxes and Solstices; on February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1. Thus there are approximately 90 days from one Cross-Quarter to another (i.e., February 1 to May 1), and roughly 45 days in between a Cross-Quarter and an Equinox or Solstice (i.e., June 21, Summer Solstice, to August 1, Lammas).

The Cross-Quarter days are traditionally celebrated on the 1st of the month; they do have astronomical dates, however. On a calendar, find the preceding Solstice (or Equinox), count the days to the next Equinox (or Solstice), and divide by half. That day, usually the 45th or 46th, is the actual astronomical date of the Cross-Quarter.

Much mythological and esoteric lore is attached to the sabbats. In the Faerie Faith tradition, and according to Robert Graves¹,

the two halves of the year are ruled alternately by the Holly King and the Oak King. The Oak King is born, or begins his rule, on the Winter Solstice, and rules till the Summer Solstice, when he is killed by his rival and tanist, the Holly King. The Holly King then rules the dark half of the year, June-December, till his subsequent death at the Winter Solstice, either by the hands of the Oak King, or just of old age.

The Oak King, whose colors are green and gold, corresponds to the Christian savior, Jesus, who is also born at the Winter Solstice. He is the Sun King, the one who brings the light. He rules the green and growing things, and his peak of power is at the apex of the sun at Summer Solstice.

The Holly King, whose colors are red and gold, is the Oak King's tanist, or other self. He is the Set to Osiris, the Apollo to Adonis, the Judas to Jesus. Unable to integrate with his twin, he kills him, and takes his place for half the year. He rules the dying, sleeping half of the year, and his death, or transformation into the Sun King, occurs at the time of his greatest

strength, the Winter Solstice, when the light is the weakest.

The year is also divided along another line, from Spring Equinox to Fall Equinox (see diagram). The time from September 21 to March 21 is the Yin half of the year, while the time between March 21 and September 21 is the Yang half. At the Equinoxes, the light is equal; therefore the energy is equal, too. The Winter Solstice, being the time of least light, is the peak of the Yin, female energy; the male, Yang energy peaks at the Summer Solstice when the days are longest. You may notice this change in energy in yourself: do you feel like hibernating in the winter, when all is cold and dark, maybe curling up with a good book or watching movies? Come the spring and summer months, however, you may feel more like going outside, swimming, hiking, camping, being more sociable and extroverted, and less like pursuing intellectual activities.

While the Equinoxes mark the time of equal energy and light, we don't actually feel the shift from Yin to Yang (or Yang to Yin) till May 1 and November 1. This is because of the phenomenon of the 45-day lag. Although December 21 is the shortest day of the year, the coldest part of winter isn't until February, 45 days later. Like-

wise, although September 21 is the time of equal Yin and Yang, the energies are manifested 45 days later on November 1, Samhain, when, mythologically speaking, the 'gates to the underworld' are opened.

The opening of the gates to the underworld refer to the beginning the Yin energies, when the energies 'descend into the earth.' Six months later, on May 1, Beltane, the gates of the underworld are closed, and the energies return to the above-world, as symbolized by the May Pole. Basically, although the energies actually shift from Yang to Yin on September 21, the Fall Equinox, and from Yin to Yang on March 21, the Spring Equinox, we don't perceive this shift, termed the 'opening' or 'closing' of the gates of the underworld, until the Cross-Quarter days, November 1 and May 1, 45 days later.

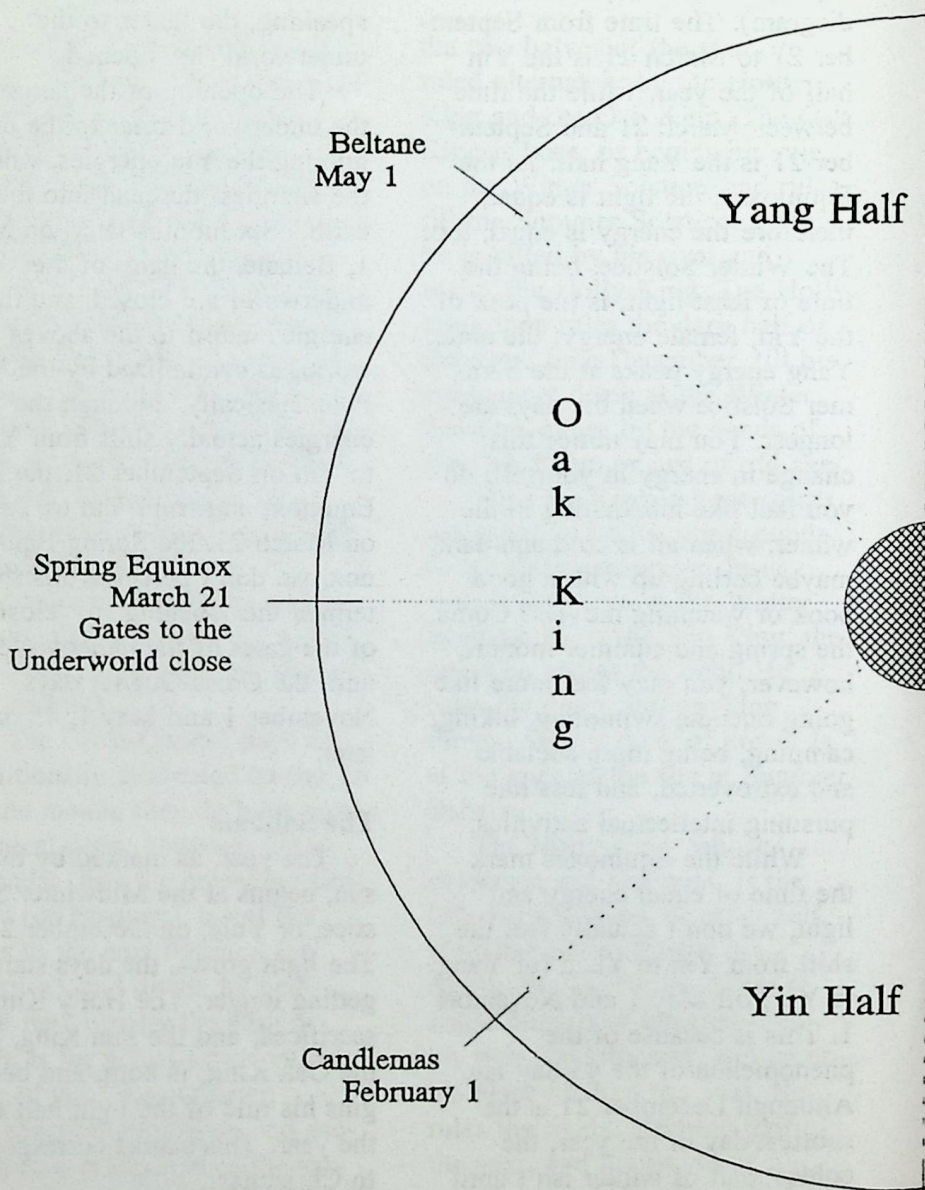
The Sabbats

The year, as marked by the sun, begins at the Midwinter Solstice, or Yule, on December 21. The light grows, the days start getting longer. The Holly King is sacrificed, and the Sun King, or the Oak King, is born, and begins his rule of the light half of the year. This sabbat corresponds to Christmas.

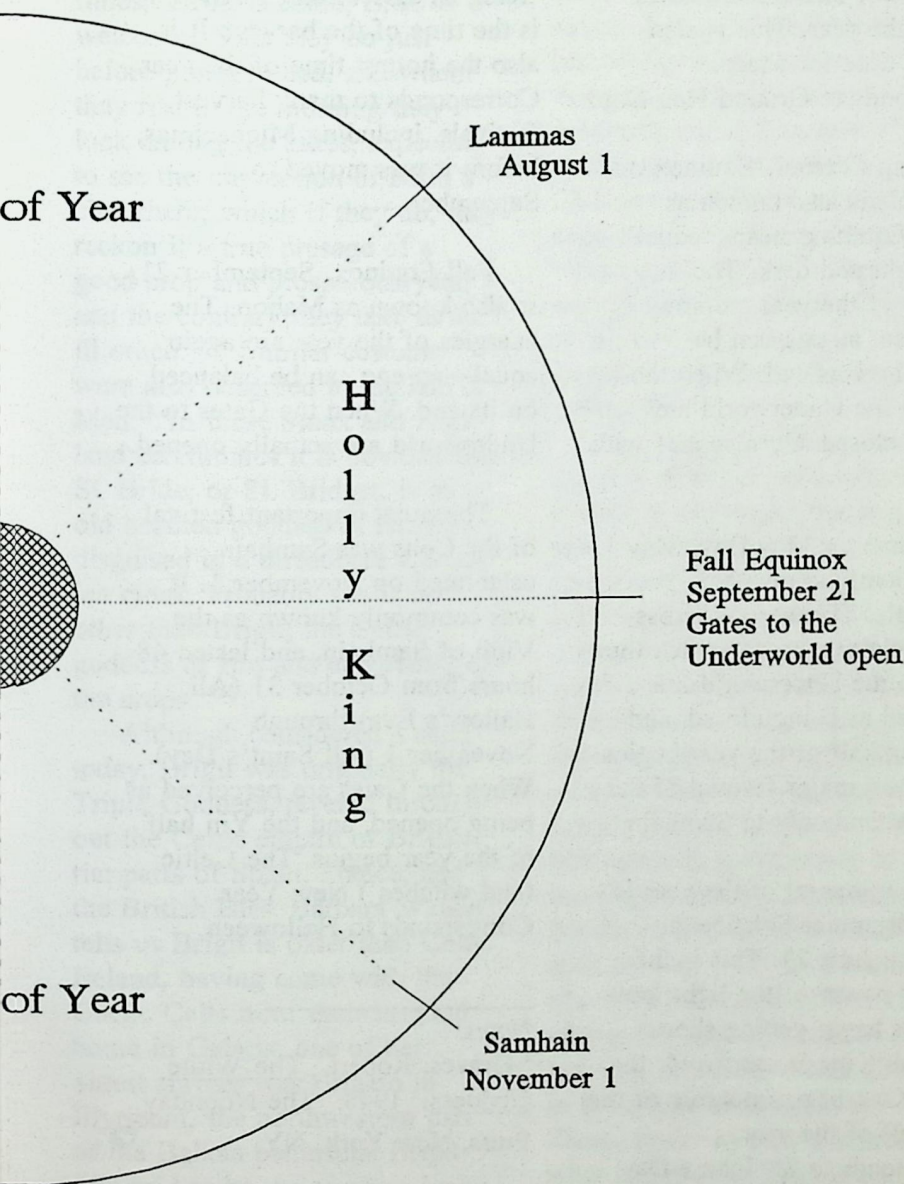
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THE EIGHT-SPOKED

June 21
Summer Solstice

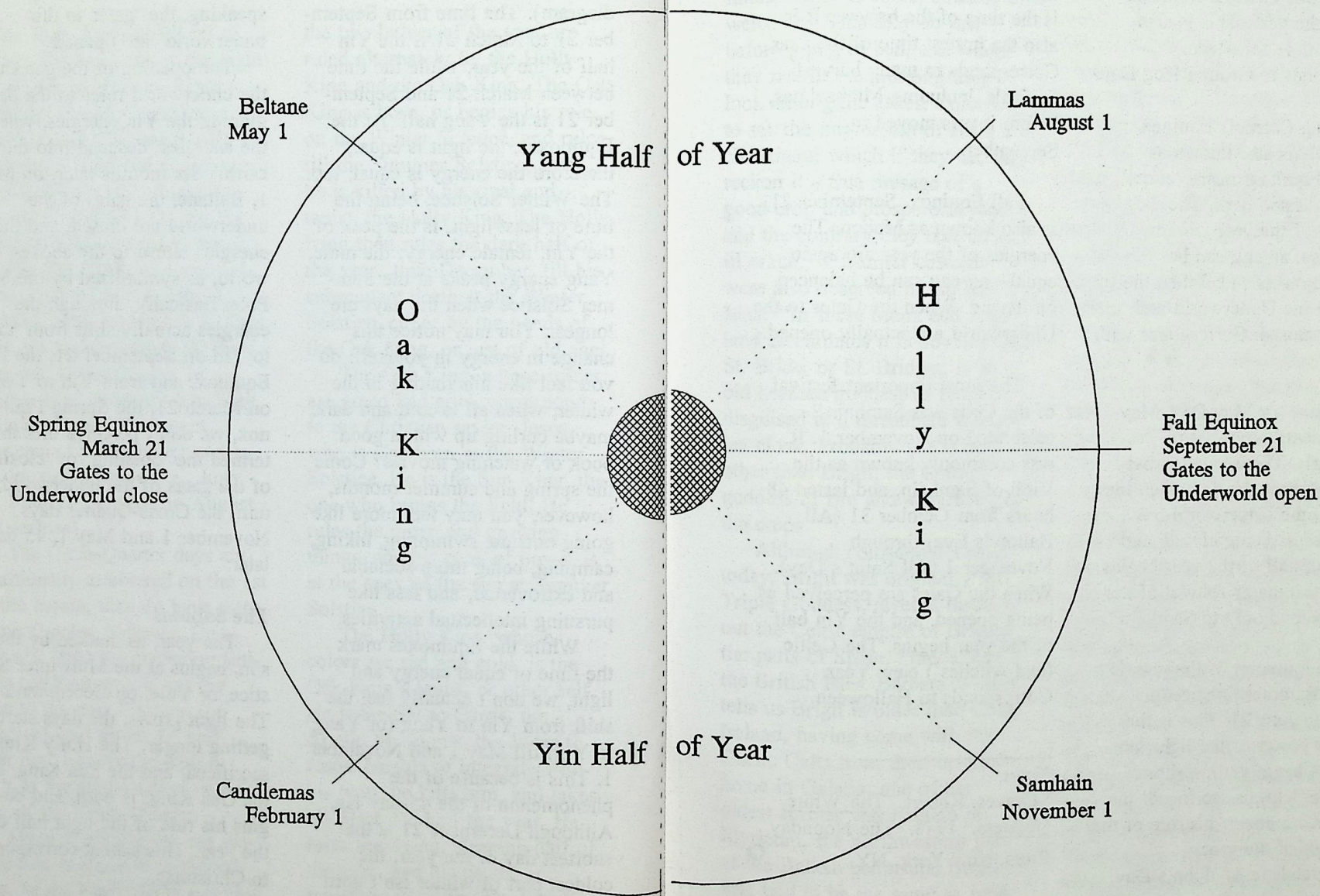


WHEEL OF THE YEAR



THE EIGHT-SPOKED WHEEL OF THE YEAR

June 21
Summer Solstice



Wheel, cont. from pg. 43_

The first Cross-Quarter day is Candlemas, on February 1. This is also known as Brigit's Day, or Imbolc. Although the days are longer now, this is the coldest time of the year. This is also lambing time for sheep. Corresponds to Ground Hog Day.

Spring (Vernal) Equinox, March 21, is also known as Ostara. Equinox means 'equal'; equal light and dark. The energies of the year are now equal also; an egg can be balanced on its end. When the Gates to the Underworld are actually closed. Corresponds with Easter.

Beltane, or May Day, May 1, was anciently known as Walpurgis. This second Cross-Quarter day is the day when the Gates to the Underworld are perceived as being closed, and the Yang half of the year begins. This was a major festival of the Celts, second only to Samhain.

The midpoint of the year is the Midsummer Solstice, or Litha, on June 21. This is the peak of power of the light; now the days begin getting shorter. The Oak King is sacrificed; the Holly King begins his rule of the dark half of the year. Corresponds to St. John's Day.

Lammas, August 1, is also called Lugnassad. A late-comer in the Celtic calendar, Lugnassad is named for the sun-god Lugh. Being an agricultural festival, it is the time of the harvest. It is also the hottest time of the year. Corresponds to many harvest festivals, including Michaelmas, before it was moved to September.

Fall Equinox, September 21, is also known as Mabon. The energies of the year are again equal—an egg can be balanced on its end. When the Gates to the Underworld are actually opened.

The most important festival of the Celts was Samhain, celebrated on November 1. It was commonly known as the Vigil of Samhain, and lasted 48 hours from October 31 (All Hallow's Eve) through November 1 (All Saint's Day). When the Gates are perceived as being opened, and the Yin half of the year begins. The Celtic (and witches') New Year. Corresponds to Halloween.

Notes:

¹ Graves, Robert. The White Goddess. 1948. The Noonday Press, New York, NY.

Festivals of February,

cont. from pg. 15

call Briid's bed; and then the mistress and servants cry three times, 'Briid is' come, Briid is welcome.' This they do just before going to bed, and when they rise in the morning they look among the ashes, expecting to see the impression of Briid's club there; which if they do, they reckon it a true presage of a good crop and prosperous year, and the contrary they take as an ill omen.'²⁴ Similar customs were also observed in the Isle of Man. "In these Manx and Highland ceremonies it is obvious that St. Bride, or St. Bridget, is an old heathen goddess of fertility, disguised in a threadbare Christian cloak. Probably she is no other than Brigit, the Celtic goddess of fire and apparently of the crops.'²⁵

Although considered a saint today, Brigit was originally the Triple Goddess, revered throughout the Celtic empire of Brigantia: parts of Spain, France, and the British Isles. Barbara Walker tells us Brigit is older than Celtic Ireland, having come with the Gaelic Celts from their original home in Galatia; one of her oldest shrines was Brigeto in Illyricum, the northwestern part of the Balkan peninsula. Brigit was said to be the same as Juno Regina, Queen of Heaven, and

Tanit, the Dea Celestis (Heavenly Goddess)²⁶.

Dr. MacCulloch says Brigit originated in a period when the Celts worshipped goddesses rather than gods, and when knowledge of medicine, agriculture and inspiration were women's rather than men's²⁷. She is referred to in Cormac's Glossary as Brigit the female sage and Brigit the goddess, whom poets adored²⁸. She was a typical feminine trinity: Brigit ruled, and her two sisters governed the arts of healing and smithcraft.

The Catholic church, finding the cult of Brigit impossible to eradicate, canonized her as a saint, calling her Bridget or Bride (pronounced 'breed'). Church scholars who specialized in biographies of saints declared she was a nun who founded a convent at Kildare. The story goes that she was born of princely ancestors near Dundalk, County Louth, Ireland, in 451 or 452. She received many offers of marriage when a young woman, but decided to become a nun and took the veil from St. Macaille. She lived with seven other virgins at the foot of Croghan Hill, but later moved to Druin Criadh, in the plains of Magh Life. There, under an oak, she erected what became the famous convent of Cill-Dara, or 'the church of

Festivals

the oak.' The city of Kildare was built there, along with a cathedral. St. Bridget founded two monastic institutions, one each for men and women, which were jointly presided over by St. Bridget and St. Conleth, bishop of Kildare. She also founded a school of art, including metalwork and illumination. She died on February 1, 525, and was buried to the right of Kildare cathedral's high altar, but her remains were later moved in the 9th century, due to Scandinavian raids, to Downpatrick, where they were buried with those of St. Patrick and St. Columba²⁹.

Underneath the Christian trappings, however, Brigit remained more than a saint to her followers. The convent at Kildare "was noted for its heathenish miracles and evidences of fertility magic. Cows never went dry; flowers and shamrocks sprang up in Brigit's footprints; eternal spring reigned in her bower."³⁰ Irish writers referred to Brigit as the Queen of Heaven, thereby identifying her with Mary. She was called "Mother of my Sovereign, Mary of the Goidels, Queen of the South, Prophetess of Christ, Mother of Jesus."³¹

Brigit was thought to be the mystic mother-bride of St. Patrick, who supposedly died as one of her sacrificial victims, and entered the underworld through

her sacred grove at Derry Down. An old saying goes, "On the hill of Down, buried in one tomb, were Bridget and Patricius."³² This may be a reference to St. Brigit being buried next to St. Patrick at Downpatrick, or perhaps the story of the location of the remains stemmed from this old tale. At any rate, Patrick's origins and authenticity are as uncertain as Brigit's, and since his name meant 'father,' he may have been a new name for Brigit's old consort the Dagda, or 'father.' Patrick became part of Brigit's originally female trinity when it was semi-Christianized by the church as a 'Wonder-working Triad' consisting of Brigit, Patrick and Columba: the Mother, the Father, and the Holy Dove. St. Brigit's feast day was February 1, the first day of spring according to the old calendar. It was called Oimele, Imolg, or Imbolc, the day of union between God and Goddess³³.

GROUNDHOG DAY

February 1, Imbolc, and February 2, Candlemas, were very important to the rural folk. Imbolc was a lambing festival, and even today in the rural British Isles, many sheep farmers arrange to begin lambing. Although it's still the middle of winter, and special care must be taken to shelter ewes and lambs,

Festivals

this date has two great advantages: the lambs will be just the right age to graze the spring grass, and they are well-grown and ready for market in June and July³⁴.

In America, Candlemas Day is known as Groundhog Day, a time for forecasting the weather for the next six weeks. This custom was brought over to America by immigrants from Great Britain and Germany. The idea is that if the groundhog, or woodchuck, comes out of his hole on this day and sees his shadow, he'll retreat back into his quarters, and there will be six more weeks of winter. But if the day is cloudy he won't return to his hole for a long sleep, as the winter weather will soon give way to spring. In Germany it was the badger which was carefully watched; in the U.S., the custom was transferred to the woodchuck.

This preoccupation with the weather on Candlemas Day may be due in part to the fact that in Britain, Candlemas was held to mark a milestone in the return of the sun. The length of the days are increasing; Katharine Briggs says that candles were lighted to strengthen the power of the sun³⁵. The increasing daylight led people to look beyond winter for the first signs of spring. Some of the Candlemas lore is cautionary:

In the barn on Candlemas Day, should be half the straw and half the hay. In other words, in spite of the approach of spring, winter should be considered as only half over: *As the day lengthens, so the cold strengthens*³⁶.

Other rhymes concerning the weather on Candlemas Day include: *If Candlemas Day be dry and fair, half the winter's to come, and mair; if Candlemas Day be wet and foul, the half of winter's gone to Yule, and If Candlemas Day be fair and bright, Winter will have another flight; if Candlemas Day be shower and rain, Winter is gone and will not come again.* A German saying is 'The shepherd would rather see the wolf enter his stable on Candlemas Day than the sun.' Douglas says that the belief that the weather on Candlemas Day forecasts by contraries the weather of the next several weeks has no connection with any religious festival or saint³⁷.

In the early part of this century a group of men with a merry sense of humor, living in and around Quarryville, Pennsylvania, organized the Slumbering Groundhog Lodge. "On the morning of February 2 its members don silk hats and carry canes and go into the fields seeking the burrow of a woodchuck. When one finds a burrow

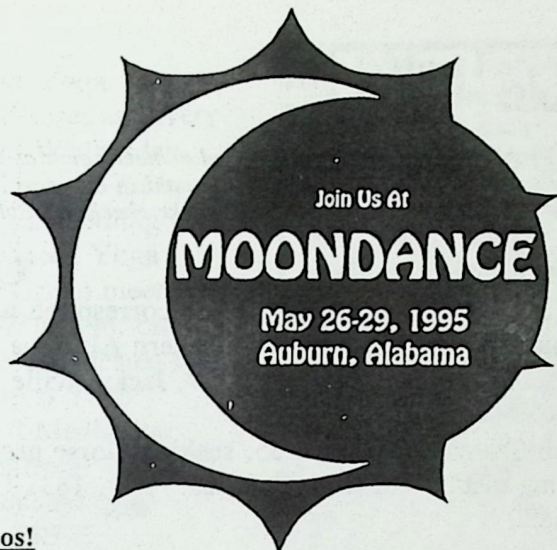
Festivals

he calls to the others and they all assemble to await the awakening of the animal from his hibernation and his emergence into the outer air. They watch his behavior and then return to the village where they interpret his actions and report them to the public. According to the records of the lodge the woodchuck's prognostications have been verified by the weather eight times, have been indefinite five times and have been wrong seven times since the observations began.³⁸

Notes:

- ¹ Pennick, Nigel. The Pagan Book of Days. 1992. Destiny Books, Rochester, VT, pg. 37.
- ² Douglas, George William. The American Book of Days. 1948. The H.W. Wilson Co., New York, NY, pg. 77.
- ³ Walker, Barbara G. The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets. 1983. Harper & Row, San Francisco, CA, pg. 135, and Leviticus 12:2-5.
- ⁴ Hole, Christina. British Folk Customs. 1976. Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., London, pg. 42.
- ⁵ Douglas, pg. 77.
- ⁶ Ibid, pg. 77.
- ⁷ Walker, pg. 135.
- ⁸ Douglas, pg. 77.
- ⁹ Walker, pg. 556.
- ¹⁰ Hole, pg. 203.

- ¹¹ Walker, pg. 556-557.
- ¹² Ibid, pg. 135.
- ¹³ Douglas, pg. 77-78.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 120-121.
- ¹⁵ Walker, pg. 1037.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, pg. 1037.
- ¹⁷ Hole, pg. 203.
- ¹⁸ Douglas, pg. 121.
- ¹⁹ Whitlock, Ralph. A Calendar of Country Customs. 1978. B.T. Batsford, Ltd., London, pg. 31.
- ²⁰ Douglas, pg. 121.
- ²¹ Hole, pg. 204.
- ²² Walker, pg 1037-1038.
- ²³ Hole, pg. 42.
- ²⁴ Frazer, Sir James George. The Golden Bough. 1922. Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, NY, pg. 155.
- ²⁵ Ibid, pg. 156.
- ²⁶ Walker, pg. 117.
- ²⁷ Ibid, pg. 117, quoting from P.M. Campbell, pg. 432.
- ²⁸ Ibid, pg. 116, quoting from I. Joyce, pg. 260-261.
- ²⁹ Douglas, pg. 76.
- ³⁰ Walker, pg. 117.
- ³¹ Ibid, pg. 117, quoting from W.G. Graves, pg. 144.
- ³² Ibid, pg. 117, quoting from Brewster, pg. 140.
- ³³ Ibid, pg. 117.
- ³⁴ Whitlock, pg. 29.
- ³⁵ Ibid, pg. 29.
- ³⁶ Ibid, pg. 30.
- ³⁷ Douglas, pg. 78.
- ³⁸ Ibid, pg. 78-79.



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For the pot-luck feast, bring food that can be served cold, or cooked or heated on a grill (suggestions on what to bring will follow later). You'll also need your own food and cookware for other meals; fire pits and a grill are available.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS and GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The next issue of **THE HAZEL NUT** will focus on the Alder and Willow trees, and Beltane. Please submit relevant articles, rituals, artwork, fiction, or poetry. We also welcome your general-interest contributions and letters to the editor. Deadline for all submissions is March 15. Please provide your name and address for our records, and a brief bio to be printed with your article or ritual; this can include your legal or magickal name and/or address, if you wish. Be sure to specify your by-line name. Text should be typed, black ink on white paper; provide a DOS ASCII disk if possible. Artwork should be black ink on plain white paper; no pencil drawings! Originals will be returned with a SASE. We reserve the right to edit for length, and to refuse publication of any submission or letter. Mail all submissions to: Linda Kerr, **THE HAZEL NUT**, P.O. Box 186, Auburn, AL 36831-0186.

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Bubbles From the Cauldron

Book Reviews, Etc.

The Witches' Hammer, by Jane Stanton Hitchcock. 1994. Penguin Books, New York, NY. Hardcover, \$21.95.

"The Malleus Maleficarum was published in 1485, accompanied by a papal bull of Pope Innocent VIII, sanctifying it with supreme Church authority. It was the law of the land in both Catholic and Protestant Christendom for over two hundred years." (From The Witches' Hammer, pg. 1.)

The main character is Beatrice O'Connell, a divorcee, suffering from a lack of self-esteem in the beginning of the book and recovering from the effects of betrayal by her ex-husband in their past relationship. Through a series of events and encounters she emerges as a completely modern feminist. She also realizes the true meaning of the Malleus Maleficarum and that this thinking still exists today. This is a fictional mystery piece which I highly recommend. According to the author, "All women are witches!" I really enjoyed reading this book and could not put it down until I finished.

Reviewed by Stormy

Talk to Your Plants, by Jerry Baker. 1973. Pocket Books, New York, NY. Softcover, \$4.95.

When I first saw this book's title, I figured it was a new-agey type book on gardening; talking to your plants, helping them grow better, infusing them with good vibes, etc. Instead, I found a wonderful little book on plants, of all sorts. This book covers vegetable

gardening, growing fruit, nut and shade trees, what type of grass to plant in your yard, edible weeds, herbs, berries; in short, everything you could want to know about growing anything. A very practical, readable book for anybody who loves the outdoors.

Reviewed by Muirghoin



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Box 6091
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USA

Linda Kerr
THE HAZEL NUT
P.O. Box 186
Auburn, AL 36831-0186

Linda C. Kerr