



Gylden Magick

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May 2025

PRACTICAL MAGICK & UNIVERSAL ENERGY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Editor's notes

by Gylden Fellowship

Welcome to **GYLDEN MAGICK** – the spiritual magazine from [Gylden Fellowship](#) that spans both traditional and newer pagan beliefs and practice.

Dear readers of **GYLDEN MAGICK**,

It's **May** (the **Flower Moon**) – I've been reflecting on the beauty of nature with all the flowers and blossom at this time. Beltaine was the beginning of summer for the Saxons – a time when sheep were moved to the upland pastures until the Feast of Winter in October.

The hours of daylight have been growing steadily. The power of the sun increases each day as the nights get shorter, until we reach the solstice/ Alban Hefin in June. To that end, this edition has an emphasis on the elements – light, earth, air and water.

Dates for your diaries – not least **Thargelia** (ancient Greece) on 7 May. Held on the island of Delos, this festival celebrated Apollo and Artemis. Other key dates include the **Festival of St Brendan the Navigator** on 16 May, **The Hammer of Thor** on 19-20 May, **Sacred Well Days** across Europe on 26-28 May and **Oak Apple Day** on 29 May. Oak Apple Day commemorates the return of King Charles II from exile in 1660.

One of the correspondence crystals for May is jade. If you do happen to have a jade elephant, remember it's lucky to turn its head towards the door.

The altar colours for this period around **Beltaine** are green, white and yellow. But no ads – after all, we're like a pagan public library and all the information is free.

We continue with our regular series about celestial forecasts, world art, nature, witchcraft and magick; this time we consider natural healing and serenity. Our crystal expert, Charlie, turns her attention to pyrite. Also, we have two other pieces on science (food flavourings and life in the hadal zone) from Mark Sharpen. Spring is featured in our piece from SWT, empaths, Forest Schools and bone density in space.

Thank you for all your feedback and many blessings.

Gylden Fellowship admins

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Contents: May 2025

Crystals: pyrite by Charlie Foreverdark	Pages 3-5
World art: Keukenhof Tulip Festival collated by Gylden Fellowship	Pages 6-8
Science: flavourings by Mark Sharpen	Pages 9-10
Nature: Forest School UK by Emma Yates	Pages 11-12
Science: life in the hadal zone by Mark Sharpen	Page 13
Celestial forecasts: May by Joanna Bristow-Watkins	Pages 14-18
Science: bone density in space by Carly Cassella	Page 19
Nature: Spring pictures by Sussex Wildlife Trust	Pages 20-21
Spring customs by Erica Zann	Page 22
Doctrine of Signatures by Nic the Witch	Pages 23-24
Poetry: Shrine by Nicola Ison	Page 25
Health: empaths by Lucinvampire	Page 26
Magick: natural health and finding serenity by Nic the Witch	Pages 27-28
Nature: rhythmic cognition in mammals	Page 29
Gylden contact info	Page 30



Crystals: pyrite

By Charlie Foreverdark

Time to send greetings to another regular author to **GYLDEN MAGICK** – **Charlie Foreverdark**. Charlie is a noted blog writer and participant in many online crystal and gemstone events.

The glittering iron sulphide mineral pyrite (FeS_2) is known to most people by the synonym, *fool's gold*: something that promises great value, but is intrinsically worthless. In truth, however, far from being without worth, pyrite played a vital and pivotal part in human evolution. The role of pyrite in fire-lighting is a common feature of all ancient civilisations and led on to the development of modern chemical, pharmacological and armament industries.

The majority of people will have likely encountered the phrase, *fool's gold*, in one form or another. Whether in the Stone Roses song of the same name, used in the last scene of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, or in great literature such as Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, where the medieval caveat was used to express the notion that shiny and attractive things are not always precious. Shakespeare wrote: "All that glisters is not gold; often have you heard that told", and he was not the only person to express this idea in his writing. 12th century French theologian, Alain de Lille, penned the line: "Do not hold everything gold that shines like gold", and in 1380, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote: "Hit is not al gold, that glareth" in his poem, *The House of Fame*.

Led Zeppelin opened their song, *Stairway to Heaven*, with the lyric "There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold", but it's fair to say that the sentiments of Shakespeare, de Lille and Chaucer will serve you better when applied to the business of gold prospecting! Although lighter and more brittle than gold, the brassy colour and metallic lustre of pyrite caused inexperienced prospectors to mistake it for the rarer and more valuable gold, earning it the synonym of fool's gold.

Despite having been something of a disappointing find when compared with a nugget of pure gold, within the crystal lattice structure of pyrite, there is often actual gold to be found. The two minerals often form together, and some pyrite deposits even contain enough included gold to warrant targeted mining, but in the majority of cases, the gold content is much lower and averages just a few tenths of a percent.

Extracting any gold from the pyrite is an extremely difficult process which consists of grinding and heating the composite specimen and then treating it with sodium cyanide. But it is a worthwhile process. Scientists believe that around 24% of the gold on the market is refractory, (meaning that it has to be extracted from other minerals) and somewhere between 5% and 10% of the world's gold production actually derives from pyrite. So, uncovering fool's gold wasn't quite as dispiriting as you might have concluded from the historic accounts of disheartened prospectors.

Though they appear similar, pyrite and gold each have their own unique properties. Pyrite is brittle and will fracture, whereas gold is ductile and will bend. There are simple ways to differentiate as pyrite sits on Moh's scale at between 6 -6.5, and pure gold is much softer at 2.5. The scratch or streak tests are both applicable, assuming that you don't mind a destructive effect on the specimen that you are attempting to identify! X-ray fluorescence analysers can be used to definitively distinguish the two minerals from one another without causing any damage.

The name, *pyrite*, comes from the Greek word, *pyr*, meaning fire, because it emits a spark when struck against a harder material such as iron or flint. It may not be generally appreciated how important pyrite has been when it comes to providing the basics for our current civilisation.



Predating pivotal points of the development of humankind (such as sanitation, agriculture, and the wheel), the **discovery of fire** enabled immediate and drastic progression in our early evolution. Pyrite has been used to start fires since prehistoric times. Evidence of compact ignition kits have been found on early Homo Sapiens excavation sites throughout Eurasia. These portable kits comprised of a nodule of pyrite, something durable to strike it against and an inclusion of dried vegetation matter for tinder - and were typically carried in leather pouches like a prehistoric Zippo, if you will!

Prior to the application of pyrite, access to flame for early humans was limited to forest fires ignited by lightning, or a burning flare of natural gas venting from a fissure. These were non-portable sources of fire and difficult to harness effectively. The discovery of pyrite provided essential portability and aided in mankind's mastery of fire hundreds of thousands of years ago. Fire was an instrument of great change and development. Cooking plants and flesh rendered them safer to eat and easier to digest, so a wider range of nourishment became available. A warm fire extended the day, and enhanced safety and security by providing a light source in the dark nights. Fires kept early settlers from freezing in the winter, and gathering around the source of heat and light might arguably have contributed to the development of speech and language! So, fire was a pretty big deal, and pyrite was a pretty big part of that.

This particular property of pyrite also made it useful for early firearms, providing the ignition spark for the gunpowder; Wheel-lock guns, in which a spring-driven serrated wheel rotated against a piece of pyrite, were used before development of the flintlock, but this application is now obsolete.

Pyrite has also been used in jewellery dating back centuries before our time. Examples of pyrite jewellery such as polished pins, earrings and amulets from ancient Greek, Roman and Inca burial sites have been uncovered. It was also a popular decorative material in Victorian Britain. Pyrite is highly reflective so flat tablets were even polished and used as mirrors.

Pyrite is widely distributed worldwide, and forms under extremely varied conditions. It can be produced volcanically within molten rock (magma) or within hydrothermal solutions and can even form as stalactite growth. It occurs as an accessory mineral in igneous rocks and within vein deposits alongside quartz and sulphide minerals.

Myriads of microscopic pyrite crystals can be found in soils and sediments such as limestone, black shale, and coal. Pyrite which forms in organic-rich sediments, such as coal and shale is formed by bacteria and can replace organic materials such as plant debris or shells to create amazing pyritised fossils. As the decaying organic material consumes oxygen and releases sulphur, pyrite forms as a replacement mineral; creating exact replicas of the ancient sea creature or plant life. More than 90% of the pyrite on Earth is formed by this microbiological process.

Pyrite is composed of iron and sulphur; however, the mineral does not serve as an important source of either of these elements as there are easier and more lucrative options for obtaining them. Because of the availability of far better sources, pyrite is not generally used as an ore. In calcite and quartz veins, pyrite can oxidise to form iron oxides or hydroxides such as **limonite**. Such oxidised zones are called **gossans**, and appear as autumnal coloured rusty zones at the rock surface. Gossans can be good drilling targets for gold and other precious and base metals, as they are a good indicator that there will be other metallic mineralisation in the underlying rock.

Cuboidal crystals tend to be the most common visible formation of pyrite, with square prisms being more probable than perfect cubes. There are also balls of radiating pyrite crystals forming from a central axis, which are commonly found in limestone and chalk. Pyrite can even form as irregular pentagonal, dodecahedral, and octahedral crystals but these occur less frequently.

The most common occurrences of pyrite are as microscopic globular aggregates of individual pyrite spherules. These are known as **framboids**, because under the microscope they look like tiny raspberries. Pyrite framboids, with diameters of around 0.01mm, are invisible to the naked eye. However, improved microscopy in the early 20th century showed that each individual specimen can contain as many as one million tiny similarly sized and shaped pyrite crystals. The abundance and distribution of pyrite framboids is somewhat extraordinary. A reasonable estimate for the total number of framboids on the planet is around 10 billion times the number of sand grains in the world or about a million times the number of stars in the universe, with billions more being formed every second! They are found in rocks and sediments of all ages, but the oldest reported pyrite framboids were found in 2.9-billion-year-old sediments from South Africa.

When pyrite reacts with water and oxygen, it releases sulphuric acid, which can pollute groundwater and cause acid mine drainage, a serious environmental problem across the globe. However, this toxic substance is not without its uses - sulphuric acid has become one of the most important industrial chemicals, and more of it is used each year than any other manufactured chemical. Pyrite continues to be mined worldwide as a major source of sulphur, the basic constituent of sulphuric acid. Sulphuric acid is used in the chemical industry in the production of detergents, synthetic resins, dyes, pharmaceuticals, petroleum catalysts, insecticides, and antifreeze. It is also used in the manufacture of pigments such as paints, enamels, and printing ink. The list of applications is long and even includes the production of batteries, cellophane and explosives! For many years Spain was the largest producer of pyrite, but today Italy and China are the world's largest producers, followed by Russia and Peru.

Pyrite is already playing a significant role in frontier areas of science and technology, such as nanotechnology and energy conversion. Several studies are underway to evaluate iron pyrite for application in solar cells for renewable energy. Researchers are working to iron out several potential techniques and should issues with developing the full potential of iron pyrite be overcome, this mineral could prove an extremely valuable energy resource in the future.

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Keukenhof Tulip Festival 2025

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







Science: flavourings

By Mark Sharpen

In 2017, Starbucks released the Unicorn Frappuccino for four days only. This swirled, colour-changing concoction of purple and blue hues came on the heels of a wave of social-media food hype for all things linked to unicorns: cakes, drinks and bagels, all dyed improbable colours and often sprinkled with edible glitter. But what did this unicorn drink taste like? Reviewers were mixed on what it could be. Was it raspberry or cotton candy? There were many opinions, but baristas weighed in to note that the main flavour was actually mango, along with brightly coloured, tangy powder mixed together with white chocolate drizzle. Unicorn-flavoured drinks are still around, usually in various pink shades, with flavours like cotton candy or bubble gum.

Connecting concepts and flavours is both an art and a science. That's according to *John Heller*, a flavourist who works at Imbibe, a flavour chemistry and beverage development company based in Illinois. If you've never heard of the term, *flavourist*, that's not surprising to him. "I actually didn't know that the flavour industry really even existed until I started working in it," Heller says. With a degree in chemical engineering, he decided to go into the consumer products industry, unlike many of his classmates. "Most people went into the petroleum industry," he says. "I didn't want to end up on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico." There are only a few hundred certified flavourists, or flavour chemists, in the United States.

Becoming one is a gruelling process, requiring a seven-year apprenticeship on the job, under the supervision of another certified flavour chemist. Certification involves the ability to identify different chemicals based on smell and taste, knowledge of food regulations around the world and expertise with specialized equipment. According to Heller, "despite all that, it's a fun job".



"A flavour itself is a mixture of a bunch of different aroma chemicals, either natural or synthetically derived," says Heller, "whether the flavouring comes in a liquid or powdered form, depends on what the client wants to use it for. So we'll be able to make a liquid flavour for ready-to-drink sparkling water or Gatorade ... and then we'll also be able to provide powder flavours for baking mix, [powdered] lemonade, or stick packs". If you Google fantasy flavours, various cosmic and mythology-based candies and syrups will pop up. But in Heller's line of work, a fantasy flavour can mean something else

"Usually, when I hear the term, *fantasy flavour*, it's assigned to something that doesn't grow in nature," he says. "Strawberry is not a *fantasy flavour*, but birthday cake is. You have an idea of what a strawberry should or can't taste like. *Fantasy* is a bit different. You're not going to go pick a marshmallow off of a plant. You're not going to get a birthday cake growing in someone's garden. So it's left open to interpretation".

Even though some people might insist on a chocolate or carrot cake for their birthday treat, Heller describes how he might design a flavouring based on a standard birthday cake. Heller begins to list what he could include: sugary sweetness, caramel, creaminess from the frosting, vanilla, bubble gum, tutti-frutti and citrus. But, he adds, everything is contingent on what his client thinks the perfect birthday cake would taste like.

When it comes to flavours such as unicorn, it's common for the marketing side of it, such as colour, concept or a name, to come before a flavour profile is even discussed. Even when a client asks for a flavour based on an imaginary concept, the result is rooted in something real. For Heller, "the idea of dragon's blood has come up, where it's dragon fruit paired with a blood orange flavour profile. That was back when *Game of Thrones* was on the air."

Other flavour trends might include foods and drinks based on meteorological phenomena and astronomical objects. Unlike unicorns and mermaids, they're real, but they share much of the same mystery and magic. (It also helps that flavours such as starlight or rainbow cry out for bright colours and glitter, all the better for social media.)> Even these flavour concepts can be rooted in reality.

In 2024, the **Torani** brand of syrups released what they called their first fantasy flavour, *Galaxy*. Appropriately, the syrup is a deep cosmic purple, a colour that is common to pictures from the Hubble telescope. The flavour is a mixture of rum and raspberry, with a mineral finish, that can be added to coffee, tea, or lemonade.



Galaxy was Torani's 2024 Flavour of the Year.

Rum and raspberry are not random flavour picks. Instead, food scientist Mailyne Park took inspiration from a 2009 article in *The Guardian* about how scientists identified ethyl formate inside Sagittarius B2, a swirling cloud of dust and gas at the centre of our galaxy. Ethyl formate has two interesting properties: It gives raspberries their flavour, and it has a distinct rum-like scent. Thus, the Galaxy flavour was born created. In the end, creating fantastical flavourings is not a new thing in the world of food and drink, namely blue raspberry slushies and Superman ice cream. Today, the challenge for flavourists is how to use real-world ingredients to distil the magic of unicorns, the happiness of birthday cake or the beauty of the stars into something that can be bottled.

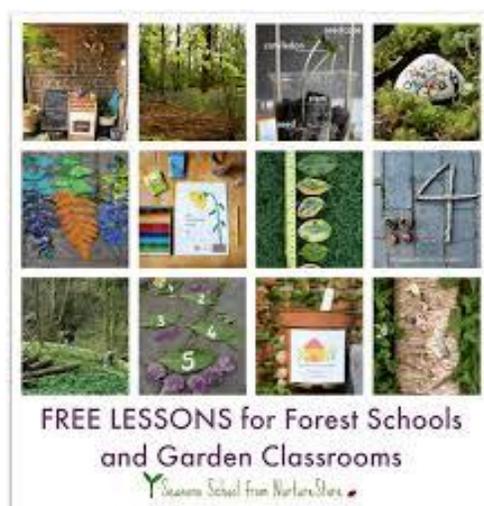
Nature: Forest School UK

By Emma Yates

Over the past 30 years or so, Forest School has experienced rapid growth across the UK and is inhabiting a seemingly neglected space within the UK education system, like the pioneering Downy Birch tree steadily colonising areas of vacant land. Central to the ethos of Forest School is the concept of the holistic development of the whole child. There is a growing body of literature promoting the claimed benefits of the Forest School approach to raised self-esteem, and improved confidence and communication skills. However, a clear sustainable and long-term plan for the implementation of Forest School into the UK education system has yet to be established. This piece describes recent discussions about the challenges facing Forest School in the UK.

There are recognised issues around the variance between the vision of the authentic Scandinavian outdoor education models and actual Forest School practice in the UK, as well as challenges including educational performativity, funding restrictions, land access limitations, cultural differences, attitudes to risk, climate and weather, educational commodification and tensions between purpose and practice. Despite these challenges, Forest School in the UK has continued to grow. However, the future of Forest School in the UK remains unclear. Through the fog of challenge, it has perhaps been difficult to see the wood for the trees. I suggest that many of the issues facing Forest School in the UK could be resolved or if not, improved by support at policy level. Therefore, the role of national and local policy remains the most significant factor majorly impacting the future opportunities for Forest School in the UK. It has been argued that for the future provision of outdoor education in the UK, including Forest School, influencing decisions at governmental level should be a priority.

As the outcomes related to the holistic development of the whole person are not easily measurable, the concept is barely represented in league tables and comparative school data in favour of education statistics that are linked to employability and contribute to competitive global economy data. Creating a culture that values the core tenets of Forest School: child-centred learning and taking risks in the outdoors and their claimed benefits to the development of the whole person, depends on policy makers recognising the concept of holistic development within the overall purpose of education.



Greater efforts are therefore needed to ensure a synergy between the purpose of education as both the transference of knowledge and the holistic development of the whole person. Unless governments ensure appropriate systems, services and support for holistic education, the embedding of Forest School officially into

the national curriculum long term will not be attained. Work could be done to address this need at both a national and at a collective international level. Ofsted's *Draft Education Inspection Framework* (2019) claims to shift the emphasis away from performance data to empower schools to put the needs of the child first.

The Framework announces a renewed emphasis on personal development that aims to ensure that the curriculum provides for learners broader development, enabling them to develop and discover their interests and talents. The framework also recognises the role of education in supporting young people to develop their character, including their resilience, confidence and independence.

Ofsted's Draft Education Inspection Framework potentially presents opportunities for Forest School, if the Forest School approach can be recognised at government level for its contributory benefits towards character education and developing a holistically informed curriculum. While this is promising for Forest School in the UK, there is a need for caution as there are often issues in the actual implementation of education policies. There is a risk that government can be commended for announcing popular policy reforms, but identifying actual improvements can often remain problematic.

With an ever-increasing accountability on the spending of taxpayers' money, policy makers will require robust justifications of Forest School if it is to be fully endorsed at government level. Any justification for investment for Forest School on a national scale would need to include some measurement of progress and attainment. There is, therefore, a definite need for robust justification of the benefits of the holistic development of individuals to a prosperous society. What is now needed is a national study to determine the impact of long-term Forest School programmes and examine more closely the relationship between holistic development and academic progress over time.

The question of whether the holistic benefits of Forest School could or should be measured and used in comparative school data and league tables is an intriguing one, which could be usefully explored in further research. How can we work together to address the pressures to measure the impact of Forest School in very crude ways, which ultimately miss some of the important developments? The prospect of Forest School outcomes being used in comparative school data could potentially encounter resistance from those who hold on to the notion that Forest School should be something quite separate from the international competitive stage, an alternative model that operates quite exclusively from the rest of the UK education system. But is it therefore possible that the most potent barrier to the future of Forest School in the UK, may be this element of the Forest School community itself?

An inflexible ambition to cling to the purest form of Forest School, a learning model that originated in a different country, with a different culture, history, geography and politics to the UK, and drive it into our system without accepting the necessary adaptations to the ideology, is surely short-sighted. I do believe that Forest School has the potential to make a great impact, but it cannot change the culture in which it operates altogether, rather Forest School must embrace it. In order for Forest School to have the most transformative power, to affect the most change, it must impact the most people possible. Forest School can only do this by being supported by power at government level and that will only happen if the Forest School agenda is in line with that of the government. There are tensions here, but it is time for parity with other government endorsed schools, whilst working for Forest Schools to continue to have a very different focus. It is time to look at how this can be achieved. Just as it takes a complex ecosystem and the right climate and conditions for a forest to grow, continued efforts are needed from the complex network of culture, politics, practitioner communication and community to enable Forest School in the UK to thrive.

Science: life in the hadal zone

By Mark Sharpen

The hadal zone, also known as the **hadopelagic zone**, represents the deepest region of the ocean, extending from 6000m to 11,000 metres (3.7 to 6.8 miles) below sea level, and is primarily found within oceanic trenches. Despite everything stacked against them, a variety of life thrives at ocean depths with bone-crushing pressure, low-oxygen, no light and very cold temperatures. A new study (published in the journal, *Cell*) describes the evolutionary history of 11 deep-sea species from environments stretching from the central Indian Ocean and the western Pacific Ocean and found that all species contained the convergent evolution of the *rtf1* gene, which improves transcription efficiency at higher pressures. Although other evolutionary changes also aid in these species' deep-sea survival, this universal adaptation shows that nature uses similar evolutionary solution when faced with overwhelming environmental challenges.

Life isn't easy in the deepest areas of the world's oceans. Stretching more than 6000m (19,700 feet) below the surface, this zone has pressures up to 1100 times stronger than Earth's atmosphere at sea level. Despite this extreme pressure (not to mention bone-chilling temperatures, low-oxygen levels and absolute darkness), life thrives in these ultra-deep trenches, fractures and vents. In this new study, scientists from Chinese Academy of Sciences, North-western Polytechnical University, and BGI-Qingdao (a gene research institute) explored deep-sea fish habitats from the central Indian Ocean and the western Pacific, including the deepest point on the planet's surface, the Mariana Trench, using a variety of research vessels and piloted submersibles. From these habitats, the researchers reconstructed the evolutionary history of six major animal groups across 11 species, which included snailfish, cusk-eels, and lizardfish. While some species came from the hadal zone, this study also included specimens found all the way up to 1218m (nearly 4000 feet), which is still deep sea by definition.

This process identified two main pathways for deep-sea fish evolution that largely supported a century-old hypothesis that attempted to answer how animals evolved to live in such regions. The first pathway, which the researchers call the **ancient survivors**, relates to species that have called these dark depths home for dozens or maybe even hundreds of millions of years. These organisms specifically navigated these pitch-dark waters *before* the end-Cretaceous mass extinction event some 66 million years ago. However, **the new fishes are species** that are recent arrivals (at least geologically speaking), having arrived in the hadal zone after the extinction of all land-based dinosaurs. Across these different animal groups, species, and pathways, the researchers noticed that all specimens contained a highly conserved mutation that impacted the *rtf1* gene if the fish lived below 3000m (nearly 10,000 feet). They found that this gene affects transcription efficiency specifically in high pressure environments and is likely the genetic key for adapting to the crushing pressures found at these depths. This is an example of convergent evolution where separate species develop similar evolutionary changes despite not having a recent common ancestor.

The scientists also found that invertebrates were much more likely to survive in deeper ocean depths for two main reasons. "First, as top predators, vertebrates require specific ecological conditions, including sufficient prey populations," the authors write. "Second, vertebrates may face significant challenges from the high pressure and darkness of the deep sea, possibly due to the sensitivity of their complex central nervous systems". The authors note that while they've found convergent evolutionary explanations for the deep-sea survival of these species, it's likely that a variety of other genetic changes aid in these creatures' ability to survive the impossible. The team also detected traces of anthropogenic pollutants, including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and believe future studies should analyse how this pollution could impact these incredible animals already surviving against all odds.

Celestial Forecasts: May

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins

May is a time when our Pagan roots push tender shoots through the veils of modern folklore, reminding us of our deep connection with nature's cycles. The month begins with **Beltane** on 1 May, also celebrated as **May Day**, with the UK Bank Holiday falling on the first Monday. Beltane remains a vibrant Pagan festival, still honoured in many parishes across the land, where age-old customs flourish in full bloom: May Poles entwined with colourful ribbons, maidens crowned with fragrant flower garlands, Morris dancers clattering in rhythm, whimsical hobby horses prancing and the ancient Green Man making his leafy appearance.

It is a celebration of fertility, abundance, and the return of the Sun's warmth—a threshold moment where spring matures into summer. The **Mayflower**, or **Hawthorn**, graces hedgerows with its ethereal blossoms, giving rise to the old saying, "ne'er cast a clout till May be out", a phrase I long believed referred to the end of the month, though some say it refers to the flowering of the hawthorn itself.

The name **May** stems from **Maia**, the Greek goddess of fertility and nurturing abundance. In Anglo-Saxon times, it was known as **Thrimilci**, meaning **three milkings**, a nod to the lushness of pasture that allowed cows to be milked thrice daily. This month brings not only the seasonal joys of our own **British Traditional Festivals** (notably 1st, 4th, 16th, and 29th May), but also a tapestry of sacred dates from other traditions: **Roman observances** (1st, 9th, and 15th), **Egyptian reverence** (14th), and **Romani/ French celebrations** (24th). We also honour **Mental Health Awareness Week** from 12-18 May, an invitation to tend to our inner garden with as much care as we do the outer one.

Celestially speaking, **skywatchers** will be treated to the **Aquariid Meteor Shower**, peaking on the night of **5th/6th May**—a perfect time to lie beneath the stars and tune in to cosmic whispers. Join us for our **Full Moon Online Guided Meditation on Saturday 12 May**, from **7.30pm to 9.30pm (UK time)**: a sacred space to harmonise with lunar energies and explore the soul's intuitive depths. And if you long to immerse yourself in nature, we invite you to our **Forest Bathing session on Saturday 19th May**, held at the tranquil **Harry Edwards Foundation**. A perfect way to realign with the Earth and soak up the season's healing energies.

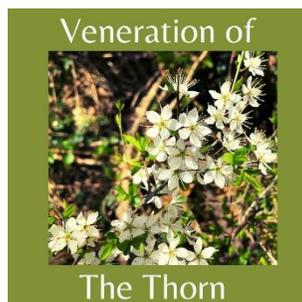


Thursday 1 May is May Day and Beltane - a Celtic word meaning fires of Bel (Bel was a Celtic deity). It is a fire festival that celebrates the coming of summer and the fertility of the coming year. Celtic festivals often tied in with the needs of the community. In springtime, at the beginning of the farming calendar, everybody would be hoping for a fruitful year for their fields and, hence, also their families. Beltane rituals would often include courting: for example, young men and women collecting blossoms in the woods and lighting fires in the evening. These rituals would often lead to matches and marriages, either immediately or in the coming summer or autumn.

Festivals occurred frequently on the early May Bank Holiday in the UK (the first Monday on/after 1 May), when many towns and villages offered May Day celebrations. The **Jack in the Green Festival** is held in Hastings, with four days of festivities around the May Day weekend, this year, Friday 2 May-Monday 5 May.

Since its revival in the 1980s, the festival has become synonymous with the town of Hastings and is now one of its largest events. Over the long weekend there is Morris dancing around the town, a traditional ceilidh and a sunrise ceremony to welcome in the dawn of summer on Monday 1 May. Bank holiday Monday is the highlight as the town turns green. A grand procession leads the giant foliage-covered Jack through the Old Town and up to the West Hill, where he is eventually slain and the spirit of summer is released! In Hastings, Jack in the Green is a hugely popular event: local roads and the A21 can get congested and car parking around the town is limited.

Thursday 1 May was also the annual Roman Festival of Bona Dea. In Roman mythology, Bona Dea (literally "the good goddess") was the goddess of fertility, healing, virginity, and women. She was the daughter of the god, Faunus, and was associated with supplying medicinal healing herbs in her temple garden. Bona Dea was traditionally invoked for freedom from slavery; many of her worshippers were freed slaves and plebeians and several were women seeking aid in sickness or for fertility. This festival was celebrated by women only!

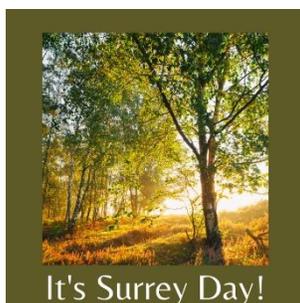


Sunday 4 May is the festival of the Veneration of the Thorn at which the Hawthorn is honoured. This is a festival of modern origin that may have been adapted from the night of Lunantisidhe on **16 May**, honouring the fairy spirits of Hawthorns. Holy bushes and trees marking sacred places and wells are acknowledged and new scraps of cloth are tied to their branches.

Monday 5/ Tuesday 6 May (specifically Sunday night / Monday morning) is the peak of the ETA Aquariid Meteor Shower, see rmg.org or EarthSky Website. Predominantly, this is a pre-dawn shower, namely one where the meteors may occur in the dark hour before dawn. The best display will rain down on the morning of the 6 May (between midnight on the 5 May and dawn on the 6 May) and with New Moon on 8 May, there will be minimal light pollution so visibility could be good, but these ETA Aquariids can appear any time between 24 April and 20 May.

Friday 9 May is the Roman Festival of Lemuria. This involved a ritual by the Master (or Mistress) of the House with nine black beans(!) to honour the Lemures – spirits of those who died unnatural or violent deaths. I wondered if it was connected to the ancient land of Lemuria, believed to have been situated in the Pacific area near Hawaii, and a possible belief by the Romans that the land may have been destroyed violently (legend says that, like Atlantis, a disaster such as volcanic eruption or flood caused its destruction).

Saturday 10 May is Surrey Day here in our locality, usually held on the first Saturday after the Bank Holiday May. The seventh annual Surrey Day takes place on Saturday 10 May, 2025, led by Visit Surrey and partners, BBC Radio Surrey, Surrey Life Magazine, Surrey Lieutenancy and Local Food Surrey. Surrey Day is a huge, inclusive initiative to which everyone is invited! Details on the Visit Surrey website.



Monday 12 May @ 17:55 (Willow Flower Micro Full Moon). Between Full Moon and the next New Moon is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body. See below for our monthly [**Full Moon Personal and Global Healing & Unity Consciousness Live Virtual Meditation**](#) or, if you prefer instructions to meditate alone, see [**Angela McGerr's Full Moon Meditation with Gabriel**](#), from Angela McGerr's book *A Harmony of Angels*; signed copies of which are available from the [**Harmony Shop**](#).

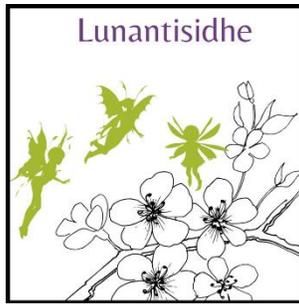
Monday 12 May, 7.30-9.30pm UK Time (GMT+1 which is also UT+1) is our [**Full Moon Unity Consciousness Meditation**](#). During this session, we connect with other like-minded people and together we work through a mindful chakra balancing process using colours and etheric crystals, with the aim that all participants will experience a degree of unity consciousness. Participants all receive a deeply healing experience. Cost to participate is £20 by online BACS payment (£1 admin fee added for PayPal, concessions to RSE/VFoA graduates), book at the [**Harmony Shop**](#). This activity serves as a good taster of Joanna's work in general and the virtual format of our Zoom based programme. And, most importantly, it's a step towards making a difference to the global predicament. To find out how working on your own spiritual consciousness can help humanity and the planet by raising the overall human consciousness levels, see Joanna's [**You Tube explanation**](#).



Monday 12-Sunday 18 May is Mental Health Awareness Week here in the UK, and the theme this year is **Community**. According to the website: being part of a safe, positive community is vital for our mental health and wellbeing. We thrive when we have strong connections with other people and supportive communities that remind us, we are not alone. Communities can provide a sense of belonging, safety, support in hard times and give us a sense purpose.

Wednesday 14 May is the Egyptian Celebration known as the Panegyric of Isis, when Aset (Isis) found Asar (Osiris) and duly celebrated. Offerings of wine, bread and milk are made and, traditionally, Auset is praised for her gifts. It is a happy time for celebrating quests in life. *Informative laminated posters of Isis*, by Jacqui Taliesin El Masry from *Alkhemi*, are available to purchase from the [**Harmony Shop**](#).

Thursday 15 May is the Ancient Roman Ceremony of Argei. At this festival, 27 human-shaped bundles of rushes, known as Argei, were carried in an anti-clockwise procession through the city; possibly in a ritual undertaken as a substitute for human sacrifice. Finally, the Vestal Virgins were thrown the Argei into the River Tiber from the Bridge of Sublicius.



Friday 16 May, honouring the fairy spirits of hawthorns. Lunantisidhe honours the fairy spirits of Hawthorns (whitethorns as opposed to the blackthorns venerated at Samhain). Holy bushes and trees marking sacred places and wells are acknowledged and new scraps of cloth are tied to their branches.

Saturday 17 May, 11am-2pm, Forest Bathing in the grounds of Harry Edward's Healing Sanctuary at a cost per person of £39.77. Immerse yourself in the healing elements of nature and connect deeply with all your senses. We will take you on a 2½ hour journey through the beautiful landscaped park, nestled in this little-known oasis of calm within Greater London. Through a selection of simple sensory activities, you will learn how to enhance your perceptions and slow down to focus on what could easily be missed. We end with a treelaxation, a deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience and which, despite the title forest bathing, does not involve any swimming!

Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response, and a stabilised cortisol cycle. Join us for this wonderfully nurturing session on the final day of Mental Health Awareness Week.

Wednesday 21 May, The Real Great Escape talk by Joanna at the Haslemere Festival. On the night of 24 March 1944, 76 airmen escaped out of the Prisoner of War camp Stalag Luft III. The event was immortalised by the 1963 Hollywood blockbuster, **The Great Escape**, which was partly fictional but a surprising number of astounding activities depicted in the film were based on fact. Of the 76 escapees, only three made it home and, of the remainder, 50 were murdered on Hitler's orders, in direct contravention of the Geneva Convention. Joanna's father, Alec Bristow, was a WWII Mosquito Pilot, imprisoned in the camp at the time, and Joanna offers a popular talk on his memoirs of the occasion.



Friday 23 May, 10am-5pm, Bramley Surrey, Weave with Nature: A Journey through the Wood Wide Web. Step into a day of nature-infused creativity and deep connection at this unique Nature, Creativity & Wellbeing Retreat, co-hosted by **Hedges & Hurdles** and **Harmony in Nature**. Begin with a tranquil **forest bathing** session, where you'll tune into the subtle magic of the Wood Wide Web — the hidden network that underpins the woodland ecosystem.

After a seasonal woodland picnic, you'll channel inspiration into a **willow weaving workshop**, crafting a meaningful creation under the guidance of experienced artisans. The day concludes with calming breathwork, **Treelaxation**, and a heartfelt gratitude circle. An ideal retreat for nature lovers and creatives alike. **Cost: £133**. Limited spaces — **book via Hedges & Hurdles**.

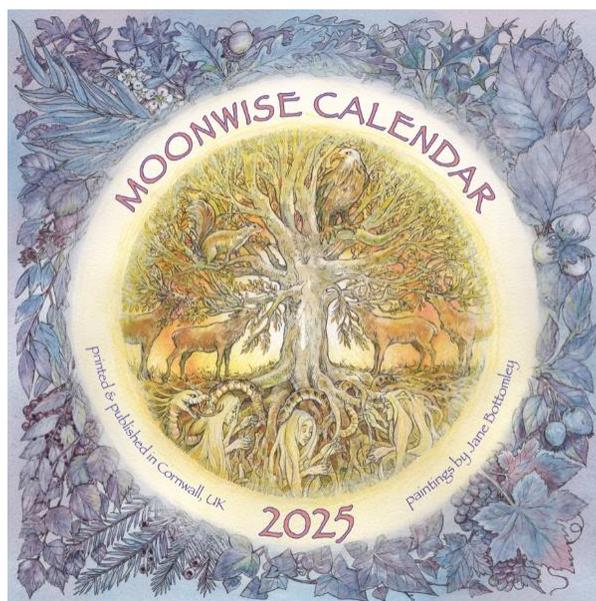
Friday 23 May is the Romani and Christian Festival of the Three Marys at Sainte-Maries-de-la-Mer, on the south coast of France. Here landed Mary Magdalene, Mary Jacob (the sister of Our Lady) and Mary Salome (mother of James and John). A local Chieftain, Sara the Kali, had a vision of their arrival and by spreading her cloak over the rough sea ensured their safe arrival.

Tuesday 27 May @ 04:42 (Monday night/Tuesday morning) is Hawthorn New Supermoon.

The **New Moon Abundance Ritual** should be carried out within 24 hours after the New Moon. It needs to be after the New Moon because the moon should be waxing (getting bigger again) to carry the manifestation energy. There are video instructions on my **Facebook Page** and/or **You Tube Page**. New Moon is a good time to work on your Vision Board for the rest of 2025.

Thursday 29 May is the English Folk Festival of Oak Apple Day, held in honour of oak trees after Charles II escaped from Cromwell's army by hiding in an oak tree. Oak leaves are worn until midday. In May 1660, Oak Apple Day or Royal Oak Day was declared as a formal public holiday, to be celebrated in England on 29 May to commemorate the restoration of the English Monarchy. Although it was formally abolished in 1869, until national lockdown, the day was still celebrated in some parts of the country and is alternatively known as Shick Shack Day, Oak and Nettle Day, Yak Bob Day or Arbour tree Day.

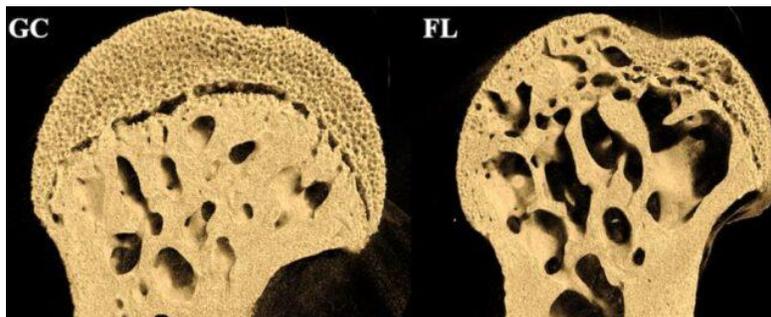
Acknowledgments



Celestial Forecast is compiled by Joanna Bristow-Watkins of Harmony Healing, the original is published at Joanna's **Monthly Celestial Forecasts**. It is created using many sources but notably the **Moonwise Calendar** and Lia Leendertz's various Almanacs. Whilst considerable effort is made to ensure accuracy, this is not an exact science and sources are sometimes contradictory!

Science: bone density in space

By Carly Cassella



Femoral heads of ground control (left) and astronaut mice (right). ([Cahill et al., PLOS ONE, 2025](#))

Floating about in microgravity might seem like a blissful reprieve for the human body's weight-bearing skeleton, but when astronauts spend months in space, their bone density takes a serious hit. A study of mice on board the International Space Station (ISS) gives NASA scientists a better clue as to why this significant and unresolved health risk exists. These results come from NASA's [longest-duration spaceflight rodent study](#) to date.

As it turns out, the bone losses may not have to do with space radiation, a lack of sunlight, or a similar, systemic factor. After mice spent 37 days in orbit, some parts of their skeletons showed more damage than others. Compared to ground control mice who were not shuttled off our planet, the hindlimb femurs of mice in space were riddled with large holes, especially at their ends where they join the hip and knee joint. By contrast, the lumbar part of mice spines remained remarkably intact.

"A specific focus of our study is the femur because of its major weight-bearing role in the mouse," said researchers from NASA and the Blue Marble Space Institute of Science, "in two-legged humans, the lumbar spine mostly carries the weight of the upper body, but in four-legged rodents, the horizontal structure does not serve the same weight-bearing role". This suggests that mammal bones bearing weight on Earth are the ones most impacted by microgravity in orbit. Perhaps it's like the concept in neuroscience that if weight-bearing bones aren't getting worked out like usual, they may begin to deteriorate. When mice on Earth were kept in cages that limit movement, they showed losses of density in weight-bearing bones, but to a smaller extent than microgravity mice. To account for the stress of the rocket launch, the ground control mice were also exposed to simulations of flight.

According to the research, "if space radiation in low Earth orbit or other systemic factors were the primary effectors of bone loss during spaceflight, we would expect systemic changes to the skeletal system. If the loss was caused by ionizing radiation, for instance, researchers would expect to see the dense outer bits of bone somewhat shielding the inner marrow cavity. But that doesn't appear to be the case. The deterioration occurs inside out in mice".

The femoral neck, for instance, has a substantial outer covering of bone, and yet it shows a significant loss of inner, spongy bone marrow when exposed to microgravity for 37 days. Radiation can trigger bone loss, but the dosage is much, much higher, equivalent to about 13 years of living on board the ISS. In less than half a year in low orbit, however, astronauts can experience decades' worth of bone loss, from which they may never fully recover. Each month, on average, human space travellers lose 1% or more of their bone density, about 10 times the rate of osteoporosis on Earth. This decline greatly increases the risk of fractures in long bones like the femur.

Nature: spring pictures

By Sussex Wildlife Trust



Gorse at Old Lodge, Ashdown Forest (c) Steve Brown



Pearl-bordered Fritillary (c) Emma Varley



Juvenile and adult robin (c) Barry Clough



Orange ladybird on bluebell by Joanna Kaczorowska

History: May queens and well-dressings

By Erica Zann

It's interesting to note how many of our traditions were invented during the Victorian age. There's lots of data on the Gylden website about maypoles in the [Gylden Briefings](#) section, but here, we're looking briefly at two other customs – the May Queen and well-dressings. And do not forget nettles! *"To this day the nettle is boiled in the Highlands and in Ireland by the country people in the spring-time. Till tea became the fashion, nettles were boiled in meal and made capital food."* (John Cameron, *Gaelic Names of Plants*, 1883).

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Folklore*, the tradition of crowning the May Queen comes from the Victorian era, based on the popularity of Tennyson's poem, *The May Queen*. It seems to have evolved from a practice of selecting a Lord and Lady or King and Queen for a festival, carnival or just for the day. Women and girls were the focus and the May Queen celebration, by the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, involved the coronation of a local girl or young woman who would preside over events with a group of ladies to support her. In villages with strong Roman Catholic histories, the focus honoured the Virgin Mary and she was designated as Queen of the May. If we look back to the May Day festivities in the town of Bridport in 1918, we find an account of the Crowning the May Queen and the Maypole Dance.

"On Thursday the girls of the National Schools had their annual festival of crowning the May Queen and dancing round the Maypole. There was a very good attendance of the general public, the ceremony taking place in the school-yard. Favoured with fine weather, the scene was a very picturesque one, and the proceedings were watched with the greatest interest and pleasure. The children, as is their custom, were dressed in white, and with their Queen (Vera Meech), who is elected by the votes of her schoolmates, they paraded the Rope Walks, St. Michael's Lane, and Gundry Lane, and returned to the playground. Here the Maypole was set up and the Queen was then enthroned. She recited a verse of Tennyson's May Queen, and then the Rector crowned her with a wreath of flowers. Some very pretty Maypole dances were then gone through, and some nicely rendered songs gave variety to the programme, while at the close a collection, which realized £4, was made to defray the cost of a new set of strings for the Maypole."

Onward to [well-dressings](#), which have ancient origins, but which took on new aspects in the Victorian era. The practice of honouring springs and wells originated in pre-Roman times. Some springs were found to have medicinal qualities and were revered for that too, namely Bath, Malvern or Buxton. Many places with pagan associations for water deities were later changed by Christians from the Lady of the Well to Our Lady's Well.

Some of the medicinal wells evolved into fashionable spa towns, but the age-old custom of giving gifts or coins to a well continues to this day. Well-dressing is a variation of this offering, perhaps tying ribbons around the well or decorating it with flowers and green branches. At present, most of the well-dressings are found in Derbyshire or Staffordshire, such as Endon, Barlow or Tissington.

Tissington is famous for its well-dressing and visitors come to watch the annual ceremony. This takes place on Ascension Day, when people gather to see the wells blessed. For centuries, five wells have been dressed in the village: Yew Tree Well, Hall Well, Hands Well, Coffin Well and Town Well (since 1982, a smaller Children's Well was added). The well-dressing involves erecting boards covered in clay, into which thousands of flower petals are pressed to create an elaborate tableau of some biblical or topographical scene. It is likely that well-dressing took place here in 1348, to give thanks for the village's escape from the Black Death, which the villagers attributed to the purity of its water. Tissington is considered to have been the first place to dress wells in the county and wells have been dressed there for over 650 years.

History & magick: Doctrine of Signatures

By Nic the Witch

The Doctrine of Signatures is an aspect of herbal medicine from the Middle Ages. It was based on the belief that plants that looked like a part of the body could cure diseases that would arise there. Folk healers in Christian and Islamic countries claimed that God or Allah deliberately made plants to resemble certain parts of the body and that the plants indicated the cures. Even in modern natural healing, the idea of the Doctrine of Signatures underpins many key homeopathic remedies.

To understand the concept of the Doctrine of Signatures, it is vital to be aware of a Swiss Renaissance philosopher, alchemist and physician called Aureolus Phillipus Theophrastus von Hohenheim or, more commonly, Paracelsus (1493-1541). Yet Paracelsus did not invent the idea – he introduced the theory that the divine Creator had made plants in such a way as to show their medicinal uses.

Paracelsus had drawn upon the work of earlier herbal doctors like the Roman, Galen of Pergamum (129-200 CE), and had observed nature to support his theory. For example, Paracelsus noticed how the qualities of plants often reflected their appearance:

- ✚ The seeds of skullcap resemble small skulls and are effective at curing headaches.
- ✚ The hollow stalk of garlic resembles the windpipe and is used for throat and bronchial problems.
- ✚ Willow grows in damp places and will heal rheumatic conditions or agues, caused by a build-up of fluid on the joints.
- ✚ Eyebright flowers look like bright blue eyes and are used to treat eye diseases.
- ✚ Lungwort has an oval, white spotted leaf that resembles that of a diseased lung – so, it was used for curing lung ailments.
- ✚ Cardamine flowers resemble teeth and the plant is known as tooth-wort – it's used to combat toothache.

After Paracelsus, this idea was re-examined and dubbed the Doctrine of Signatures, following the publication of a book in 1621 by the German mystic, Jakob Boehme, *The Signature of All Things.* Likewise, an English botanist, William Cole (1626-62), commented that "*the mercy of God maketh herbes for the use of men, and hath given them particular Signatures, whereby a man may read the use of them*".

Another interpretation of the Doctrine of Signatures was that plants grew where they were needed and that their behaviour could also guide us to their medicinal effects. A key example was the decision of Reverend Edward Stone to start taking willow bark to treat his agues in the 1750s. At first, the effect of Stone's allusion to the Doctrine made his doctors sceptical of his report of the bark's effects, but his work led eventually to the discovery of the drug, salicylic acid, used in aspirin.



Many shamanic practitioners will confirm that nature is able to communicate directly with the soul. When it comes to plants, a plant spirit shaman takes note of the Doctrine of Signatures. All nature tells us what plants may be used for, like a natural apothecary. Shamanic practitioners see the spiritual powers and qualities of plants in many ways:

- ✚ Colour of flowers, stems or roots.
- ✚ Perfumes or scents.
- ✚ Shapes of leaves.
- ✚ Forms of foliage.
- ✚ Soils in which they grow.
- ✚ Moods evoked.

Let's consider this list in a little more detail. The overall **colour** of a plants gives a clue to its use – reddish plants may be good for circulatory problems. Burdock is a prime example with red stems and red-veined leaves – it's used to fight anaemia, fatigue, etc. **Flower colour** corresponds to the chakras and chakra healing. The **leaf shape** is important too – if a leaf is very narrow, the effect is more targeted. Plantains are good examples here as the rib-leaved variety has a slightly different use to the broad-leaved plantain – one is better for yellow mucus colds while the other is better for wounds. I've used the rib-leaved variety with comfrey as a salve for sprains.

Apart from shamanic practitioners, the Doctrine of Signatures also underpins many **homeopathic** cures. Using very small doses of the various plants to combat certain ills and to strengthen the immune system, is a technique beloved of homeopaths. A bit like flu vaccines that include tiny parts of the flu virus to build immunity. Still, here are a few examples of plants that are used for homeopathic remedies, based upon the physical appearance of the plants.

- ✚ Chelidonium has a yellow sap that is good against jaundice.
- ✚ Sanguinaria and hypericum have red colouration and red sap and are used for bleeding.
- ✚ Digitalis (see below) has blood-coloured dots on the petals and is often used for blood dis-eases, haemorrhages or heart problems.
- ✚ Euphrasia has a black spot in its flower and is used for eye problems.
- ✚ St John's wort has oil glands in the leaves that are similar in appearance to pores in the skin. As such, the plant is used as an anti-biotic to heal wounds and also as an anti-depressant.



Poetry: *Shrine*

By Nicola Ison

Ancient yews, a spring and sarsen stones,
A meeting place for merry Pharisees,
Or a centre for latent magick.
Age-old, this place is the hub,
Attracting pilgrims old and new,
With feelings of awed reverence.
It's listed in all the tourist guides,
But very few sightseers come –
There are no ice cream vans or
Amusement arcades or even
A shop for postcards and souvenirs.
This is Nature in the raw –
An opportunity for reflective peace,
In a world of turgid soap-operas,
That lurches from one crisis to another.
Immune to such melodramas,
The shrine dreams on in partial sentience,
Remembering prayers from druids,
And tributes from modern pagans.
Some visitors come armed with cameras and,
All manner of photo-accessories,
Taking pictures from every angle.
Such intrusions are allowed, but ignore
The essential truth of the shrine –
True pilgrims need no photos or guided tours.
To gain a glimpse of other levels,
One needs to absorb the aura of the shrine,
Letting it seep into your spirit and,
Remaining there forever and beyond.
This is a place for those who can see,
For those who can perceive the history
Of ever-changing landscapes and life.
The shrine was here when men still
Walked on all fours and ran from thunder.
It will be here when men have vanished,
Leaving small traces of their existence.
Ageless and tranquil, the spirits of place,
Via powers of sun, water, air and earth,
Maintain unceasing vigilance at all times,
Throughout the Wheel of each year.

Health: empaths

By Lucinvampire©

You may be sitting there wondering or something may have drawn you to research into empathy, something may have happened to you that make you question yourself, your emotions or how you are feeling around others. If you are new to the path, you may just be curious though or you may be asking yourself, am I empathic and how can I find out if I am one? So, what's an empath? Simply put, it is a person who can be affected by the emotional state or the feelings of another person. How can you tell if you are an empath? There's no quick answer here, but there are a few indicators that can point to if you maybe empathic. Can I learn to be an empath? Sadly, not, it is one of those things you either are or you aren't. What are the signs that I am an empath? Here is a list of some things that can show if you are an empath:

- Knowing stuff without being told
- Knowing someone is lying to you
- Being overwhelmed by public places/ crowds
- Needing your own quiet time and space
- You can't watch violent or traumatic things on TV
- Get distracted easily if something doesn't interest you
- Love of nature and animals
- Being compassionate to those in emotional pain
- Being a good listener and people offload all their problems on you
- Always looking for answers
- Being a free spirit, hating rules and control
- Being a day dreamer
- Drawn to spiritual paths
- Having a creative side
- Feeling constantly tired or fatigued
- Having an addictive personality
- Getting symptoms of other people's ailments
- Digestive disorders/ lower back pains
- Emotional person can be prone to mood swings
- Prefers new things to antiques/second hand items.

If you've answered yes to all or most of the above points, what protection is needed?

- Create and hold a personal shield
- Daily cleansing routine
- Learn your own feelings and emotions so you can tell when you are being affected by another
- Take some quality you-time on a regular basis
- Meditate regularly and quieten your mind
- Spend time in nature daily, take some long deep breaths and balance yourself.

If you think or know you are an empath, there are times when you want to be more open, lower your shield/protection and open yourself to the people around you. This isn't always appropriate, so be cautious and careful. If you are new to being an empath, seek guidance on this from fellow spiritualists/pagans. It is sometimes best to seek the personal guidance from other empaths, talk to and listen to those on the pathways and you'll soon realise who is also like you: they will probably be quite happy to talk to you about the gift.

Magick: natural health and finding serenity

By Nic the Witch

Hi there, I can suggest some ways in which you can boost your immune system, to strengthen resistance against the dis-ease. The key **herbs** for strengthening natural immunity are:

- Echinacea
- Eucalyptus
- Elderberry.

Other useful herbs to incorporate in your diet are garlic, liquorice, sage, thyme, mullein and yarrow.

When it comes to healing from the inside, typical **snacks or dishes** that you might consider are shown below – I can provide recipes if you wish, but some might seem to be *yuk* (a technical term) from the start:

- a) Chrysanthemum and elderflower tea
- b) Mullein and marshmallow tea
- c) Rosehip and hibiscus tea
- d) Elderberry and elderflower cordial
- e) Blackberry and lime cordial
- f) Echinacea and thyme syrup
- g) Sweet violet and ginger syrup
- h) Mullein and aniseed syrup
- i) Nettle and sweet potato soup
- j) Lentil and turmeric soup.

It also occurred to me that you might appreciate a couple of hints on cutting down the stress or nervous exhaustion at this time. It's spring and there are plenty of **violets** around - just having a small bunch or pot of violets around is helpful, as the plant symbolises the softer and more vulnerable side of life. Using violets for magic makes you appreciate the understated beauty in life and suggest that you share these gifts with others.

Have you ever noticed how much anger is around nowadays? It seems that instant rage is everywhere on the roads, in car parks, in supermarket aisles and in all sorts of queues. The reason is that we're all under so much stress, much of it self-inflicted (eg not enough time), that anger is the only outlet. But it's not a good outlet, because anger hurts all around us and only contributes to our own dis-ease.

There is another spellcraft article that looks at spells to cope with common lifestyle issues, such as lack of money or debts. This article complements that one by covering ways to minimise rage, whether it comes from a computer peripheral that breaks down or no spaces in the town car park to inconsiderate drivers. Common spells or charms can work via crystals or herbs and I'll come to these later, but the first thing to consider is **daily practice**: crucial to witches, particularly those who practise the Craft every day of the year.

For those of us who start each day anxious to get to work on time or have a multitude of chores to do at home, the following tasks help to keep you grounded and in touch with the earth.

1. **To start each day:** 15 minutes to set aside for stretching or a few gentle exercises, thinking about your blessings and sending good wishes to friends and family, record any dreams in a diary, face east and welcome the chance for new opportunities. If possible, make a positive pledge about the day to come or recite a blessing to your own deities (a common one that I use is shown below).
2. **During the day:** keep reminding yourself of your positive pledge and try to achieve it, try and drink only water now and again as a detox and set aside 10-15 minutes for meditation.
3. **At the end of each day:** face the west and give thanks for what the day has brought you, list good things in a diary and do what you can do ensure a restful sleep. My suggestion here is to drink a soothing tea that has lavender or valerian in it and say a night-time charm (as shown below).

Nic's morning blessing

Brigid and Cernunnos, I greet you,
Help me to understand your earth.
Guide my feet as they tread your pathways,
And keep me safely out of harm's way.
Teach me to trust my spirit and my instincts
For I am a product of your creative force.
My life is just part of your creation and,
I ask you to not test me, but make my day a joy,
And speak to me through my intuition.
Let me see that my thoughts are not frivolous,
But are important parts of who I am — in your world.
As above, so below, so mote it be.

Nic's evening blessing

You will need a crystal of serenity, perhaps amethyst or blue lace agate

Stone of peaceful calming light,
I pass you all my dreams tonight,
Dissolve the nightmares – the rest can stay,
For me to sleep until next day.
As above, so below, so mote it be.

Nature: rhythmic cognition in mammals

By Gylden Fellowship

A sea lion named Ronan has been trained to bob her head in time to a metronome-like sound at Long Marine Laboratory at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Peter Cook, a graduate student at the lab whose work with Ronan started as a side project, said her favorite song appears to be Earth Wind and Fire's "Boogie Wonderland." And she keeps better rhythmic time than many humans.

<https://youtu.be/RRXgWafnCE?si=5lT2GOTNo6f6b2RL>

Ronan the sea lion can still keep a beat after all these years. She can groove to rock and electronica. But the 15-year-old California sea lion's talent shines most in bobbing to disco hits like Boogie Wonderland. "She just nails that one, swaying her head in time to the tempo changes", said Peter Cook, a behavioural neuroscientist at New College of Florida who has spent a decade studying Ronan's rhythmic abilities.

Not many animals show a clear ability to identify and move to a beat aside from humans, parrots and some primates. But then there's Ronan, a bright-eyed sea lion that has scientists rethinking the meaning of music. A former rescue sea lion, she burst to fame around a decade ago after scientists reported her musical skills. From age 3, she has been a resident at the University of California, Santa Cruz's Long Marine Laboratory, where researchers including Cook have tested and honed her ability to recognise rhythms.

Ronan joined a select group of animal movers and shakers, which also includes Snowball the famed dancing cockatoo -- that together upended the long-held idea that the ability to respond to music and recognise a beat was distinctly human.



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