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The Sap Rises by Becky Kimberley

I am an eclectic Green witch, Forest School, tutor and community artist, working under the name Cotswoldcre8.



WITCH Magazine

Dearest Witches,

Welcome to issue 41 and blessed Ostara! Spring Equinox is a time to emerge. Perhaps the seeds and intentions which we planted over the dark months of winter are showing the first signs of germination.

It's also a time to celebrate the wonder and abundance of nature, renewing our relationships with plant and tree allies by spending time with them. If you have a favourite tree, river or other outdoor spot, consider this a call to pay a visit.

This issue is dedicated to my mother Adele Bruce, who took her journey to the Otherworld very suddenly and unexpectedly on Saturday 16th of March 2024. She had bright purple hair and was the light in any room. I can only aspire to live as fully and vibrantly as she did.

Helen JR Bruce - Editor

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ISSN 2635-2176

Published by Crows Feet Press



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COVER ART - Zoe Oakley

I have always had a passion for being creative, using a colourful and defined approach for self-expression. I work in a variety of styles often incorporating otherworldly archetypes and the life force of the deva world into my work and honor the joy of manifesting the spirits of nature and the primordial roots of life.

<https://oakenspiritart.com/> www.facebook.com/Zoe.Oakley.Oakenspirit/

MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS



John Michael McLoughlin

John is an Irish-American writer and author of *Pagan Portals: The Irish Pagan Book of Rites*. Nourished and fascinated by the stories of his Irish and Scandinavian family since childhood, he is an avid researcher and devotee of traditional Irish, Norse, and Judaic spirituality and lore. www.collectiveinkbooks.com/moon-books/authors/john-mcloughlin



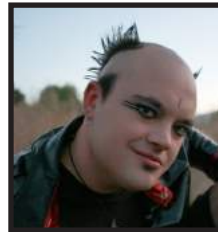
Cacey Blackburn

I'm Cacey, a 44 year old witch - tarot reader and Counsellor come Herbalist in Australia, originally from New Zealand. I trained as a tarot reader in my early 20s through a 9 month internship which included tarot, astrology and general witchcraft in the Alexandrian tradition through an English lady I met. I've been working as a professional reader and Counsellor since then. www.seahorseoracle.com/about



Faith Barnes

I have over 20 years experience as a practicing witch and I'm very passionate about sharing my knowledge and ideas on the craft. As with everything spiritual and part of the craft, everyone is always learning, I am too! <https://witchinasmall.wordpress.com/about/>
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Raven Digitalis

Originally trained in Georgian Witchcraft, Raven has been an earth-based practitioner since 1999, a Priest since 2003, a Freemason since 2012, and an empath all of his life. He holds a degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Montana, co-operated a nonprofit Pagan Temple for 16 years, and is also a professional Tarot reader, editor, card-carrying magician, and animal rights advocate. www.ravendigitalis.com www.instagram.com/ravendigitalis
www.facebook.com/ravendigitalis



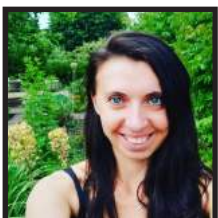
Ginny Brown

Ginny Forest Song is a shamanic healer, offering shamanic healing and soul Guidance Tarot reading in the sacred space of the Goddess Temple Warley Bristol, on the First Sunday of each month. soulguidancehealing.co.uk
ginny@soulguidancehealing.co.uk



Sarah- Jayne Williams

My name is Sarah-jayne, I'm a 43 year old working mum, wife, nana and witch. I've spent the last 22 years practicing witchcraft and tarot which has enabled me to help others. I grow my own herbs in my little witches garden which I use in my crafts and spells.
www.instagram.com/irismoonapothecary
www.tiktok.com/@irismoonapothecary



Oak Canessa-Pollard

Oak is a professional Storyteller who is passionate about all things Folklore. Living in Sussex, she loves nothing more than roaming the South Downs seeing signs of magic. Running her folkloric witch Instagram is her favourite pastime, plus a ritual or three.
Instagram: [folkloric.witch](https://www.instagram.com/folkloric.witch) www.facebook.com/solsticestorytellingcircle



Sarah Peacock

A Hedgewitch of over 30 years, Sarah is trained in Psycho-Therapeutic Shamanism and is currently a person-centred counsellor in training. She writes, gives talks and runs workshops on subjects ranging from recovering creativity, the transition to elderhood, to the craft of the Hedgewitch. Her blog can be found at: <https://thewitchsthicket.wordpress.com/about/>



Rachael Treymane

Kia ora, I am Rachael Treymane, a seasoned magical practitioner with 29 years of exploration and education. As the esteemed leader of the Coven of the Sacred Stars, I guide and nurture a community bound by the shared reverence for the magical arts that acknowledge our connection with “as above, so below”. [Facebook.com/sacredstarscoven](https://www.facebook.com/sacredstarscoven)



Scott Irvine

Scott Irvine is a Druid in a witches hat, a pagan who reveres Mother Earth and all life that resides on her. He sees the spiritual realm as real and as important as the material world. www.facebook.com/Author-Scott-Irvine



CJ the Kitchen Witch

Blossom & Bloom-Joyful Living is a women’s wellness page dedicated to reconnecting women to their joy and creativity and offers a range of Seasonal, Intentional and Bespoke Simmer Pots and Candles. www.facebook.com/people/Blossom-Bloom-Joyful-Living



Richard C Hick

Rich is a successful business consultant working throughout engineering and manufacturing, a father and a veteran endurance athlete. Spiritually, he is wholly diverse and acceptant of truth wherever it may come, an eternal student, eclectic witch, freemason, and hermetic, drawing from a rich web of traditions to form his daily practice. He lives with his wife in beautiful and ancient Derbyshire, with his dogs, cats and rabbits.



Wendy Witch

I’m a Tarot reader and Pagan Celebrant conducting Handfastings and Baby Naming Ceremonies. I live aboard a narrowboat and chug up and down the Grand Union Canal with my husband and a mad dog. I love reading, gardening (on the roof), making magic and eating cake. www.wendywitch.uk www.facebook.com/wendywaterwitch
www.instagram.com/wendy__witch



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Steffie de Vaan

Steffie de Vaan (she/her) is a Dutch intuitive witch. She loves cheap and easy witchcraft without cultural appropriation. Follow her on instagram as [muse_of_midnight](https://www.instagram.com/muse_of_midnight).



Fauna Raine

Fauna Raine is a professional reader & healer specializing in Tarot, Palmistry & Crystal Healing and offers private sittings, workshops and mentoring. Fauna has a private professional office in Telford, Shropshire and is a resident reader & holistic therapist at Mystique Psychic Centre in Shrewsbury. Fauna also attends many Pagan and Holistic festivals and events. You can find more of her work on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Faunaraine or contact her through email Faunaraine@gmail.com



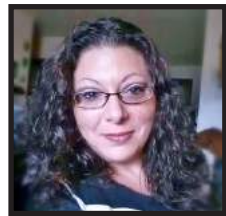
Titania Fae

Titania Fae is an experienced Psychic Medium and Spiritual Mentor who offers a variety of divination, holistic and spiritual services. As part of a husband and wife collaboration you can find out more about Titania and Paul's business known as 'The Gypsy and The Witch' at www.thegypsyaidthewitch.com or on their social media accounts such as Facebook, Insta, Tiktok and YouTube.



Danni Twigg

Hi I'm Danielle, a Psychic Medium and Shamanic Practitioner. I also follow witchcraft as I was born into a family of healers and mediums, I have connected with spirit since being a very young child and have learned how to practice safely whilst developing my gifts in mediumship circles. <https://goldenwolfwing.co.uk/>



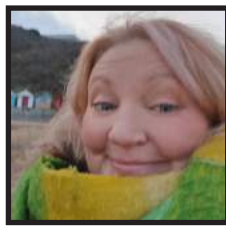
Christina Corsetti

Christina Corsetti grew up in Salem, Massachusetts. She is a Paranormal Investigator who does her evidence review and collects EVPs, an Author, a Solitary Witch, and a Tarot/Oracle Reader. Christina will always continue to bring life to the paranormal world with her experiences and dedication. She devotes her time to helping others and has a keen knack for sharing her articles with the world on Social Media. <https://www.horseflychroniclesworldofpsychics.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/HauntedSalemChris/>



Carmen Vass

Carmen Vass, the radiant force behind Pumpkin Witch and Sage, is the whimsical, witchy unicorn auntie you've always dreamed of. Her life, a vibrant tapestry woven from the lights and rich textures of Broadway & International tours, fuels her unique approach to Lightwork and healing. Carmen's magic comes not just from her spells, but from a life lived with an open heart and an adventurous spirit. Every healing session with her is tailored, drawing on the profound wisdom she's gathered from the world's corners. @pumpkin_witch_and_sage



Julie Harrison

Hello, my name is Julie. I grew up in the shadow of Pendle Hill and as a child I was always sure I could hear the witches' laughter carried on the breeze. I now live with my family in deepest Suffolk, one of my favourite places to be is along the windswept East Anglian coastline. I hope the witches followed me, they're always welcome and I make sure to keep a collection of hag stones ready for them, just in case!



JE Marriott

J.E. Marriott is a British author living in Canada with her husband, two demon cats and has a penchant for tea. She has been Pagan most of her life and attends a Druid ADF Grove. She writes paranormal mysteries, supernatural thrillers and magically enchanted tales for all. www.jemarriott.com/ www.instagram.com/jemarriott.author/ www.facebook.com/JEMarriottAuthor



Auset Gypsy

James Jacob Pierri studied Ayurvedic Medicine, Anatomy & Physiology and Herbalism, graduating from The Florida College of Natural Health & Holistic Sciences and also studied Aromatherapy at The AVEDA Institute NYC. James holds national certification as massage therapist, Yoga instructor and Usui Reiki practitioner He is the author of the internationally published AusetGypsy Tarot & Book Set. www.ausetgypsy.com



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RECONSTRUCTING IRISH PAGANISM

The original historic, ancestral spiritualities of many peoples have been shattered and lost. Much of this due to the relentless zeal of those who, so convicted of their religions' claims to be sole arbiters of truth, could tolerate no alternative. Other religious systems are atrophying today through the encroachment of postmodernism and its attendant spiritual apathy.

In reaction to this, many turn to atheism. Others find solace in the black-and-white dogmas of traditional Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and other mainstream faiths. Some, however, look further back to the great ancestral spiritualities: those faiths which grew up with humanity, whose sacred text is written unlettered on bark and unhewn stone. All peoples have had their own natural expression for touching the Divine, whether the ancient Norse, the Anishinaabe, the Yoruba, etc. I believe that by returning to these perennial forms of spirituality, by reconstructing those shattered fragments into a living faith and worldview for today, we can rediscover the direction and meaning so achingly lacking in many souls today. We can find our place in the world by retaking our place at the ancestral fire.

Let us consider one ancestral spirituality: that of the Irish, often referred to as Irish Paganism, also called Irish Reconstructionism, Traditional Irish Spirituality, Páganacht, or more broadly speaking, Celtic Paganism or Celtic Reconstructionism. What exactly is it? Who is it for, i.e. who can be an Irish Pagan? And why should we reconstruct it?

What is Irish Paganism?

Irish Paganism is the ancestral spirituality of the Irish people prior to the coming of Christianity, then sustained and developed as folkways and folk-religion often with only a veneer of Christianity during Catholic times, and now undergoing renewal and reconstruction with the current freedom to shed its Christian guise.

A flood of questions arises, with uncomfortable answers for those who want black and white answers—what do we even know of this religion? Compared to many modern faiths, not much. Was it uniform across Ireland? No. Was it uniform across history? No.

For those used to the cut and dry, formulated creeds, and hierarchical systems provided by the major denominational faiths of today, this is frustratingly unsatis-

factory. At first glance it would appear that reconstructing Irish Paganism is as fruitless as trying to put a broken window back together in the dark.

The situation is not so dire. Many assume that the old ways died abruptly with the coming of Christianity, as though Ireland had centuries of native wisdom and religious practice that suddenly imploded at the arrival of Patrick and, thereafter, every Irish household was on its knees praying their rosaries and attending Mass.

In reality, the ancestral ways never died. Distorted, muted, at times actively suppressed, but never dead. The names of the Irish Gods, their tribes, stories and attributes, were recorded by monks who, even amid the Christian fervor of the monastery, saw fit to recall the deeds of their ancestral deities and heroes. The common people may have gone with devoted regularity to Mass every Sunday, yet the ancient Celtic festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Bealtaine, and Lúnasa were still observed with heathen glee—these alongside a multitude of folkways, pagan customs, local festivals and otherworldly beings continued to be revered right up to the modern day. Indeed, it's a tragic irony that many of these observances endured into the beginning of the twentieth century, only to be lost—not to Christianity—but to the apathy of the modern age.

So what do we have of Irish Paganism? While we may not have the libraries of information and experiential accounts that a continuous tradition of unbroken practice and a large number of followers may provide, we do have a robust body of lived tradition in Irish folkways and beliefs, as well as the lore recorded by those monks who lived in times so much closer to the memory of the pagan age.

Who is Irish Paganism for?

The question becomes who can be an Irish Pagan? If this way of life is the cultural inheritance of the Irish people, is it only accessible to those of Irish ethnicity? Can it only be practiced on the island of Ireland? If the answer is no to these questions, then what makes it 'Irish' if it can be adopted by anyone?

Let's be clear: Irish Paganism is open to anyone. The reason this has to be so is not political. It's rational. The idea that the Gods—those unfathomable expressions of the Divine—would respond only to those of a certain DNA makeup or who carry a Republic of Ireland

passport is ridiculous. Any deity who needs to check our citizenship status at the entrance to the grove is not worthy of our time and worship. If they were more bound by the arbitrary definitions of government boundaries and ethnic groups than we are (we, who are able to travel across borders and form friendships and relationships across national and ethnic lines), then they would be weak and unwise beings indeed. Rest assured, the guiding forces of the universe are not so limited and pathetic.

So let no-one bar you from adopting Irish Paganism for yourself based on your background. The only thing such gate-keeping protects are the insecure egos of those who would wield it as a mask for nationalistic, racist and otherwise xenophobic ideologies. It might be said that people of an Irish ethnic or national background may come to Irish Paganism more readily, however this doesn't necessarily bear out. An Irish national who grew up amid the doctrines of Catholicism may find Irish Paganism to be extraordinarily foreign, as opposed to someone raised on the Indian subcontinent who grew up Hindu and for whom polytheism comes comfortably and naturally.

Irish Paganism is Irish because it is the cultural system for experiencing the Divine as expressed by the lived traditions of the Irish people, themselves a coming-together of different ethnicities and nationalities assembled after centuries of migration and invasion going back to the lore of the Book of Invasions and evidenced from genetics and the prehistoric archaeological record. Those who adopt Irish Paganism, who foster Irish traditions and who even choose to learn the Irish language and other Irish customs magnify the Irish culture through their love for it, just as other waves of people such as the Norse and Normans who, coming to Ireland to conquer, famously became 'more Irish than the Irish themselves.'

Why should we reconstruct Irish Paganism?

Many feel lost today. Our political institutions seem shattered and hopelessly corrupted. Society is frayed. Our days have become little moments loosely connected from one distraction to the next. Religion, which in former times provided existential meaning and purpose to it all, disappoints. The conventional, monolithic religions of previous generations often seem out-of-touch at best, corrupt and destructive at worst. Disenchanted with these, seekers turn to alternative forms of spirituality which, while at first promising the direct experience of the Divine Other so lacking in conventional faiths, often prove to be shallow waters—a disparate collection of techniques and traditions uprooted from the native soil of the religions and cultures that gave them birth. Saccharine

spirituality. It tastes sweet at first, but does little to nourish, burns off quickly, and in the long run, starves.

We crave a spirituality that will nourish without con trolling us; that has the gravity of ancestral wisdom without paralyzing us in the past; has genuine guidance tested and proven by practitioners throughout time without the suffocating strictures of outmoded, unscientific, brutally bigoted and backward worldviews.

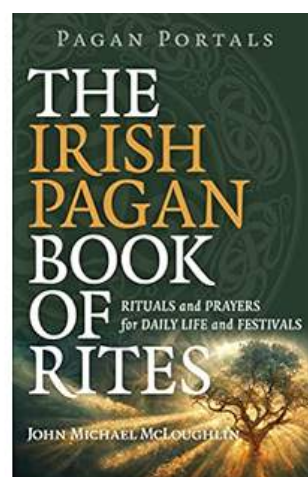
So where is this path? Where is the solution—the balm for our alienated, cynical souls?

It's in laying down roots. It's in rekindling and reconstructing our ancestral spiritualities. Rather than being imposed top-down, they have formed throughout the ages from the ground-up among the people: unlike revealed religions such as Christianity and Islam which were dictated by a man and then imposed by way of dogmas and doctrinal hierarchies upon people (often by force), ancestral spiritualities formed slowly and naturally since prehistory through people's collective experience of the Divine, of the natural world and their relationships with each other.

For this reason, ancestral spiritualities such as Irish Paganism are uniquely suited to fulfilling the soul's longing for purpose and connection to the Divine, for they are born out of the long millenia of the human experience itself and its ongoing play with the numinous other we encounter in the Gods and the living world around us.

As I stated in *The Irish Pagan Book of Rites*, "fundamentally, by realigning ourselves with the Gods, with our Ancestors, with the good spirits of the Land, we place ourselves in right order with the worlds, and assert with our words and actions the power to make holy again what has otherwise become corrupted by the forgetfulness of the unbalanced world."

John Michael McLoughlin



Meditations with Fly Agaric



Fly agaric is a powerful ally for the modern-day witch, and has been used as a medicine, spirit ally and healer since the beginnings of shamanism in Siberia.

This most famous fungi presents its glorious red cap, speckled with white dots and a delicate white veil, screaming both a warning and a curiosity with its vibrant colouring. Steeped in eons of mythology, Scott Cunningham includes it in his herbal writings as an ingredient in traditional witches flying ointment. The connections it holds to the fae realms, the forest floor, pine, oak and cedar trees to name a few - invite us to connect in deeply to the core of the earth mother, as the mushroom itself does through its intelligent mycorrhizal underground webs. The more deeply we are grounded, the higher we can fly.

Fly agaric has complex phytochemistry and is not a plant ally for beginners, thus working and connecting with this spirit through meditation is a safe and incredibly powerful way to access its healing and teachings. Plant spirits will readily attend your circles, if they are asked respectfully and cajoled with lovingly prepared gifts and offerings made in their honour, thus showing that we understand the principle of sacred exchange of knowledge and energy that is being shared.

During my meditations with Fly agaric, the medicine that came through strongly was that this mushroom heals the heart. It is a gentle, calming and very loving spirit. For me, it is like communing with the heart of mother earth herself. The word Ama in Latin (*Amanita muscaria*) means love, and the presence I experience during meditation has been like a soft, warm hug.

Before commencing a meeting with Fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), I cast a circle as I would for any magickal work, to ensure I have a clear connection to the spirit ally I call forth. Gifts that I find especially relevant are pine needles and pine cones tied with red ribbons, good quality cacao, tobacco and cinnamon, but you may choose any gifts that feel right. Have a pen and paper close by as you may wish to write things down. A common occurrence in her presence is to feel sleepy and calm, this is normal. As fly agaric takes you deeply into your heart, you may sense any grief or other emotions that have been residing there unnoticed. It is incredibly valuable for you to see this, this is a powerful healing gift that she offers if insights of this nature are shown to you. I advise that you sit with whatever feelings or images are shown to you and allow them to simply be, this is all that is required to receive the energy and healings that are being gifted. Sit in quiet meditation and allow the process to naturally unfold, sitting or lying for at least half an hour is ideal.



During my encounters, my heart has overflowed with tears of love and gratitude for the earth and a feeling of home-coming, deep peace has surrounded me. I have also received insights into the motives of certain coping mechanisms and behaviours that have been with me since early childhood, and since becoming aware of them, I have been able to let go and live more fully in my heart, and with trust in my path and a deeper feeling of safety. I recommend composing a letter to Fly agaric asking for help or healing on any issues you need to work through, and being very clear about what you would like to learn. It is also intelligent to ask in your letter for the spirit to show you what you need to know for your spiritual growth, healing and highest good. A phrase I like to use is 'dear Fly agaric, show me what I need to know'.

This stunning and powerful mushroom is so steeped in tradition and healing potentials. Current research shows promise in treating Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, eyesight, muscle tension, sciatica, anxiety, insomnia and the list goes on. For those with a special interest I highly recommend reading further, as there is a wealth of published information about Fly agaric (A.M). Anyone wishing to take it internally or topically should consult a qualified herbalist with knowledge on how to properly prepare it for ingestion, contraindications and gaba agonists, as the results can be highly unpredictable and it should definitely not be played around with, or you may receive a sharp lesson you were not expecting. That is why meditation is such a great way to connect with this healing ally.

A starting place for further reading: 'Fly Agaric : A compendium of history, pharmacology and mythology', edited by K. Feeney, 'Plants of The Gods', By Schultez, Hofmann and Ratsch and 'The Immortality Key' by B. Muraresku. Happy flying.

Cacey Blackburn

Nurture, Love and Grow

Good deeds for good energy! Spread the love this sabbath by nurturing new life through food!

- Conjure up eggshell mix to feed your plants, vital nutrients to encourage growth
- Birdseed eggs! Hide for animals to find and eat in the woods
- Sow daisy seeds for pollinating insects to feast on. With the petals comes a tasty treat for earwigs. And rabbits, slugs and snails all devour the whole plant! Your not just feeding one but many lives. Do it in style by sowing them in a circle, spiral or even heart shape to use for spring witchy circles of healing love!

- Ladybird Sanctuary - Ladybugs are small but might! They can eat up to five thousand insects in their lifetime. They feed on destructive plant-eating pests, saving our crops and food. I think that deserves a little reward, sanctuary! They are also seen as good luck, when making the house chant:

"Good luck bringers

Come to stay

Have a treat and a play

Welcome to this happy day"

To create a place to nest, make a small wooden box with ladybird sized holes to enter and place it halfway up a tree. Or use a half piece of bamboo on wire to call home! Add that energy boost area with sweet treats like raisins, apple slices or honey water. Make a drinking station by including a cotton ball dipped in water or mist spray the house. And for Ostara, plant pollen rich flowers like fennel, dill and marigold plants to attract the ladybirds to their new home!

Faith Barnes



Grandmother Moon by Jesse Dickson

My work leans into the darker side of nature, storytelling, witchcraft and ancient legends. Creativity is air to me. It's how I breathe. Without the ability to create, I am simply a ghost. A silent, haunted wisp of breath ... voiceless and emotionless. www.thewolfandthewildthings.co.uk @The_wolf_and_the_wild_things



Stop & Smell the Roses: Spiritually Bonding With Nature

Stop and smell the roses! No, seriously. This time-honored phrase tells us to slow down to observe and experience the beauty of our reality. Life has a tendency to be busy, rushed, and altogether fast paced. While this approach works for some people — and is undoubtedly necessary at times to accomplish our goals and obligations — if we don't take time to slow our pace and lighten our load, the stresses of daily living can become quite momentous.

When we connect with Nature, we connect with ourselves. Witches strive to be in tune with Nature. This is displayed in our seasonal celebrations and in our usage of plants, stones, and other natural tools. Our reverence and admiration of the natural world inspires us to respect our interaction with it in numerous ways. Most of us recycle (all of us should), many of us choose a natural or organic diet, many of us give attention to our daily environmental impacts (and strive to lessen them), we choose our relationship with animals, and some of us fight tooth and nail to bring awareness to environmental issues in the world at large. Witches are “green” folk, ideally, and a reverence of Nature is core to our spirituality.

Magick is a natural part of existence; it operates through the spiraling and cycling dance of life, and is therefore connected to Nature. Even if one's occult leanings are more academic or ceremonial, a connection to the natural world is still forged in terms of relation to the planets and the cosmos. For the nature-based Witch, Wiccan, Pagan, Druid, or whatnot, the cycles of Nature are given special and direct attention. We must maintain this connection as much as possible. We must adapt our current paradigms to incorporate a deep awareness of, and relationship to, Mother Nature — wherever we may find ourselves at any given time.

One way to hone this connection is to stop and smell the roses. Slow down. Breathe. Enjoy the beauty of the natural world. Take a little time out of a busy day to strengthen that connection. It's dreadfully easy to get trapped in the cycle of constant rushed obligation. Because of our culture's frequent disconnection from Nature (not to mention its frequent disregard), it gives us all the more reason to reconnect personally. We must take the initiative to hone our connection to our environment.

What is the Great Outdoors like in your area? Are you surrounded by an abundance of trees, grasses, plants, fruits, and vegetation? Are you in an extremely urban environment that displays more manmade industrialism than naturalism? Or are you somewhere in between the two?

When we are immersed in an untouched or lightly-touched natural environment, our energy shifts, joining the rhythm of our surroundings. The essence of our

being becomes subtly touched by the surrounding forces. Even walking through a park on the way to work shifts our energy pattern momentarily, beckoning our spirits to revere Nature by our side. Humans are animals; we are very much a part of Nature. By taking time out of our day to reconnect our awareness to the environment, we imbue ourselves with a greater sense of Divine fulfillment.

The land is alive and the spirits animate every living thing. When surrounded by the natural world, the elements become more apparent. The Earth beneath our bodies holds us in sacred space... the Air we breathe keeps us connected to life, and is indeed the same air our venerated ancestors breathed... the Fire of the life-giving sun illuminates the world around us and makes us aware of our environment... the Water of the rivers, oceans, lakes, and streams mirrors the blood pulsing through our veins... Spirit, Akasha, and Quintessence permeate all. The elements can be easily bonded with and honored when we are immersed in their splendor.

The weather affects our mood. Everyone knows that! But do we know the extent of it? Personally, it's only been in recent years, having lived in both chilly Montana and tropical Hawaii, that I've come to understand how profoundly the weather affects mood. In my teenage years, I would notice the weather patterns around me but not think of them in an interspiritual context. Now, when I notice myself feeling somber when the skies are grey, or motivated when sunlight drenches the land, I realize that the weather is greatly influencing one's attitude, perceptions, and perspectives. Because of this, a unique magick is at one's fingertips during any given weather pattern. As our moods are altered, energy shifts, and certain vibrations become more accessible. Here are some suggestions for spiritually weathering the weather:



Sunny: Summon the purifying light of the sun to cast away mental and emotional debris. Perform calls to solar deities, meditating on the sun's role in the sustenance of all life on Earth. Call forth the Oak King and other archetypes of life, fertility, and vitality.

Snowy: Make prayers, calls, and offerings to Jack Frost: the archetypal Holly King of the bitter season. Lay in the snow, put energy into snowballs, and meditate on your deeper nature: snow draws one's energy into oneself and aids in purification.



Rainy: Like holy tears, utilize the releasing and unburdening power of rain. Surrender to the element of Water, dance in the raindrops, and let it wash away pain and difficulty in your life. Perform heavy workings with Water and its associated spirits. If rainfall evokes sorrowful energies within you, use the pouring rain to help purify these feelings, alchemizing them into emotional nourishment.

Foggy: Because fog represents mystery, utilize its eldritch energy to pierce "through the veil." This is particularly significant during heavy fog, when the point before us can barely be seen with the naked eye. This makes the deeper planes more accessible, and allows one's outdoor magickal work to be naturally shrouded.

Hailing: Hail can be seen as representing anger: ice falling from the sky. Allow the hail to invigorate you, charge you, and get your magickal juices flowing. Dance in the hail, allow it to sting your flesh; these are kisses and scourges. Contemplate how you have suffered in your life in order to learn.

Storming: Storms are pure, raw energy. The storm is a grand purging, and a palpable reminder of Nature's intensity. Utilize the storm to raise extreme energies of any type. Cast your spells with force, shout the sacred names, and merge your own energy with the glory of the storm.

Overcast: Grey days... they draw us inward and force us to be reflective. Use overcast days for highly personal, transformative magick. These are the ideal days to meditate, chant mantras, relax in the bathtub, or turn the pages

of an occult tome. This is also a great time to create art of any kind, and to offer prayers of gratitude.

When performing outdoor rituals, whether they are Sabbat/Esbat observances or are personalized spellcasting, transformative meditations, or theurgic operations, the time of day makes a difference. Consider the time of day and its alignment to your rite. Dawn is the time of new beginnings and rebirth, midday is the time of full light and solar glory, dusk is the time of releasing and banishing, and midnight is the time for secretive magick and lunar fullness. One's consciousness shifts at both dawn and dusk, which is one reason why both times of day are considered auspicious: they are the liminal 'tween times, and somewhat merge this world and the hidden realms.

It's also a worthwhile venture to explore not only the day's astrological alignments, but also the process of finding the day's planetary hours. Of course, there's always an app for those things nowadays!

Don't be afraid of Nature; get outside! Take a hike! Smear mud all over your body! Go for a swim in a lake, take up skydiving, or frolic beneath the rain's energizing sting! When we surrender to the natural cycles, we fill ourselves with their deepest essence; our spirits become fused to the energy around us. Nature helps us more deeply know ourselves. Safely push your limits, test your thresholds, and stop to smell the roses.

Raven Digitalis

The Witches Path

A Witches path is not a straight one, it is woven in all the challenges and gifts we inherit and gather along the way. It is often misunderstood and feared. When we step onto the Witches path, we may not know that it can be a solitary existence for some, you may not find your people or place to be accepted. When asked how I blend my practice of Witchcraft, Shamanism and priestess self into one it gave me a real opportunity to pause and think.

For as long as I can remember I have been connected to nature and with the power of the Divine, knowing that we were part of something far greater but not understanding why everyone did not recognise this. Be that the Universe, Goddess, or spirit realm. I recognised very early on that I did not walk this earthly existence alone despite not yet having” my people”.

I learned and practiced alone for many years, in the arts of divination in many forms, palmistry, tea leaf reading, candle magic, oracle cards, Tarot and Astrology from as young as 12. I wanted to soak up all the knowledge of everything that was around me, guiding me, and yet it came so easily I knew that I was merely tapping into old wisdom, the wisdom we all hold.

Eventually I found my local Goddess temple and synchronically, found my people. This was right on my doorstep, hidden in plain sight. Knowing I could speak freely about my practice, my beliefs allowed me to shed the witch wound, step into my power and embrace who I am. more importantly I had others I could share this with, so I was no longer a solitary Witch.

Things eventually gained momentum, I became a Shamanic practitioner, embracing the seer and healer within and a walker between the realms. My connection to the land and plants deepened as did my union with my allies. It was during a journey to the energy of plants that my connection to Cerridwen came, Goddess of death and rebirth, wise-woman, Divinator and soul midwife. One I knew would transform my life and practice.

I understand that these practices far outdate my earthly experience in this lifetime or the last few in fact. Shamanism has been part of many cultures and lineages throughout time, the Shaman “those who can see in the dark” sight beyond sight, wise counsel, and prophet. Similarly to the wise woman, witch in the communities, communing with her familiar, using all that nature has to offer to heal and manifest. Also the priestess was a vessel for the Goddess to bring about healing, wisdom, and connection to all.

I continue to understand that these parts of me are all integral, are all magical, are all necessary for me. They all utilise the power of the elements, they all embrace the connection we have with animals, power animals, familiars, totem animals of the Goddess. They embrace that everything is energy, and we are sacred beings, they acknowledge that there is a spirit in everything that should be worshiped. They all involve service to the planet, to our community and to ourselves, with an understanding of harm none and not interfering with cosmic order.

The answer to my question is that it does not matter which aspect you present yourself in, the energy you are working with and the intentions for your work are key regardless of naming that as Witch, Shaman or priestess. We are powerful beings, and we work with powerful energy around us and beyond. As we approach the spring equinox, I am gaining my sense of balance in alignment with nature and feeling blessed for the connections I have and continue to make as I take my practice out into the world. Blessings to you all.

Ginny Brown

Self Empowerment Spell

Ostara the spring equinox, the first day of spring. A time of powerful new beginnings and awakening of life. Where we plant seeds for the future and anticipate growth. At ostara we walk into a fresh new energy, one which can feel slightly daunting especially after the winter months. I composed a self empowerment spell to help me with the transition into spring. This simple spell helps us to open up into the beliefs of our inner wisdom and truly step into our power, ready for the new beginnings and opportunities that may come our way.

You will need:

- 1 white candle (any size will do)
- 3 drops of cinnamon essential oil
- 2 teaspoons of a carrier oil such as olive or almond oil
- A few sprigs of rosemary (or dried is fine)
- A sharp instrument to inscribe your candle
- A fireproof dish
- A small dish

Holding your candle in your most dominant hand take a few moments to focus on self empowerment and what that means to you, you could think about new opportunities , setting goals for the future or believing in yourself more.

Taking your sharp instrument inscribe words or sigils or even pictures into your candle that represent self empowerment.

In your small bowl add 2 teaspoons of your carrier oil then add 3 drops of cinnamon essential oil and mix gently clockwise, thinking again about your own self empowerment.

Anoint your candle with the oil blends that the oil covers the whole of the candle. Place your candle in a fireproof dish and sprinkle or place your rosemary around your candle in a circle.

Light your candle and say the following incantation:

“With this self empowerment candle white,
My visions and goals of my life take flight.
With flickering flame, strong and tall,
I believe in myself for once and all.
My visions and dreams are felt from the heart,
My journey is beginning now,
I trust my new start.
I ask of thee goddess to guide me in truth,
Of my knowledge and power that I’ve gleaned from my youth.
Candle white, vandle bright,
Away with my spell in the air tonight.
And it harm none,
There it is done. “

Allow your gaze to wander into the flame, when the time feels right for you extinguish the candle and place the rosemary into a bowl to place on your altar. You can add a spring to a bath when you need a little boost of power.

Sarah-Jayne Williams

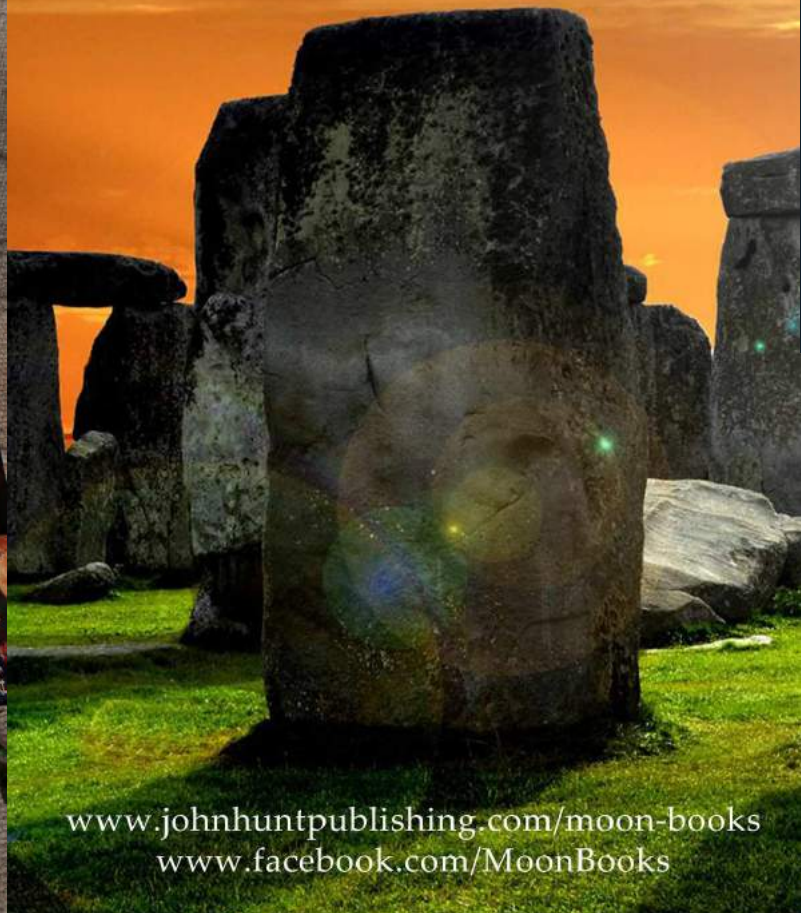
SCOTT IRVINE a druid in a witches hat



Philosopher, photographer & earth worker

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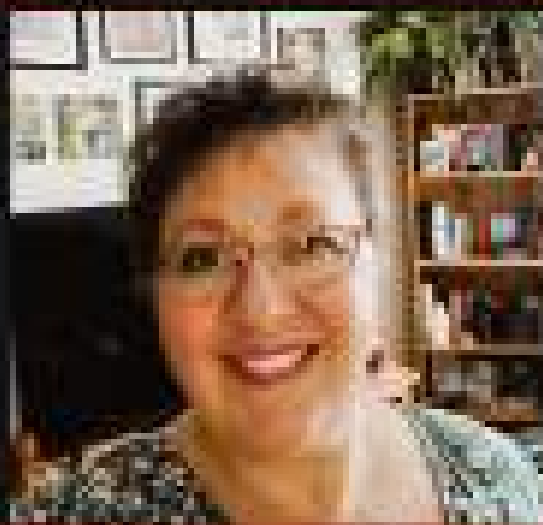
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A DOSE OF FOLKLORE

WITH OAK CANESSA-POLLARD



BANISHING BOILS AND SOOTHING SWELLING

It may seem to many of us that using parts of dead people in magic is the stuff of dark myth, only to be found in the shadows of Knockturn Alley in the form of the Hand of Glory: “Insert a candle and it gives light only to the holder! Best friend of thieves and plunderers!”. This lore has been found across Europe and, perhaps unsurprisingly, is founded on the not too distant past.

Before the mandating of literacy and long before digital technology, people found their entertainment in a good hanging, and if the victim was a person of particular notoriety, even better. Those of heinous crimes such as smuggling and highway robbery were made an example of by placing the cadaver in chains, or a gibbet. The encased body was raised up somewhere public, usually close to the site of their crime, to deter anyone following in their footsteps. This practise was only outlawed in 1832, so folk had many centuries to develop a use for such a readily available corpse.

It was considered obvious to many, that due to the death by constriction of the throat and neck, the touch of a hanged man’s finger to the neck of a goitre (swollen thyroid) sufferer would reduce the swelling, as the evil would flow into the corpse to try and remedy the tightness of cursed neck. Boils were also widely thought to be cured by the touch of a hanged man for the same reason.

This cure became so well known and prescriptive, that spectators would form a queue at executions, and hangmen would charge a penny to pass the dead hand over the neck or boil. Interestingly, this became such a lucrative business, that occasionally hands would go missing from gibbeted criminals, and reappear for a price at a local person’s house.

The wood of the frame from which the body was gibbeted was said to have its own magic, and wedges were often taken from the post, and kept in a pocket to ward off toothache, as dead teeth never rotted so the frame must be imbued with such power. The very fact that the men were dead, therefore unable to father children, also sparked a tradition of young married women holding their hand for a minimum of two minutes. This was strongly believed to prevent them becoming pregnant for the next two years, and was a practice eagerly adopted in poverty stricken large families where every mouth was a struggle.

These notions of post-mortem powers and magic were prevalent across all parts of the UK, and throughout the centuries, from the time of Boudica to written recordings in Sussex in the 1840s. Despite modern disgust at such behaviours and disrespect for the dead, people did what they needed to do, and it worked well enough that these actions were performed thousands of times over. Who are we to say they wouldn’t work now?

Oak Canessa-Pollard

Rest, reflection and action:

How to grow your practice as a witch

As a point of balance between Imbolc and Beltane, the Spring Equinox is an edge on which the movement of the year's energy hangs briefly, no longer incubated within but not yet fully realised.

The hermetic concept 'As above, so below' teaches us that each of us is a microcosm of those bigger energies at play in the macrocosm of the universe, the four elemental directions of the compass, all that is above and all that is below.

In the same fashion, our growth as beings is connected to and no different from the cycle of growth that is all around us. In the west we are taught that growth is linear and progressive. But that's an illusion created by an out of balance world. Nothing grows without rest and nothing grows forever. The dark half of the year is as important as the light half. The same can be said for us. Looking to nature we see dark and light, rest and growth, death and life, spirals and cycles. There are spirals in the DNA double helix, sunflowers, weather patterns, galaxies, mollusc shells, ferns and algae. Spiral growth is energy efficient, nature shows us.

Caesar claimed that the Celts began both their days and years with the dark resting phase. The Villards d'Héria and Coligny 'calendars' worked on the lunar cycle. According to the Coligny 'calendar' Samhain marked the start of the new year. It was a time, the archaeological record shows us, that was marked by a flurry of ritual activity and a time when the realm of the dead was closest to the living. It was a time to mark the importance of darkness, death and the ancestors. Some Witches choose to begin their new year at Samhain too, a time when they can withdraw, rest and consult the ancestors about the work to be done and dream their new year into being.

Perhaps, the ancients recognised that successful growth needs a time of rest and recovery and knew that there cannot be growth without death or release of the old. Restoration ecology recognises the importance of rest and withdrawal. Studies have shown that, in many cases, so-called active restoration is no more helpful than leaving an ecosystem alone to repair itself. Many creatures hibernate in winter. Trees enter dormancy. Without this period of rest and recovery nothing would thrive. As a Witch, I know that this retreating aspect of the spiral of

the year, where we go within and where we release what no longer serves is of equal importance to the growth aspect. I believe that this is the same for our spiritual growth throughout our life.

As a Witch of over 30 years, I have at times found myself frustrated with my growth. There are times where despite reading the books, doing the rituals and really wanting growth, my development has felt stuck. I have felt frustrated and have sometimes given up. However, I've learned that it's better to hang in there and recognise it for what it is, an important phase in growth. The tarot card, the hanged man, teaches us that by pausing, letting go and sacrificing doing for being, we gain wisdom. If we embrace the times of rest we will grow all the stronger. We are not only our physical bodies and our minds. There are hidden, deeper aspects of ourselves that develop even as we think that there is nothing going on. If we are to truly grow as Witches then we need to understand that there are parts of our growth that can't be tackled head on with our mind, ego or will. Sometimes you can only learn by resting and withdrawing.



So, instead of approaching your growth as a Witch from the Western perspective of growth as linear and exponential, why not try exploring it from a more natural spiraling and cyclic perspective and give equal weight to the dark and the light, to rest and growth?

Some suggestions:

Work with the cycle of the moon to experience its rhythmic flow within the broader rhythm of the year. Like the Celts, begin with the dark. The dark moon is a time for closure, for rest and healing. It's a time for dreaming and intuiting. What issues are being highlighted in your life? What shadows need integrating or alchemising?

The new moon is a time for creating intentions for the lunar month, for visualising. What are you going to work on creating and manifesting and putting into motion during the waxing moon? Write down your intentions and put them on your altar. Meditate upon them. Take action to support them, whether physically, emotionally or spiritually.

The full moon highlights what needs releasing in the waning phase to support further growth. What has been difficult about this moon? What do you feel you need to release? What no longer serves you? Release through ritual, through journaling and through meditation or chakra work.

The dark phase of the year could be aligned with the solar year from Autumn Equinox through to just before Spring Equinox. Reflect on your growth over the light phase of the year. What has worked? What needs revisiting? What have been your main lessons? Get out of the way of your mind and ego to explore. Meditate, try divination tools like tarot or runes or try 'crossing the hedge' and shamanic journeying to the upper or lower worlds to get insight to prepare for the work of the next light phase.

The light phase could be aligned with the solar year from Spring Equinox through to just before Autumn Equinox. Use the lessons of the dark phase to take action. Read, join workshops, start a coven or study group to share skills and knowledge. Be creative: write, sing or play an instrument, paint, garden, sculpt. Take a Witch's pilgrimage. Explore a new wild place and see what it has to teach you.



Hilary Davies Fabric Artist

I spent many years as a greetings card illustrator, an Arts worker with the homeless and with life-limited adults and twenty years as a Community Choir Leader. In March 2020, lockdown necessitated another change of focus and I re-discovered my love of machine sewing. I discovered Free-motion machine embroidery and quilting and soon found that I was able to combine it with my skills as an artist, my love of colour and of the natural world, to produce quilted fabric collages.

Fabric collage, for me, is like painting with fabric, building up colours and forms using lots of tiny fabric pieces lightly glued to a base material. It is then 'thread painted' to add colour and definition and quilted to create texture and a three-dimensional effect."

www.hilarydavies-fabricartist.co.uk

Facebook: Hilary Davies Fabric Artist

Sarah Peacock

Sometimes I feel silly

Sometimes I feel silly doing Witchcraft...

You heard me right – me, a practitioner for 29 years! Someone who brings people together to learn and teach, someone who has been published, someone who has mentored others, someone who leads their own coven. I think it is important that we talk about this because I know that I am not alone in this and other peoples will be able to relate.

In the hushed moments of my solitary rituals, a familiar companion often visits—doubt. The flickering candlelight casts shadows that dance with my scepticism, and I can't help but wonder, “Do I look silly doing this?” The incantations, the gestures, the whispered conversations with the unseen—all of it can feel like an elaborate act in the theatre of the absurd. Most of the time I live for these moments, but other times, well, I just feel silly.

Yet as I stand within my sacred space, I've come to realize that there's a peculiar magic in the silliness. The laughter that bubbles up as I stumble over a spell or mispronounce an incantation is a reminder that, at its core, witchcraft isn't just about serious rituals and intense energies. It's about tapping into the childlike wonder that believes in the extraordinary, the whimsical, and the enchanting. Even if we are not aware of it witchcraft holds a space of empowerment for our inner child, the traumatised child who is desperate to reaffirm themselves in this world through the medium of magic.

The broomstick becomes a prop for a whimsical dance, and the cauldron transforms into a vessel for laughter. The spells I cast take on a playful hue, and the herbs and crystals, once regarded with utmost seriousness, now share a light-hearted camaraderie. The silliness, it seems, is a key ingredient in the cauldron of magic. In the moments of doubt, I've learned to shed the heavy cloak of self-judgment. The judgment that says I must perform every ritual with unwavering seriousness or risk the ridicule of my own inner critic. Instead, I embrace the vulnerability that comes with embracing the silly. After all, magic thrives in authenticity, and there's nothing more authentic than embracing the quirks and laughter that make me human.

Silliness, as it turns out, is a sacred offering. It's an acknowledgment that magic doesn't require a stoic demeanour or a rigid adherence to tradition. It flourishes in the soil of joy, spontaneity, and a willingness to not take oneself too seriously. In the midst of the dance, the laughter, and the seemingly absurd gestures, I discover a deeper connection to the mystical forces that weave through the tapestry of existence.

So, as I stand before my altar, adorned in robes that may seem too theatrical and holding a wand that's more play than precision, I embrace the silliness. For in the dance of the silly witch, there is an ancient wisdom—a reminder that magic, at its heart, is a celebration of the extraordinary within the ordinary, the mystical within the mundane. And in this recognition, I find a profound and delightful magic that transcends the boundaries of self-judgment. After all, the greatest spell one can cast is the spell of self-acceptance, and sometimes, it's okay to let that spell be sprinkled with a dash of silliness.



Rachael Treymane

Spring Balance

Spring Equinox is about romance and love. Warmer temperatures and longer days are here and blooms are beginning to poke through the ground as the Earth's vibration increases, feeding the land with the fertile power of the Goddess. The earliest recorded spring fertility Goddess is the Sumerian Inanna, the original Queen of Heaven and the first Goddess of Love. She was married to the original dying and resurrected God, known as the 'Shepherd', Dumuzi, roughly translates as the 'True Son of God'.

After being dragged away by demons to the underworld (see the Yule edition of *Witch*, issue 39), Dumuzi returns to the surface around this time as the creative fire of the serpent to be reunited with his beloved Inanna.

Spring Equinox is the midpoint between the end of winter at Imbolc and the beginning of summer at Beltain. It is also the midpoint between the winter and summer extremes of the solstices when day and night are equal length of twelve hours each. Light is in ascendancy, the temperatures are warming and nature is springing into life. The Spring Equinox is only one of two moments of the year when light and dark are balanced in harmony. It is a small reminder how important balance is to our lives, our own wellbeing and peace of mind like the balance of labour and rest, of work and home life and the balance of mind, body and spirit. To find any sort of balance in an ever-changing world, a journey needs to be taken, not only in the physical plane but also the spiritual realm.

Our reality relies on opposing forces interacting with each other, dualities emanating from a single source we understand as the Goddess, creating change, allowing life to transform and evolve. The forces work together in order to maintain the balance of life and death, light and dark etc. generating change in our physical reality, manifesting events that play out throughout our lifetime.

Many of us spend much of our time working to have a roof over our heads, food and drink in our bellies and clothes to keep us protected from the elements, the essentials of life. It is vital to be able to escape from the mundane world of taxes and laws, of politics and work and journey to a sacred space in nature, both physically and spiritually to wind down and relax, to meditate and release any negative energy to recharge the spirit. There is a need to balance our material outer world reality with our inner spiritual world of the soul to bring harmony to both heart and mind. Our connection with harmony can be found in nature, the realm of the Earth spirits and wildlife.

I am blessed living in Dorset with the many Bronze and Iron Age hillforts and burial mounds and Neolithic stone circles and dolmen scattered across the landscape to visit. I love these places for their isolation from the modern world where I can just sit and be, listen to the birds and meditate. After a visit to any ancient site or forest, the countryside, a river, a hill, anywhere away from civilisation, I always come away feeling refreshed and my energy recharged by the power of nature. All it takes is a little time and a desire for adventure.

Our early ancestors understood the world as being under the guidance of the Great Mother Goddess who oversaw everything. She was the unity from which the duality of opposing forces sprang. With the arrival of civilisation, the Great Mother became separated from the human mind allowing the opposing forces to take control of our thoughts and emotions creating disharmony and dis-ease. Without the calming influence of the Mother, the polarities were at constant conflict with each other creating an imbalance in the body and soul. Light fought with dark, the above fought with below, and the visible fought with the hidden. Every event in our lives is a result of the battle between these two forces we generally describe as positive and negative energy, good and evil or angel and demons. The two forces are never static and are constantly changing into something new, transforming both our inner spirit and outer experience.

It is not just a simple case of seeking the light and ignoring the dark. When the negative aspects of our being are repressed, the dark side transforms human nature towards cruelty, corruption and conflict with others leading to pain and suffering, anger and jealousy etc. To overcome this it is vital to find the balance between the two powers, to find the fulcrum between the two. The balance is never static and is constantly adjusting itself through the unceasing information it receives from the universe.

To find balance, it is important to hold both forces within your attention together as a whole with both positive and negative aspects viewed equally. Embracing the balance allows you to see the bigger picture, helping to find the wholeness of the situation leading to truth and harmony.

Scott Irvine



Renewal by Claire Valentine

“My art is all about magical transformation. In some traditions, hares are seen as symbols of transformation or rebirth. This symbolism may stem from the hare’s ability to hibernate or its association with springtime, a season of renewal. Hares are often depicted in myths and legends as creatures that can change shape or possess magical powers. If you could transform into another animal, what would it be and why?” [Facebook.com/ClaireValentineArt](https://www.facebook.com/ClaireValentineArt)

Spring inspired- Lavender Shortbread

Ingredients

- 1 cup of Almond Flour (promote wisdom)
- 3 tbs preferred unsalted butter (melted)
- 1 Lemon zested (cleansing)
- 1-2 tsp fresh lavender (balance)
- 1-2 tsp Vanilla paste/extract (inner peace)



Method

- Mix all ingredients to form a dough.
- Place into baking tin and bake at 160-180 until golden brown
- Cut into preferred shapes while warm or shape individually before cooking.

CJ the Kitchen Witch



Spotlight: Lovewolfe Apothecary

My name is Lilth Lovewolfe, and I am the sole creatrix behind Lovewolfe Apothecary.

At the start of 2020 I opened my online apothecary after making a huge life shift, and moving back to my family home for a brief time. I was spending every day in nature, getting to know my local land, and doing copious amounts of reading and researching, to really get back to the true core of myself and my practice. That's when I felt a strong calling to start creating, and not only creating but teaching what I knew to others. After that I started posting more on social media, Youtube, and working on offerings for my shop to draw in a community around me of like-minded, spiritual, and pagan individuals.

I have been a practising witch since 2013, although I have been interested in witchcraft since the mid 1990's. I am a self taught herbalist, and I am particularly interested in animism, shadow work, and divination. I consider myself a neo pagan and a green witch. I am a huge animal lover and advocate, and I invest a lot of personal energy into eco conscious and humanitarian efforts.

The ethos of my work is a connection to nature above all else. Because many of my offerings are crafted from locally harvested plants, I put a huge emphasis on respecting the nature around me. I work with local land spirits, my spirit guides, and folklore (specifically British and Norse) to create items for daily and ritual use, which includes but is not limited to tea, incense, and skin care. Everything I create is done under planetary and daily auspices for maximum power and connection to Spirit.



My goal is to connect people to nature and Spirit through my work. There is so much power in the healing attributes of plants, their spiritual vibration, and the smells and flavours of the items in my shop. Even for those who do not consider themselves witches or magick practitioners, there is an item for them to be sure.

Currently all of my offerings are available through my website lovewolfeapothecary.com. You can find select offerings in person if you are in Canada (check the Shop in Person page on my site), and you may find me vending local witch markets throughout the year mainly in Toronto, Ontario. The best way to keep up-to-date is via my Instagram [@lovewolfeapothecary](https://www.instagram.com/lovewolfeapothecary).



I feel very inspired by the Elder Futhark runes, and I have definitely noticed patterns that resemble them in nature, especially in the roots of trees. My favourite plant ally is Elder. I take Elderberry syrup all winter, and use Elder flowers in my skincare routine. There is folklore about Elder trees being witches in disguise, and I love it so much that my stomach is tattooed with elder branches and berries. I would recommend our Maiden, Mother, Crone Youth Serum. It's an all natural facial serum that is extremely hydrating, and suitable for all skin types. Despite the name it is of course gender neutral in use.



Witch Magazine readers can receive 15% all Lovewolfe Apothecary products, with no minimum order amount, using the code **WITCHMAG1**

RUNELORE PT II

From the moment that an aspiring Runemaster picks up his or her Futhark for the first time, draws and casts, the beginnings of a deep relationship start to form. In time, that Runemaster will have no need to consult their grimoire when casting, save for the matter of recording of poignant discoveries. Rather, they will begin to understand what the runes are telling them by intuition and feel, knowing the surface meanings ad verbatim but understanding all of the depths and subtleties.

However, all journeys have to have a beginning and when new to anything, it is always wise to study the work of those who have gone before and consider them carefully. These insights can serve as a useful foundation, provided that our minds then remain open to further learning and our own inner voice, ultimately to forge our own unique pathway.

The first part of this article series appeared in the Imbolc issue of Witchzine and within it we explored the origin of the runes, the crafting of them and their surface meanings. Here, in this second article we shall go further in exploring the act of casting runes for the purpose of divination and start to look a little deeper.



Casting and Context

I know I hung on the wind-swept tree,
Its roots to the wise unknown
Spear-pierced, for nine long nights,

To Odin pledged, self, offered to self
They gave no bread, nor drinking horn
Down into the depths I gazed
Crying aloud I took up the runes
Then finally I fell

The first two verses of the Runatál poem are usually the incantations which precede my castings of runes, but of course you can adapt or alter your own practice as you see fit, particularly as your relationship with your rune set develops. However, of perhaps far greater importance is your visualisation or even, if you wish, vocalisation of your intent.

Rune castings are generally fairly meaningless unless they have context, so before you dare to invoke these powers, be careful to have clarity in your mind of that which you are asking. Are you looking for a general idea as to what the forthcoming day, week, or month might hold? Perhaps instead you are facing a decision and need some insight around that? Maybe an existing aspect of your life is troubling you and you are struggling to understand why. The runes can be consulted for any purpose you desire, but you must have that intent firmly in your mind as you reach to draw them, through to the point at which they leave your hand and fall.

Upturned and Downturned Runes

It is not always necessary for a caster to interpret a downturned rune any differently to one upturned. However, this aspect adds a much deeper layer to your castings and should be seriously considered more or less as soon as you begin to work with the runes in the divinatory sense.

When conducting a casting it is necessary first to hold context in mind, as we have already discussed. However, additionally it is important for you to have determined and visualised what a downturned rune will mean. It could simply be discounted – that is ignored altogether – if you are asking for relatively straightforward indications and wish to keep things simple. Alternatively, some of the runes have different meanings when downturned and you may decide to apply these.

To add possible complication, it is necessary for us to ensure that we do not fall into the trap of considering the upturned and downturned rune as being an absolute duality. The more positive meanings of an upturned rune can become more negative if the context of the casting or the relationship between other runes falling alongside,

Let us begin to illuminate more on the teachings of some of the runes in greater depth, this time beginning with the first six letters of the Common Germanic Futhark.

Fehu

Pronounced “Fay-Who” this rune means Cattle which, in an agricultural society where monetary coin was less relevant, represented wealth. This can, as most of us know, be a double-edged sword and the Norwegian and Icelandic texts show this with equal cynicism. The rune is often linked to Freya who had oxen sacrificed to her. To coin the positive and negative connotations, in the sagas, the necklace Brisingamen, a symbol of Freya’s wealth, was obtained by sleeping with the four dwarves who created it.

Upturned and in positive context, the rune can allude to exciting new pathways or ventures and success. Downturned and in the more negative context the rune can stand as a portent to the sickness of greed, endings of ventures and potentially even failure which might mean material loss. It is also important to regard wealth in the broader context. We can be wealthy or poverty stricken in many senses in life, besides money, such as “wealth of knowledge”, to use one such example.

Uruz

The Aurochs of old were the wild cattle of Northern Europe and their great physical prowess leant meaning to this rune, which is pronounced “Ooo – Roos”.

This rune is linked to Thor and its casting points to the considered application of our will and capabilities, possibly tests of our strength and intellect. Upturned, the rune points to a relentless application of our capability, a pragmatic application of our understanding and a tenacity to see it through. In the negative sense, it can indicate the opposites, possibly weakness in general, but also the over-application or misdirected application, leading to obsessive behaviour, ignorance and brutal rage.

Thurisaz

The name of this rune is pronounced “Thor-is-as”, which gives away the deity with whom it is most associated. In that more fanciful Anglo-Saxon sense, it is representative of Thor and his hammer, protecting Asgard from the Thurses, giants who observe the rule of brute force and unbridled destruction.

However, known as the Troll Rune in the tale of Skirnir’s Ride, Thurisaz is a generally unpleasant force throughout Norwegian and Icelandic poetry. Its possible surface meanings are giant, troll, thorn and even demon.

The appearance of the Thurisaz rune in a casting, usually relates to other runes alongside it and in that sense it is almost like an adjective, changing the meaning. In the more positive sense, Thurisaz is about directed force or conflict with a just or desirable aim. It can also carry the meaning of male eroticism and fertility. However, the latter can be a highly destructive force and in the negative sense, particularly if downturned (hidden), the rune is a stark warning of betrayal, violence, disease and general unpleasant happenings.

In mythology, Thor is the ultimate warrior but he fights brutal and chaotic forces with his unbridled force of his own.

Ansuz

This rune, pronounced “Anne – suhz” means God and is usually associated with Odin the All-father. As such, and certainly in the positive context, it represents our divine capacities of consciousness, intellect, transformation and connection.

Ansuz is a rune referring to the establishment of order from chaos. In the Norwegian runic poems it is further linked to the word Oss which means estuary and for the seafaring people to whom these texts belonged, the rune had an allegorical meaning of the beginnings of new voyages.

This rune is generally a positive leaning one, but downturned and in certain contexts it can also point to the problems associated with falsehoods, manipulation, illusion and misunderstandings.

Raido

This rune is largely accepted as meaning Ride and is actually pronounced, “Ride-Ho”. It is certainly, therefore, representative of a journey, but not necessarily a physical one. Rather, this rune can be representative of our own life pathway and all of our experiences which make us who we are.

In the positive sense it represents positive action, personal growth and sound pathways. It also represents the necessity of our mindfulness of the present and ability to transcend the unfounded fears which act like shackles and hinder us from moving forwards.

Naturally, when downturned or in the negative sense, it will represent the opposite. Stagnation, going around in circles and even a sense of being unnecessarily restrained, usually by ourselves.

Kaunaz

Sometimes this rune is named Kenaz and regardless is pronounced “Kay-naz”, carrying the meaning, most commonly, of “Torch”. However, the precise meaning of the rune is quite heavily disputed dependent upon source and other meanings have been more generally Light and also points of physical pain or torment with both Norwegian and Icelandic texts settling for the meaning being “Ulcer”.

Some believe the appearance of this rune to represent our own divine inner light or inner flame which, when harnessed, can lead to illumination of new understanding and emergence of new capabilities. However, in the more negative sense, toward which this rune leans, there is a representation of a burning fever, points of suffering and where it sits within a casting alongside other runes, particularly when downturned, it turns an otherwise positive interpretation into a warning or potential portent of ill.

Rune Relationships

In the runic descriptions which we have explored so far, I have already alluded to the relationship which the runes can have with each other. Typically, when casting runes for a divination, the caster will draw a collection, sometimes a handful, and interpret them as a whole message.



Let us use the example of a casting intended to gain advice on a new opportunity for learning. To use a simple example, here we have two runes together, both upturned. The appearance of Raido, tends to indicate that this will be an important journey and one which will lead to individual growth. However, the appearance of Thurisaz alongside it would indicate that this is going to be far from straightforward and that considerable force is going to be needed to overcome some of the barriers to that growth which you might face. Were Thurisaz to be downturned, this could point to hidden dangers and the opportunity could perhaps be one best avoided altogether.



In a more complex example, we see here three runes which we have not yet explored in depth. Let's say that in this case the caster is seeking relationship advice, perhaps a new introduction or an existing acquaintance becoming closer. Wunjo and Gebo sit alongside each other, the former depicting potential joy and harmony beside the latter being representative of mutual exchange, gift or sacrifice. These two alone would tend to indicate that the new relationship is set to be very fruitful, but the appearance of the Isa rune sitting above them, changes the meaning of the casting completely.

Isa represents stillness and self-control and with Wunjo always coming with a warning against over indulgence, the overall meaning of this casting suggests that whilst the advancement of this relationship could be very much mutually beneficial, it should be approached with considerable restraint and self-control. Otherwise the gifts might not be mutual, a one-sided relationship leading, ultimately, to disharmony and unhappiness.

In some of the historic use of the runes which was more talismanic, Runemasters used Bindrunes. These were, quite literally, two or more runes from the Futhark which were combined and carved imposed upon each other. The result was a talisman which would infuse them and create collective meaning. The meaning of the Bindrune is very similar to that of the appearance of multiple runes in a casting which might lend far greater insight as we have seen.

Rune position and the future

The second example casting which I have explained, alludes to a further subtlety to the runes which is that of the position in which they fall in respect of each other. Often when interpreting a casting it is naturally important to consider the proximity of the runes to each other, which precedes, sits above, or below others and, where a casting board or circle is used, any runes sitting within and outside it.

In the next part of this Witchzine article series, we shall explore more of the Common Germanic Futhark in greater depth and will also further explore rune positioning adding yet another layer to the interpretation of our castings. Until then, I hope that these insights have, thus far, been useful and I wish you well in your continued journey with the runes, should it remain one which you wish to undertake.

Richard C Hick



Annie Jones

Annie Jones lives in the West Midlands. She focuses her artwork on nature, the seasons and the Sabbats.

Spotlight: The Lunar Coven

At our home near the sea, I thumbed through my brand-new illustrated bible, desperately wishing to feel a connection to the writings. I was around eight years old, and this was the first I remember being drawn to spirituality, albeit through the daily prayers we had via our one overtly Christian teacher for the entire school of eight pupils. Something about it intrigued me. I loved the concept, but it didn't feel quite right. I didn't know anything else was out there, so the bible was kept but rarely read.

Instead, I continued to spend my days in the nature of the Highlands; talking to the trees and the sea, letting my imagination run wild as I ran through the long grass, collecting shells and quietly watching the shrews, hedgehogs, and any other wildlife that crossed my path. I have vivid and fond memories of the deep connection I had with the earth during that time, and of hearing spirits in the wind. After a couple years, we moved, but I never forgot our home by the sea. I still dream of it.



As I grew into a young teenager, I discovered the new age section of the local book shop. This was the early 90's, the internet was yet to take over daily life, and the bookshop was one of my favourite places to spend my time. Perusing the small section of new age books, my mind exploded. I felt like I had found my people. I started with a Tarot deck and a book called 'Witch: A hip guide to modern witchcraft'. Both of which I still have, and both are so wonderfully 90s!

Through these, my journey with witchcraft truly began. Suddenly a whole new world had opened up. I had a name for what I'd always known was in me: Witch. Not the kind I had seen in films and on TV, but someone like me who had a connection to nature, spirit, elements, the Universe. I couldn't get enough. I finally felt understood.



But... the Witch book felt like a lot. It spoke of being skyclad to carry out rituals, creating what felt like elaborate altars, spells for which I thought I had nothing I could use. I wasn't about to get naked in my bedroom at an altar and run the risk of my parents, or worse, my younger brother barging in!

Everything I read had complicated spells and rituals, and a lot of 'shoulds', all of which I did my best to follow to the letter. Don't get me wrong, it was an excellent foundation, but there were years my practice fell away. Partly because I moved to the 'big city' and discovered partying, and partly because it all felt too difficult to fit into my busy life, and overwhelming to get everything I 'needed'.

Little did I realise then, that everything I needed was within me. Spells have a big part to play, but we don't have to cast daily spells to be a witch. It's wonderful to have all the tools to give that extra power to our magick, but we don't need them.

The magick is within you, and that is what I teach.

It's why, 20+ years of honing my craft later, my mission became to make practicing witchcraft and connecting to your inner witch as easy as possible for those who were drawn to it, but felt overwhelmed as I did, all those years ago. Those who don't feel 'enough'.

'I feel like a fraud if I call myself a witch' is something I've heard over and over. And it's just not true. Even those who have a committed practice still have waxing and waning periods within it. Yes, we do need that foundation of knowledge, but it doesn't need to be overwhelming - it's my job to make it simple and help tailor it to your busy life.

Nothing brings me greater joy than helping others find their inner witch. Through my online membership The Lunar Coven, hosting circles to honour the Sabbats, or 1:1 coaching and mentoring, I help empower womxn to embrace their magick so they can thrive in harmony with the magical seasons and cycles. If you haven't guessed, I'm a Gemini so I like to keep busy! You can find everything I'm up to on my Instagram, @emma.anderson.coaching and website emmaandersoncoaching.com. I love to chat, so wing me a message!

Emma Anderson

Emma has created two bespoke, free resources for Witch Magazine readers.

- Ebook: Moon Magick: Create your dream life by harnessing the power of the moon phases
- Releasing Ritual Workshop: A pre-recorded step by step full moon releasing ritual that can be used every lunar cycle

Both can be accessed via: <https://mailchi.mp/emmaandersoncoaching/moon-magick>

Handfasting Ceremonies

As a Pagan Celebrant and Priestess I conduct many Pagan Ceremonies, Handfastings, Pagan Weddings, Vow Renewals, Elopements and Baby Naming Ceremonies too. These beautiful and magical occasions are becoming very popular. More people are wanting a spiritual wedding or naming ceremony which resonates with their beliefs.

Handfastings, or Celtic Weddings, predate Christianity and is how people used to get married before organised religion came along. During the ceremony the couple's hands are literally bound together with cords or ribbons. The knot represents the union between the couple and should never be undone. This is where the expression 'Tying the Knot' originates. Many couples also exchange rings nowadays too.

Handfasting is a wonderful celebration for people who feel that a traditional wedding is not for them. No one is excluded. Everyone is welcome. No matter what creed, religious belief, sexual orientation. Single, married, divorced, separated, 'it's complicated', whatever your marital status, you can have a Handfasting Ceremony. If you're already married, Handfasting is a wonderful way to renew your vows.

In England and Wales Handfasting is not legally binding. However, this is not important to most couples. It's recognised by the pagan community as spiritually binding and therefore transcends the law of the land. Some couples choose to have two ceremonies, (a traditional religious ceremony or a register office ceremony), and a Handfasting too. All you need is to be in love.

Some couples have a themed wedding - medieval, hippy, formal or fairytale. You can choose your own music, rings, attire, and decorations. You can have music, poetry, drumming, dancing, singing etc. at any point during the ceremony. I have conducted Handfastings in forests, on beaches, at ruined churches, within crop circles, village halls, in gardens, even underground - places that have a special significance for the bride and groom. The result is always magical.

The Handfasting Ceremony

This original Handfasting Ceremony is based on ancient pagan beliefs and because there are no hard and fast rules, you can customise your ceremony to suit you. Every Handfasting is different - that's what makes them so special.

My Ceremony has been passed down through my family and has changed very little over the generations. It binds the couple together forever, not just 'til death do us part' but in the next life and the next.... Sometimes couples are Handfasted for a Year and a Day which is suitable for periods of engagements, like a blessing before the real marriage takes place.



The Gathering - The guests form a circle around the bride and groom. The Handfasting Altar stands within the circle and holds candles, incense, flowers, ribbons, the Handfasting Cord and any other sentimental items. The circle is swept three times in honour of the Maiden, Mother and Crone.

The Introduction - Welcoming everyone and briefly explaining the Ceremony is important to me. Not everyone attending will know what to expect and this puts guests at ease. Sometimes I will mention anyone who has passed over too.

Lady/Lord of Misrule - If there is a designated photographer I will pronounce them The Lady or Lord of Misrule (just for the day!) so that they can go anywhere inside the circle in order to get the best shots.

Opening The Circle - I cast the circle by walking around the outside of the guests whilst drawing an invisible line on the ground with my athame. I welcome the spirits from each elemental direction to witness the ceremony and then ask everyone to take a step back and say, "You are now standing on sacred ground."

The Ceremony - I usually begin with, "Blessed friends we have gathered in this sacred place to celebrate the marriage for (name) and (name). Such a marriage transcends any purely legal commitment made before a representative of our country because it is celebrated before the deities and thus cannot be entered into lightly or set aside with impunity." My tradition includes these beautiful words, easily changed for same sex couples,

To the groom - "O man, behold thy chosen woman and gaze upon her beauty. Thou must know that she is made in the image of the Goddess, glorious and beautiful, strong and wise, priestess and mother. See in her thy fulfilment of love and companionship. See in her thy inner feminine self and rejoice, that in her thou mayest find fulfilment. See in her womanhood the grail of immortality, the sacred cauldron that is the very cradle of life itself"

Then to the bride - "O woman, behold thy chosen man and gaze upon his beauty. Thou must know that he is made in the image of God, strong and upright, the protector of the weak, who shall be thy loyal soulmate. See in his manhood the sword of power from which flows the very force that gives us life. Rejoice in the strength of his embrace and be whole."

Blessing the Bread and Mead - Traditionally, bread and mead is used but you can have whatever you wish; water, wine, spirits are popular, juice. Cake, fruit, biscuits, I once blessed a chocolate muffin! Hold these offerings up to the sky. to be blessed by the deities. The couple place a little piece of bread into each other's mouths and say, "May you never go hungry." Then they hold the goblet for each other to drink and say. "May you never go thirsty." They then anoint each other on the forehead with oil or water and say whatever they wish.

The Vows and Exchanging of the Rings - Most couples exchange rings. Sometimes gifts are exchanged instead, perhaps something they have made for each other; pendants, bracelets or a painting or sculpture. I use traditional Handfasting Vows, sometimes the couple write their own or we have both. It is important to note that the vows contain the following words....."nothing can exist in the purity of my love for thee.....I promise to love thee completely without restraint.....in life and beyond, where we shall meet, remember and love again..." Handfasting is forever.





The Talking Stick - Many Pagan gatherings have a talking stick. In days gone by this would allow everyone within the community to have their say. For example, maybe someone needs help with ploughing, or someone feels they are being treated unfairly. It may be to declare a birth, marriage or death or just to give thanks to their community. The person holding the talking stick is allowed to say whatever they wish while everyone else listens.

During the Handfasting a talking stick (this could be an actual stick, I like to use a wand or my broomstick) is passed around so that all the guests can say a few words of congratulations if they wish. This is a good time for poetry or speeches. It's a very moving part of the ceremony and is usually full of laughter and tears.

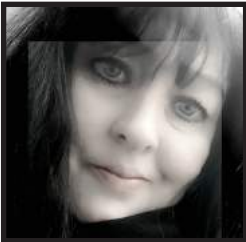
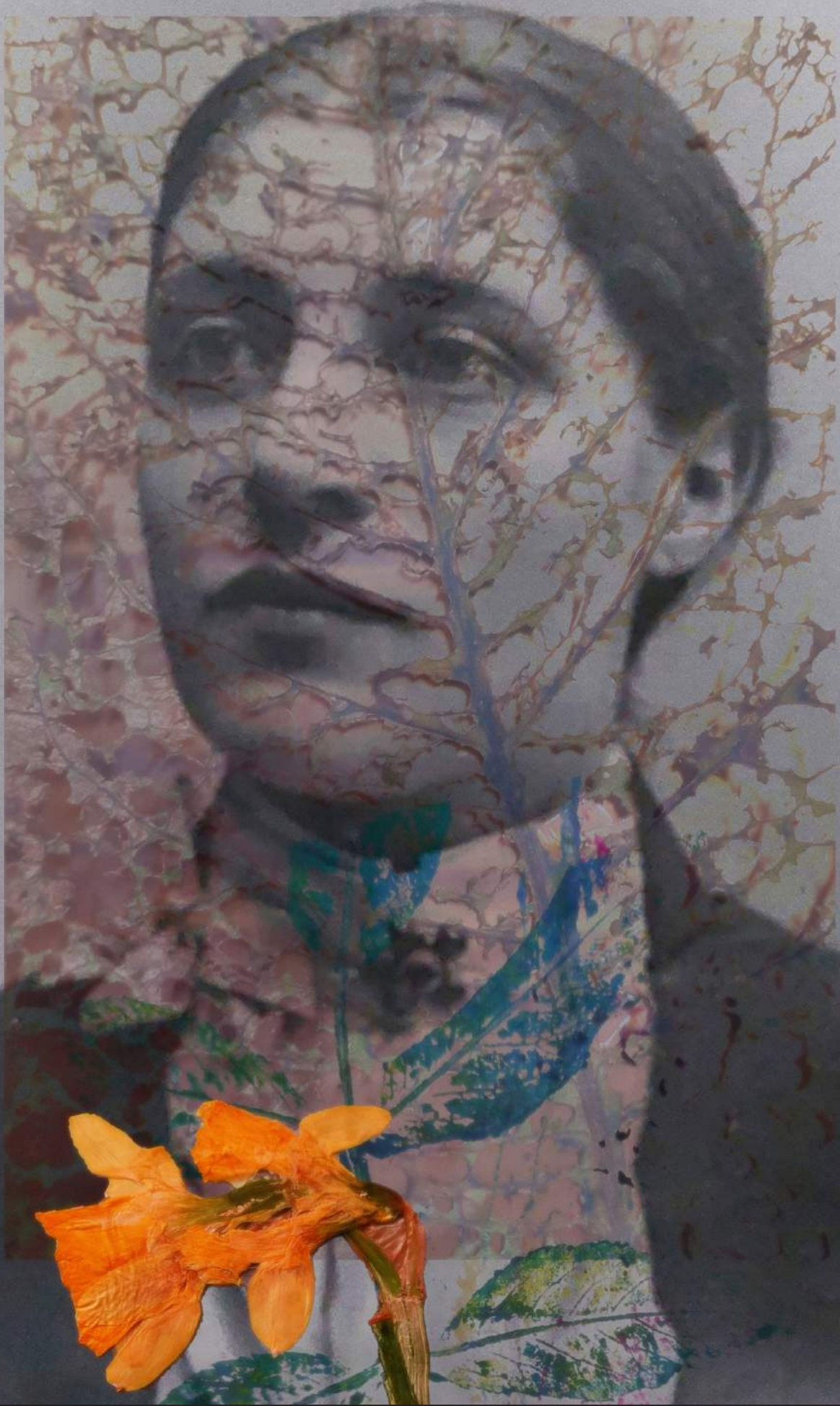
The Final Blessing - While the couple are still tied, I will say the final blessing, "Above you are the stars and below you is the earth. Like the stars your love should be a constant source of light, and like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow," and the release the couple from the Handfasting Cord.

The Declaration - These words are changed to suit the couple....and there is much cheering and applauding!
"You may now kiss the bride/groom/each other!"

Closing The Circle - Everyone will face the 4 elemental directions while I thank the spirits for witnessing the ceremony, and everyone is free to move.

Broomstick Jumping - The happy couple then jump over the broomstick. This symbolises jumping from their old life into their new married relationship. It is also a symbol of not just physical fertility but emotional and mental fertility too. For luck, all the guests can follow suit and jump the broomstick too. Myself and my husband have jumped over so many we should have hundreds of children by now!

Wendy Witch



Monique Bouman

My work consists of many colours, textile materials, botanical plants and seaweeds. All combined into many layered artworks. My work is analogue and digital, I am an intuitive and visual person who lives and works in the Netherlands.

www.Facebook.com/Kiek'sArt-World www.Instagram.com/Kieksartworld

Enchanting Ostara: Herbal Magick and Culinary Delights

At Witches Tea we try to immerse ourselves in the celebration of Ostara, the Vernal Equinox, the pages of history unfold before us, revealing the deeprooted connections between the festival and the ever-renewing spirit of nature. Ostara, named after the Anglo-Saxon Goddess Eostre, invites us to explore the historical tapestry, embrace contemporary rituals, and infuse our celebrations with the magickal essence of herbs, plants, and culinary delights.

Historical Significance

Marking the transition from winter's slumber to the vibrant rebirth of spring, Ostara finds its roots in the ancient celebrations of fertility and growth. The Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre, associated with dawn and renewal, played a central role in these festivities. In this modern age, we draw inspiration from the past to honour the cycles of life, weaving herbal remedies and culinary creations into our Ostara rituals.

Celebrating Ostara in the Past

Communities in ancient times rejoiced with communal rituals, dances, and feasts. Central to these celebrations were eggs, potent symbols of fertility and new beginnings. The tradition of decorating eggs, now synonymous with Easter, originated from these ancient practices, symbolizing the Earth's fertile womb. As modern witches, we honour this tradition, infusing our celebrations with a touch of historical magick.

Modern Celebrations

Our modern Ostara celebrations weave together ancient customs with contemporary interpretations. Altars adorned with symbols of fertility, eggs, and representations of the goddess and god take centre stage. To amplify the magick, candles in pastel hues and shades of green are lit, symbolizing the returning warmth and light of the sun.





Herbs, Plants, and Crystals

Ostara's enchantment is heightened through the use of herbs, plants, and crystals resonating with the energies of the season. Daffodils and tulips, vibrant messengers of the awakening Earth, find a place on the altar. The use of lavender, Maté, and Maidenhair (Ginkgo Biloba) infuses the air with fragrant harmony, promoting balance in the midst of rebirth. Crystals such as rose quartz, moonstone, and amethyst are selected for their associations with love, intuition, and spiritual growth. Wearing these stones or placing them on the altar amplifies the energies of the season, fostering a deep connection to the Earth and its cycles.

Herbal Remedies and Culinary Delights

Embracing Ostara involves not only spiritual practices but also a celebration of the Earth's bounty through herbal remedies and culinary delights. A rejuvenating herbal tea, crafted from a blend of

chamomile, lavender, and mint, can be prepared to invoke tranquillity and embrace the calming energies of the season.

To celebrate Ostara this year we have crafted our beautiful Marigold Morning Brew. A beautiful blend of Marigold Petals, Maté Leaves & Maidenhair. It is designed to fill you with the spirit of Nature's Rebirth.

As a Witch Magazine reader you get 20% off your first order. Just use the coupon code 'WITCHMAG20' on our website when you check out.



Your Ostara Altar

Ostara, falling alongside the Spring Equinox, celebrates the arrival of Spring. The weather might still be playing catch-up, but Winter is officially over and we can look forward to milder and sunnier days to come. This holiday is named for the Germanic and Celtic goddess Ēostre, and it celebrates fertility, rebirth, and beginnings.

When to Create your Ostara Altar

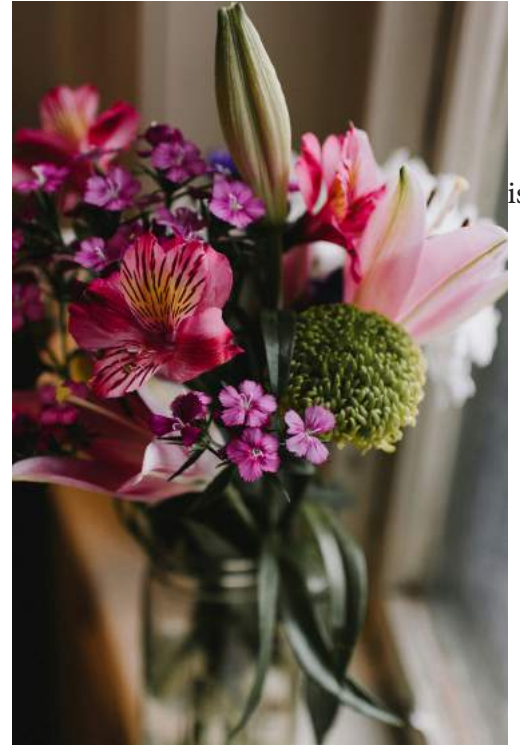
Ostara begins on March 19th and ends on February 21st. Ideally, to honour the spirit of Ostara, you want to set up your altar right at the beginning of that period. If work and life allows, aim for a time early in the day—dawn is great, but anywhere before noon works too. Any time better than no time, however, so go at your own pace.

How to Create your Ostara Altar

Pick a spot for your altar, and add things you love about Ostara.

Altar Cloth. Ostara is all about bright new beginnings, so choose an altar cloth or tile to match. Grassy greens, soft pink or blue, and joyous yellow are all great colours. The colour white, representing a fresh slate, also works.

Spring Bouquet. Picking a Spring bouquet is a great reason to go outside and connect with the world's rebirth. Make sure not to over-pick so you leave plenty for animals and other people to enjoy. If you can leave something in return—a promise to water the flowers when the heat picks up, or dropping a handful of local flower seeds—that's even better.



Bugs. Few things embody rebirth quite like insects who start their life as a completely different creature. Butterflies are the most famous example, but every humble beetle starts its lives as a larva. You can raise local species from eggs to release them, which is especially beneficial if the species is endangered—just make sure you have a good enclosure so they don't escape all over your altar. Alternatively you might find or ethically source a carapace.

Seeds. Imbue a handful of seeds with the intention of finding a new job, resetting a healthier relationship with your family, or whatever else you need. Nurture the seeds into flowers and watch your intention grow alongside them. People with black

thumbs may want to skip this, or plant the seeds out in the wild so nature can (hopefully) provide for them. Alternatively, see if a befriended Green Witch will do it for you, but make sure to offer them something of equal effort in return.

Eggs. Eggs represent new beginnings and they're very protective.

Setting a bunch of eggs on your altar isn't a great idea though, so consider blowing out and cleaning one—you'll find ample instructions on the internet. You can even paint it while imbuing it with protection for yourself, a pet, or a family member. If your first attempt doesn't end well, leaving you with smelly eggs, bury the shell under a plant so the protection transfers onto it. Otherwise this could be the start of a beautiful collection of painted eggs for you.



Cards. Tarot, oracle, and deity cards are a great addition to your Ostara altar. Aces perfectly represent the beginnings of Ostara, so pick the suit that resonates with your needs and plans. If you're not aiming for a specific start, and are happy leaving it to fate and chance, consider The Fool or The Wheel. If your new start requires leaving something behind, consider the Eight of Cups, Six of Swords, or Death card.

Your personal altar favourites. What calls to YOU in an altar? Add fresh berries, a pomegranate, or sprigs of green bushes. Anything that you associate with Spring and that makes you happy. Try to keep your regular altar separate from your Ostara altar though, so you can continue your usual practice and take time to celebrate the season specifically.

Steffie de Vaan

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Healing Through the Tarot

Those who may not be particularly familiar with the Tarot and it's working, may tend to think of going for a reading as being a mysterious and kooky event where you sit down with an Ancient, mystical reader with a dark and unknown past, while they reveal your entire future and tell you how you're going to die. While the mysterious part may be somewhat true in some circumstances, the rest is an entirely false perception painted by Movies and TV for entertainment value. While it is entirely possible for some readers to see ahead with potential trajectories, it is the querent who ultimately decides their own path through freewill. An ethical reader should never leave you feeling worried; scared or anxious following your session with them.

There is a multitude of ways to use the Tarot rather than just sticking to a traditional spread such as the Celtic Cross. Here are just a few examples of how I have personally used the cards within my professional and personal practice which have had significant results for both myself and my clients.

The Tarot has been an integral part of my own healing journey thus far. The system has proved time and time again just how invaluable it can be, thus enabling me to help both myself and my clients to navigate this journey we call life. The cards can be used in many ways, from traditional fortune telling techniques; deep exploration into the psyche, using a Jungian style psychological approach, timing techniques, coaching, incorporating Hermetic Qabalah methods, Alchemy, Astrological correspondences, shadow work, journaling prompts and even Anatomy Correspondences. These are just a few examples of how I use the Tarot when working with clients.

Journaling with the Tarot can be a fantastic way to explore your own thoughts and feelings, allowing you to take a more objective approach when dealing with your own personal situations without being bias about it. When working in this way, I find it best to use the cards conversationally. Starting with simple, open exploration then expanding the dialog. Start by speaking to yourself honestly, no matter how contradictory. 'How am I feeling today?' then continue to note down exactly how you feel in that moment, for example: calm yet anxious, tired but restless, uncomfortable and agitated. Then begin your card prompts 'why do I feel this way?' then shuffle and draw a card or two in your own way, revealing your answer. Sit with yourself and your cards in this moment and allow the response to be revealed. Working in this way will require

a touch of intuition, looking at the colour correspondences, symbolism, directional aspects and facial expressions alongside the traditional meaning of the card. Journaling in this way can bring a feeling of relief to a restless mind and further clarity if you tend to doubt your intuition when it comes to yourself. Working with the cards like this rather than a spread, can enable you to step out of your own way and explore further perspectives, by enabling you to Pidgeon hole all of those thoughts and feelings; leaving you clearer, lighter and calmer.




You can also use the healing energies of the Tarot Archetypes. If you wish to, following your journaling exercise, you can ask, 'What do I need right now in order to feel better?' and you perhaps draw The Hermit, you can use this card as a focal point to help encourage the Archetypal energy of that card, thus inviting in these energies. There aren't any real limitations to how you can use the Tarot, you can even pull specific cards from your deck to use with Intent and magical workings. You can also set an intention of what it is you wish to bring into your life, for example: you wish to bring in financial stability, success and independence of your own making, you could put the 9 Of Pentacles on your Altar space during a New Moon or waxing phase. In this way you have the energetic prompt somewhere you will see it often, adding to it's power and also in a Sacred space which again can amplify the manifestation. If you are unable to have it in open view, you can carry the card with you in your purse or use it as a bookmark in a book you are currently reading. The same works for shedding during a Full moon or Waning phase, for example: you wish to remove false friendships or those with ill intentions from your life, you can use the

As a Crystal Healing practitioner, I also use the Tarot to help with client healing. (Of course, with my professional ethics as a reader, I do not conduct health, legal or pregnancy readings for clients) but if a client comes to me with a specific physical ailment during a healing session, I also use the Anatomy correspondences to amplify the healing effects to that area alongside my Crystal toolkit. I have an Altar space within my private Office, so it is known for me to put certain cards on visible display during my sessions depending on what it is required. For example, if a client has been struggling with abdominal pain, I may use the Hanged Man to help focus healing energy to this area, or more specifically the Star card for the stomach, Temperance for the lower bowels, or Justice for the gall bladder depending on what is needed and the area of concern. All of the cards within the Tarot have a plethora of different correspondences, the Anatomy being just one of them when used in conjunction with other layers.

Healing can be a lifelong journey with many different complexities involved. The Tarot is a fantastic tool to help and guide you along the way by funnelling down the path and highlighting what areas you may need to focus on at that time in order to raise yourself up or cut yourself loose from things that may be blocking your personal ascent to freedom and healing. A Tarot reading with a professional reader can act as an informal therapy session, illuminating the potential of the path before you, uncover underlying energies surrounding certain situations and offer direction to achieve the best possible outcome.

Fauna Raine



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Flower Magic and Divination

As Ostara approaches, we enter a stage of rebirth with mother earth and her surroundings awakening from their winter hibernation. The equinox is a time for celebrating the light's return and the growth of new life. Light and growth have always been recognized as bringing hope and potential as we look towards the longer days ahead and consider all the possible ways of how to make effective use of our time.

Looking around at the natural world we live in we can observe the changing of the seasons and connect ourselves with the ongoing cycles of life through our reflections of personal change and future development. One of the obvious changes around us from winter to spring is nature's gifts of flowers with their glorious color palette and graceful fragrances showing up in our outdoor scenery.

Since ancient times, our wise ancestors have understood the power of the earth's magickal offerings brewing their cauldrons with healing remedies. Some of this wisdom has travelled through time to our modern era and implemented through foraging, homeopathy, and aromatherapy to name a few. We can always consider the thoughtful representation of flowers to provide meaningful gifts for loved ones but we can also consider the use of their unique benefits and properties for holistic health and practice such as in medicines, oils, fragrance, skin care, our daily diet and even in our morning warming cups of tea.

Roses for example, can be gifted as a known gesture of love and romance as well as being used in tinctures, skin care, fragrance, baths, and diet for its beneficial properties as an anti-depressant, aphrodisiac and anti-inflammatory flower loaded with vitamin c that can support the production of white blood cells helping our bodies to fight off infections. Another flower known for holistic purposes is Evening Primrose with pretty yellow flowers to look at alongside containing a large amount of gamma-linolenic acid, which can be used to clear up acne, treat dermatitis and relieve PMS symptoms.

As for witchcraft purposes, the use of flowers can be viewed as our understanding of the mundane life cycles and expansions associated with our individual yet connective journeys. Witchcraft is a practice that not only honors cycles on many levels of development but also supports the release of control and resistance for what is no longer serving us along the way. Flowers through symbolism represent these ideas and can be used in multiple spiritual pathways including focus, visions, and actions. Suggestions of such practices could be meditation, ritual, altar dressings, talisman making and spell craft as well as much more.

Considerations of the general meaning of flowers is useful with an instinctive connection to offerings of kindness and celebration however also think about your personal relationship with flowers which could not only bring positivity but also an energy of loss through association of funerals and memorials. With any craft work our intentions and energy is always personalized and an important aspect to any magickal workings. Individual flowers may bring a different symbology and passion to your application of practice than others so always reflect on the flower's interpretations for yourself.

With Ostara being the time of year when nature returns to life again there are many flowers generally associated with the spring equinox such as; Primroses associated with youthful energy and new beginnings, Lilacs for rebirth, Dandelions for symbolism of manifestation and outcomes. Forsythia is considered as connective with the arrival of spring and seasonal change, lastly Daffodils as the ultimate spring flower and symbol of new growth.

It is long believed that carrying a talisman of the blossom associated with your birth month would bring great luck and protection for you throughout the year ahead; January – Carnation, February -Violet, March – Daffodil, April – Daisy, May - Lily of the valley, June - Wild Rose, July - Waterlily, August – Poppy, September - Morning glory, October – Marigold, November – Chrysanthemum and December – Holly.

Flowermancy also known as Flower psychometry, is an ancient form of divination using the flower to provide guidance. This form of divination was particularly popular in Victorian times and is still used today through various interpretations. A common method of this could be deemed as a simplistic pulling off the petals of the selected flower with the querent stating “he/she/they loves me” and “he/she/they loves me not” until the final petal is pulled off revealing if the lover they seek does or does not love them.

An example of older methods includes two flowers that had not yet blossomed being put together as a pair and the initials of the querent would be placed on one stem and seeker lover’s initials would be placed on the other stem. Together these flowers would be placed in a secret spot together for ten days for the diviner to observe to consider the movement and growth in the interpretations of the compatibility and future of the couple.

In more modern flower reading methods diviners will ask the querent to select a flower from a vase of mixed variations and consider the flower’s attributes such as its stem, shape, colour, symbolism and energy applied with the knowledge of the flowers for the purpose of insight, intuition and guidance for the querent’s reading. Additionally, sometimes people use cartomancy methods with floral illustrations for the use of flowermancy readings. The meaning and uses of flowers in magick is hugely versatile and I hope this article supports you in connecting with them further in your own spirituality.

Titania Fae

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Women's Circle of Change

A little about me Let me introduce myself I'm Danni a Spiritual medium and practice Psychotherapeutic Shamanism for healing work while walking the pagan path and the owner of Goldenwolfwing.co.uk.

I run the women's Circle of Change where women are invited to step onto their own inner healing journey spiralling inwards to look at their story .As women we can often find ourselves at a pinnacle point in life where we know we are unhappy ,unfulfilled and feel a bit lost .We can often look in the mirror and wonder who the hell is staring back at us and it can be painful to presented with the image of ourselves that sometimes we don't even recognise and like .Sometimes its at this place in time we may be married have kids careers but it can feel disjointed and like it's a jigsaw puzzle where no matter how we try we can't see to make life fit .What we are often certain is somewhere inside of us is our soul screaming to get out be different ,think different and just exist in something we don't often recognise it can be frightening and exciting at the same time but we often just don't know where to begin or some may have started the inward journey but need connection to a soul family who will reach out a hand to help us get there.

As a Qualified Psychotherapist, Shamanic practitioner, and spiritual medium the wearer of a few different hats basically with layers that all overlap which are one and the same. I have navigated my own path and changed my story from a life half lived in circle. Having worked with lots of people from many different backgrounds and cultures ages, etc. who all show up feeling lost and yearning for a new way of being then connect back to their ancestral roots forming social interaction with their spiritual sisters. It is in the circles that women will feel held, safe, connecting back to their intuition and femininity while regaining their power. It is a remembering of the soul and an undoing of conditioning formed in childhood, experiences and from society, which sadly often means we have a life unconsciously chosen, this being beliefs that belong to our parent's care givers or society.

We can carry our own trauma and our ancestor's trauma which are all the stepping stones to a life half lived. when we heal our inner child and reparent ourselves we can bring light to the shadows and reveal the soul gifts this usually helps us to rekindle the essence of the magical child within enabling us to find joy, wonderment like we did as a child developing our soul gifts while bringing these to light.

We can strengthen our relationships with others, create new ones and only when we understand who we truly are, what we want and how we expect to be treated, its only then we can do this. This is achieved developing healthy boundaries, good self-awareness of our own unhelpful behaviours and triggers which often are coming from a wounding.

It's when we sit in circle we really hear our story and begin to understand it we also realise how similar our struggles are to other women and we can find strength to change the narrative and dismantle the building blocks piece by piece of the crumbling foundations, it is only then we can begin to consciously choose the life we want to live by looking at negative thinking patterns. When we learn to master our mind and select the thoughts we want this creates healthy emotions and by that anger is absolutely included as a healthy emotion when used positively after all emotion is just energy in motion its how we use it that sparks feelings and behaviours these being helpful or unhelpful to us that create patterns in life .when we work to release trapped emotions and patterns in our life we can create magic together, get in our creative feminine flow as we begin to weave the webs of a new existence that heals the ones who walked before us, this then paves a clear path for our descendants who walk after us.

We use shamanic journeying, work with the moon cycles and sabbats, reconnect to Mother Gai, our power animal, guides, and ancestors using sacred practices, divination work and guidance from spirit. Every circle is unique in the teachings I bring as im always guided by my spirit guides depending on what the energy of the women in circle will benefit from most. As each phoenix emergers from circle its always such an honour to see their courage, dedication for themselves and each other. For me its so humbling to see how their story will unfold I learn something new every time. I'm grateful to be heading towards my crone years, walking my soul path I feel something I pushed back for many years coming from a family of mediums and healers. I wasn't ready to fully embrace my journey until it was time for me to heal but that's another story one, I feel I am now ready to share.

Danni Twigg



'Humble Beginnings' by Jacq Hancock

Jacq Hancock is an illustrative folklorist based out of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her work is self-taught through independent study. Working predominantly in water-colour as a medium, her work is inspired by nature and its ability to continuously impact the culture of visual storytelling.

<https://www.thearborwytch.com>

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Celebrating Spring Equinox and Ostara

The Spring Equinox marks the first day of Spring in the northern hemisphere, where daylight savings time begins and the weather is slowly, but surely, warming. Everything is for Spring to begin. It is the day the sun's rays onto the equator while the Earth sits with its axis tilted neither toward nor away from the sun causing 12 hours of sunlight almost everywhere on Earth. The only other day this happens is during the Autumnal Equinox in September. The Spring Equinox is nicknamed the Vernal Equinox and starts on March 21st. The word Equinox means "the time of equal days and nights."

Ostara is also celebrated around the 20th and 21st at the same point as the Spring Equinox. It is a time of new beginnings and of life emerging from the frozen grasp of winter. Ostara is a Pagan Solar Holiday honoring the Spring's warmth, light from the sun, and the awakening of the Earth. Pagans celebrate this holiday having themes of balance, renewal, and rebirth. Ostara marks the Spring Equinox which happens between March 19th-23rd.

At the beginning of Spring Ostara is a good time to literally and figuratively plant seeds for the future. A holiday named for the Goddess is part of the Neopagan Wiccan Wheel of the Year, March 21st. Modern-day Wiccans or Pagans might go outside to meditate and perform a simple ritual to welcome the Spring. Much of Paganism goes back to agricultural times where Spring was historically the time when babies were born and crops bloomed. It deals with spiritual growth. Its renewal. Its rebirth. The Equinox was celebrated as a time to cleanse out stagnant energy with self and homes. You would feel a pull toward tackling new and exciting projects, also a good time to experiment with your creativity.

Spring Equinox ushers in many religious holidays, observances, and celebrations for others around the world. For both Jewish and Christian faiths, this is a time of significant meaning and faith with the celebrations of Passover and Easter. Easter always occurs on the first Sunday after the first full moon occurs after the Spring Equinox. Easter is not on the Spring Equinox because Jesus Christ's death and resurrection occurred at the time of the Jewish Passover which was celebrated on the first full moon following the Vernal equinox. This led to Christians celebrating Easter on different dates. The feast of Easter was first a Pagan holiday of renewal and rebirth honored in the early Spring and praised the Pagan Goddess of Fertility and Spring known as Ostara, Eastre, or Eostre. Some historians believe Easter eggs came from Anglo-Saxon festivals in the Spring to celebrate the Pagan Goddess Eostre.

Spiritually during the Equinox, it is an excellent time to prioritize moderation and balance with the day and night in total alignment. The Equinox can also be a time of clarity after confusion, soul contemplation, hibernation, and stillness. The Vernal Equinox comes with a persistent myth that you can balance an egg on its end on the Equinoxes, and only on the Equinoxes. An Ostara ritual is decorating boiled eggs with magical images or they use natural dye to write their wishes. The Yolk represents the sun nestled in the white fold of the Goddess. They would decorate their homes and altar with spring flowers like daffodils, tulips, or pussy willows and they would spend time, taking their time smelling the flowers. They would take notice of their surroundings and how they felt. They would plant flowers in their gardens, walk in the sunshine, and talk to trees. They would clean their homes and donate the clutter to local charity shops.

The Spring Equinox reminds us to strive for balance in our lives. The world can be stressful to our body, mind, and spirit. The Spring Equinox marks the end of winter meaning more daylight than night with each day getting slightly longer. Go celebrate those sunny days and shake off those winter blues which brings a sense of balance and ease. Also, brighten your work, gain energy, and advance your goals. The spiritual meaning of Ostara is the return of the sun and the welcoming of a new dawn.

Christina Corsetti

A Moon with Many Names and Yet an Abundance of Light

In the tapestry of the night sky, each full moon weaves its own unique story, and the first full moon of spring is no exception. As the wheel of the year turns and we embrace the Spring Equinox, March's Full Moon emerges as a celestial guide, closely intertwined with the awakening earth. A luminary orb with a multitude of names and a profound significance for both earth spirits and the devout. Known by a myriad of names – the Worm Moon, the Storm Moon, and religiously as the Lenten or Paschal Moon – this celestial beacon is a harbinger of renewal and a symbol of the cyclical nature of life.



As the Worm Moon, it heralds the awakening of the earth. Beneath the soil, worms begin their dance, aerating the earth and making it fertile for the sowing of seeds. This is nature's way of preparing for the new life that spring promises, a reminder of the perpetual cycle of rebirth that governs all living things.

The Storm Moon aspect refers to the nurturing spring showers that follow, melting the remnants of winter's snow and further preparing the ground for the seeds of new beginnings. These rains wash away the old, making way for the new, in a beautiful display of nature's resilience and its constant state of flux.

Religiously, this moon holds a special place as the Lenten or Paschal Moon. According to the Gregorian calendar, it is the moon that determines the celebration of Easter, marking a period of reflection, rebirth, and renewal not just in nature but in the spiritual lives of many.

The first full moon of spring, then, is not just a celestial event; it is a confluence of the triple Moon Goddess. As we emerge from the Crone's embrace of winter, a season of introspection and rest, we are now greeted by the vibrant energies of the maiden and the mother. The Maiden energy, with its youthful exuberance and zest for life, heralds the celebration of rebirth. It is the spark of new beginnings, the first tender shoots pushing through the thawing earth, and the promise of renewal and growth. This energy invites us to embrace change with open arms and an adventurous spirit, to plant the seeds of our dreams with the hope of a bountiful harvest. Alongside the Maiden is the nurturing presence of the Mother energy that envelops us, offering the wisdom and sustenance needed to bring these nascent dreams into being.

The mother is the fertile ground, the warm sunlight, and the gentle rains – the unwavering support that allows the maiden's potential to bloom into reality. Together, these energies weave a tapestry of life, guiding us through the cycle of growth with grace and strength. As we leave the crone's reflective embrace, we step into a world alive with possibility, supported by the nurturing love of the mother and inspired by the maiden's boundless optimism. In this sacred dance of energies, we find the courage to grow, to change, and to flourish in the light of the new season.

This duality of goddess energy is amplified by the powerful energy of the Lunar Eclipse, a cosmic reminder that this is a time to bring light into our shadows and the importance of cleansing, detoxing, releasing, forgiving, and healing.

As we observe this luminous orb brightening our evening skies, signaling the lengthening days ahead, let it remind us of the importance of nurturing the seeds of our own growth. This is a time to embrace the compassionate and nurturing energy of the mother goddess, to allow for our own rebirth and regrowth. It is a time to celebrate the fertility of new beginnings, to welcome the expanding horizons of abundance and prosperity.

In its many names and the multitude of traditions it spans, this full moon serves as a universal symbol of the promise of renewal. As we stand under its abundant light, may we all find the strength to release the past and embrace the potential for a vibrant, flourishing future.

Full Moon Ritual: The Maiden & Mother

In the silver glow of the full moon eclipse's embrace, gather under her luminous gaze, oh seekers of rebirth and nurturers of growth. This ritual, a sacred dance with the goddess energy of the moon, calls forth the nurturing embrace of the Mother and the vibrant potential of the Maiden. Let us begin.

Preparation

- Find a quiet space under the full moon's light, where you feel her energy vibrant and alive.
- Bring with you a piece of natural paper and a pen blessed by the moon's silver.
- Collect an offering for the goddesses - a bowl of water to reflect the moon's eternal grace, a white flower for purity.

Casting the Circle

Stand under the moon's glow and imagine her light encircling you, creating a sacred space that is both a shield and sanctuary. As you breathe in the night air, feel yourself enveloped in a protective bubble of silver light.

Invocation of the Mother Goddess of the Moon

"Mighty Mother, Goddess of the Moon, whose light nurtures all that exists,
Under your watchful eye, I gather, seeking your blessing.
With gratitude, I acknowledge all that IS,
The love, the joy, the growth that surrounds me.
Bless these gifts, oh Divine Mother,
Let them blossom and flourish under your tender care."

Now, write on your paper all that currently exists in your life that you wish to nurture. Pour your gratitude and love into each word. When you are done, fold the paper and place it in the bowl of water, letting the moon's reflection kiss your intentions.

Invocation of the Maiden Goddess of the Moon

"Radiant Maiden, Bringer of New Beginnings, whose light inspires the seed to break free,
In your honor, I dream, I dare, I dance towards the future.
Guide me as I plant the seeds of tomorrow,
Bless these beginnings with your boundless energy,
May they grow, unfettered by the past, reaching towards the sun."

Consider now the seedlings of your future, the dreams, and aspirations yet to take root. Write them on another piece of paper. This time, bury the paper gen-

tly in the earth (or in a pot if indoors), symbolizing the planting of new beginnings.



Sealing the Ritual

"Holy Mother, Maiden bright, in your balance and your light, I find my way,
From nurturing what is, to dreaming what might be,
Guide me under your gentle light,
Bless me with your wisdom, night after night."

Offer a few petals of the white flower to the moon, by placing them into the bowl and with your seedlings as a symbol of purity and new beginnings.

As you close your ritual, envision the moon's light sealing your intentions, both nurtured and new. Thank the goddesses for their blessings, and slowly, let the circle of light that surrounds you fade, knowing that the energy of your ritual continues to work its magic.

REMEMBER: On the 3rd evening following the Full Moon Ritual. Take the Bowl with the blessed paper and add it to your buried spot of maiden seedlings. Letting the potential and the nurture of the moon water to provide further goddess blessings.

Under the full moon's watchful eye, your journey of nurturing and rebirth is blessed. Walk forward with the confidence that what is meant to blossom will do so, guided by divine light and love.

Carmen Vass

The River Wise

A dusty woodland path I walked
Beaten well and brambled not
Feet aplenty had down it stalked
Some would say, "What more to want?"

To mine eyes a glimmer shone
And rafting river I did spy
Thought then I to follow it Home
Turned there to tramp the river wise

Met her in deepen fairy pool
There from to climb her course
Strength to strive as winds grew cool
In her bubbling many a voice

Tales in thousand tongues told
Discoursing secrets they do hide
Pressing on I, brave and bold
Eyes held still her flow beside

Once did feel a panging thirst
Knowing her, wished then to drink
The bank could not I reach at first
Could then but fathom stop and think

Traveled on some few steps more
Til time turned itself aright
Now could I reach the magic shore
In touching her, myself did sight

At this vision did I so jump
And took fast myself away
From her blood I'd not yet drunk
Yet my thirst had placed at bay

Effortless the common path
Its way shone bright and clear
But, oh, the river winding hath
Humming song secrets to share

Many the man never shall see
Marveled world of rivers bed
Those who seek its hidden beauty
Ofttimes in mire must tread

Although the flow may carry us
Downhill quickly to upward climb
Still this lady teaches us
To know what strengths we hold inside

A moment for I lost her track
Passed the time I'd poorly spent
But then I heard her calling back
Musics returning to my sense

If surface be of frozen crust
Beneath life's blood flows free
Barred by stick or stone we must
Meet challenge to dance on faithfully

I settle near to drink the stream
She holds me in her sweeping arms
One life passed by as though a dream
Cascades drift kept me from harm

Touching once and drinking too
Had felt I'd known it all
Twas then her river bent anew
Myriad voices my name did call

Seeking now to know her further
Took just one onward step
On her bank I stood no longer
Waters round my legs then crept

Striding deeper did sing aloud
Others within now visible too
Clasping hands aloft and proud
For each one of these I knew

Singing now we stay the course
Be it midnight, dawn, high noon
And new voices join the chorus
We flow on steady by sun and moon

Along the solid edge do mark
Peering into our misty realm
Seekers beginning now to embark
Call of the river at the helm

Glimpse and touch and taste shall they
Then at last may truly see
We carry the river every day
I for the river, and the river for me

Vera Nadine

Ostara

Oh-star-ra {*Proper noun*}

Pagan solar holiday honouring the spring's warmth
light from the sun and the awakening of the earth.

The crow beside me asks

"Why don't they sell tulips in the train station?" –

from the walkway we watch slugs below us
hunting for chocolate eggs shopping for sandals

I remember once meeting a giant here
who carried an eagle in his coat –

I measured him against my coffee cup
disintegrating lips on my paper straw

Rochelle Hanslow

Persephone's Garden

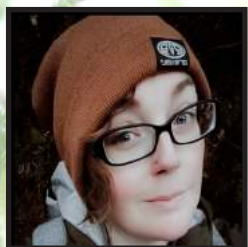
She peels back my skin
layer by delicious layer
Holds me to her shears
snipping

discarding Self
to reveal the fruit that grows therein

Making me soft where I am strong
annihilating me where I am weak
Whittling flesh away
cutting

discarding Self
until only my ghost remains

Steffie de Vaan



Rochelle Hanslow is a Scottish, neurodivergent poet and writer. Her work has been widely anthologised and she has previously featured in Witch Magazine. Rochelle is currently working towards her first poetry pamphlet under the editorial guidance of poet Laurie Bolger and regularly performs her work online with more performances coming up this year. www.rochellehanslow.com/ www.instagram.com/thestingingbelle/

Without end no beginning.

Here in this moment
When we are unsure
Of where to go
Where there is a line
On the horizon
Where we want to be
A fresh start
A fire to cleanse the past
To cast away the shadows
Of the past
Where we used to wander
Where we once felt safe
Away from the arms of lovers
In the claws of the haters
We dare not travel
Beyond that which we know
But there is a certain something
An energy inside,
All around us
A sacred soul, something undefined

That will give us new strength
That will guide us with fire in her eyes
Show us snowflakes in bloom
Here in the cold
We realise the truth
That some things need to be broken
To release us from ourselves
So that we can find the energy
To follow our own path
Where we need to be
Where we shall be,
In this moment.

Dead Culture



Dead Culture is a one man darkwave band driven by frantic drums & shrieking cello's. Lyrics by Mandrake.
www.facebook.com/DeadCulturePoetry

First Impressions - an Extract

They must have had a mother, but honestly, they couldn't remember her. Nor could anyone else for that matter. The girls had always been just that, the girls. They'd been passed from pillar to post ... each home had felt it best to move them along. Not that they were bad, no, far from it, they were remarkably quiet and dutiful. That said, there was something unsettling about them. It was difficult to voice or explain this feeling without looking like a superstitious fool. Sister Mary had sworn blind that they sent eyes to watch her whilst sleeping, although it had to be noted that Sister Mary was later found to be in possession of numerous large (and mostly half empty) bottles of homebrewed whisky. She denied all knowledge of the bottles, but still, they were found in the bottom of her knicker drawer. After that there was no question but to send Sister Mary away to a quiet retreat. It didn't change anything, though, the other children still shunned them. Playing with the girls always became too, well, too real for comfort. It was all fun and games, running from an imaginary dragon until, from nowhere, a shadow reared up and bit someone's ankles. No, it was too difficult to explain, far easier to just move the girls along.

So it was that one dismal evening, they arrived at a new home. The rain fell in stair rods on the dank street. It splashed from the pavement and raced in gurgling rivulets between the rounded cobbles and into the gutters. The taller of the two stood upright, her dirty blonde hair plastered against her pale face. Rain trickled down the nape of her neck before soaking into her tight plaits. She had no baggage other than a beaten, vinyl covered vanity case which she clutched to her chest. The smaller girl buried her face in her sister's coat, like a sparrow trying to burrow into its nest. Her wild curls trembled with each sob and she gripped tightly at the stained hem of her skirt. Mrs Phillips, a sour-faced woman, eyed them resentfully. Oh, she'd heard all the rumours, and now they were her problem!

'Inside, both of you!' she yapped. 'Sit there,' she pointed towards a pair of hard backed chairs, 'Don't move - and none of your funny business either!' Miss Phillips sniffed and turned sharply, calling for one of the older girls to take care of the new charges. As Phillips crossed the hall, a trio of children bustled from a side door. Beaming brightly, the children chorused,

"Good evening, Miss Phillips." The change in the surly woman was astounding, she bent to acknowledge their greeting, her face crinkling into a wide smile before the children skipped on. Miss Phillips continued out of the hall, humming.

The taller girl had watched the exchange carefully. The sparrow girl, her face still hidden, began to whimper. As the taller girl shifted slightly, her jaw twitched. She closed her eyes, just for a moment. Funny business...strange name for it. All it ever brought was heartache and trouble. No, there was nothing even remotely funny about their day to day existence, she thought hard, but try as she might, she couldn't remember the last time she'd laughed. No-one ever laughed with them, and moreover, this was especially true when the funny business started. Her eyes snapped open, now she understood. How could she have missed it for so long? They needed to take charge of the situation. It stood to reason that things should work both ways. Well, now it was time to test that theory and dam the flow, it seemed logical that it might begin to trickle back their way. Whatever, whoever they were, it had to be disguised. Any trace of strangeness must be glossed over. Nobody should know they were different. They needed to work together to become something altogether more...palatable, more shiny. With a few tweaks they could hide themselves in plain sight. She leaned over to her sister and whispered hurriedly. The sparrow girl looked up, frowning, but her sister smiled back confidently.

The two then settled back into their chairs. If you'd watched closely you might have imagined that their hair began to gleam a little more brightly, ringlets curled and tightened. It seemed that the vinyl case you'd first assumed to be torn and tatty was actually carefully matched with the girls' dainty patent shoes, they glinted under the hall lights. The girls smiled and smoothed down their crisp, clean dresses, after all, it was important that they looked their best.

Julie Harrison

An Extract from *Birch the Selfish Witch*

Birch hated the thought of the new baby and made sure she avoided all conversations about it. Why should she pretend to look forward to it? Wasn't she taught that if she had nothing nice to say then to say nothing at all? Birch spotted an empty cup on her dresser, bent to pick it up, brushed her hand through her very short brown hair so it stuck up just how she liked it and ran downstairs to help her Mum, guilt forcing her to move, even if she did so with bad grace.

"Hey, slow down!" Rock said as he walked past the bottom of the stairs.

"Sorry." Birch grinned, "I didn't see you."

"Obviously, we're having pizza for dinner, I don't suppose you want any?" He said holding the box high up in the air with a big smile on his face.

"Cool." Birch tried to reach up but was not tall enough, still, she tried again and failed. She continued to jump up at the box as she followed him into the kitchen laughing.

"There you are. I wondered where you had got to, Birch." Her Mum said to her from her seat at the dinner table, she turned her head for the 'welcome home' kiss from Rock. "How was your day, love?" She said to him.

"Pretty good as usual, how about you?" He gently placed his hand on her huge tummy and smiled as the baby kicked.

Birch could see her Mum's tummy ripple from where she sat. It made her shudder, how horrible to have a big thing inside you wriggling about. She thought of an octopus and had to look away quickly before her mum saw the horror on her face.

"I finished sorting the baby's clothes today, we're ready for the little one as soon as the baby decides to make an appearance," Mum said to Rock as she also placed her hand on her tummy.

"I hope you didn't work too hard, you need your rest."

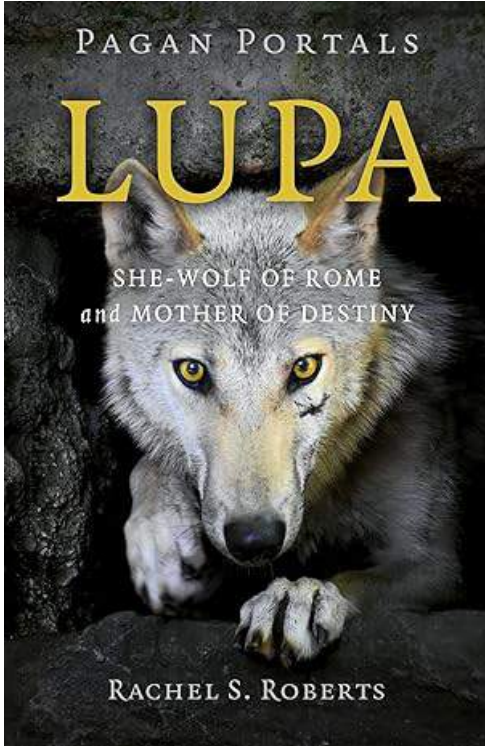
Birch looked down at her white empty plate, hoping the food would come soon. She hated it when they spoke about the baby, what about her? No one asked if she'd had a good day at school or what she had been doing today. Finally, Rock opened the pizza box and told her to dig in. He had bought Birch's favourite type home, a 'Meat Supreme', it was covered with lots of pepperoni, ham and mushrooms. The pizza still didn't cheer her up though, she always felt left out when they talked about the baby and these days it was all they talked about. Birch took two pieces and sat quietly eating them while her Mum and Rock talked about whether the baby would arrive by the due date, after or even early. Both of them sounded excited, which made Birch even more miserable.

As soon as dinner was over, Birch washed the plates and cups for her Mum and disappeared off to her room claiming she had a lot of homework to do. It was true, she did, but it was not as urgent as she had claimed. She just couldn't spend all night hearing them talk about 'it'.

Birch switched on her computer and found she had a message from her best friend Hazel. Although they saw each other every day at school, Hazel and Birch always spent some of the night messaging each other. Hazel was such a fun friend, always interested in doing what she shouldn't and often getting in trouble. Birch didn't mind; she loved all the attention the two of them got whenever they were caught doing something bad.

Birch scanned through the message. Every-one was making plans for the Imbolc celebration at the Stones and Birch and her friends were getting their new dresses ready for the maiden procession. Birch had been sewing her dress by hand as her Mum hadn't remembered to do it. This had made Birch very angry, she knew her Mum could usually be found sitting on the sofa most of the day reading, so she knew she had plenty of time to sew the dress for her if she had wanted to. In her last email to Hazel, Birch had, yet again, complained about the new baby, telling Hazel that her Mum doesn't have time for her now. How much worse would it be when it arrives? She asked. She wished they were not having a baby and that she could still be her Mum's little miracle. - *to be continued in the Beltane magazine.*

What We're Reading



Lupa by Rachel S. Roberts

This book takes the reader on an inspiring journey through the history of the sacred she-wolf as goddess and symbol of Rome. Roberts explores the well-known myth of Romulus and Remus, diving deeply into the spiritual meaning of many aspects of the story including the womb cave and the fig tree.

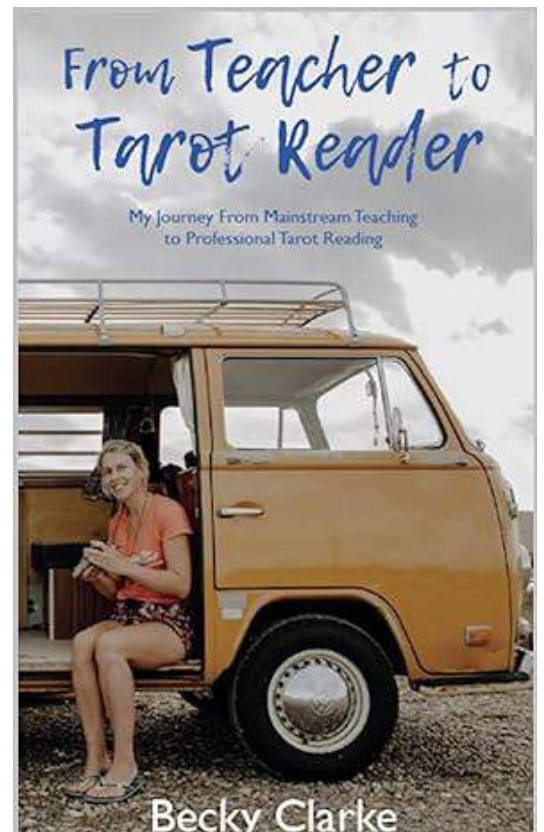
As well as uncovering evidence of the historic worship of Lupa, Roberts also offers ways that the she-wolf deity can be approached and worked with in the modern day. This book is a rallying call to any who aspire to bring more wild divine energy into their practice.

Reviewed by Helen JR Bruce

From Teacher to Tarot Reader by Becky Clarke

Part personal journey, and part tarot guide, there is much to be taken from *Teacher to Tarot*, and how it can make big changes in your own life. This was such an enjoyable read, with something for new and experienced tarot reader's alike.

Reviewed by Bekki Milner



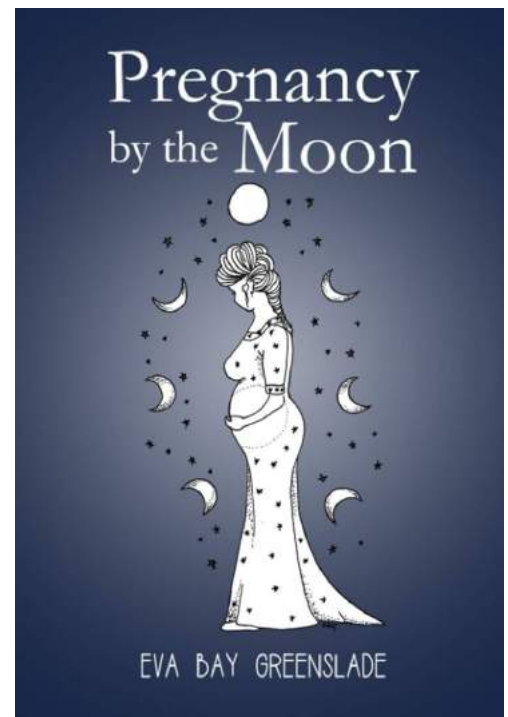
Pregnancy by the Moon

by Eva Day Greenslade

This delightful book is an invaluable guide to anyone who wishes to bring a nurturing, spiritual grounding to their pregnancy. Laid out in an easy to access manner, it provides prompts and space to journal. The gentle structure supports the creation of practice and mindfulness around your pregnancy, linking it to the cycles and energies of the moon.

Alongside guidance, the sections which invite personal input will create a lasting memento and I'm sure this book would go on to become a treasured trove of pregnancy memories for many women.

Reviewed by Helen JR Bruce



Won't Stop Moving

by Sam Creedon-Gray


I love a good oracle book - and this is amongst some of the best I've used! I found myself returning often, sometimes daily for insight or wisdom, either generally or for guidance in particular situations. The pages read like friendly reminders, and sometimes give you the push you need back to yourself or out in to the wild.


Reviewed by Bekki Milner.



Monique Bouman

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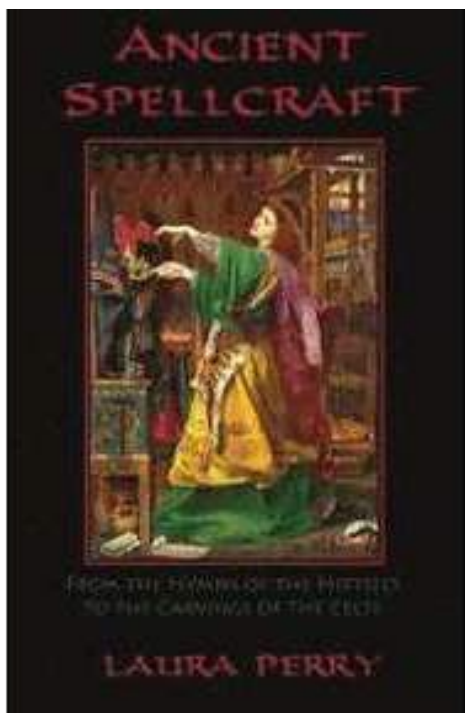
 Kieksartworld

Ancient Spellcraft

by Laura Perry

Ancient Spellcraft by Laura Perry, American artist, natural healer, pagan priestess, and creator of the Minoan Tarot, is a book of spells and rituals designed to empower the practitioner in forging a magical connection with cultures and pantheons from our distant past, many of which are underrepresented in mainstream spell books.

Spells in this book cover the most all-around useful subjects for most readers, including spells for good luck and business success, protection of self and property, romance and interpersonal relationships, divination, fertility and a lovely collection of healing spells. Each spell offers the reader an opportunity to work with deities that they may never have connected with before, from throughout ancient Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East, such as the Etruscan goddess Turan, the Celtic god Ogma, the Anatolian goddess Cybele, the Minoan goddess Rhea and many more.



A spell that I found myself particularly drawn to is one inspired by the Minoans of ancient Crete and their renown for success in business. Weaving in the goddess Ariadne and her sacred saffron, it is a delightful and easy spell for growing your own income and business. Another simple but powerful spell that I enjoyed is intended for protection from supernatural sources and brings in the energy of the Celtic goddess Brigid via her sacred Rowan tree and the use of the Ogham alphabet. These are just a small sample but meaningful, easy-to-follow spells for any taste can be found in these pages.

Well-researched and containing some splendid stories from the ancestral world, such as that of the attempted theft of Hera's temple statue from the island of Samos, the book and Laura's clear love of, and familiarity with, these ancient ways helps bring these cultures to life for the reader and allows us to see ourselves in them, taking them from the realm of the unapproachable to that of the personally inspiring. Ancient Spellcraft will appeal to novices and

practiced spell casters alike and serves as the perfect jumping-off-point for delving further into the rituals, symbols and magical ways of our ancestors.

Reviewed by Vera Nadine.



Founders, Julia and Philip Siracusa are Spiritual Coaches who can communicate to the other side with the spiritual Realm to get you answers on concerns you have in your life. With their dedicated professional Psychics, they offer Channeled Readings, Tarot Card Readings, Mini Readings, and Spiritual products that offer help to the client for their needs.

THERE IS A LIL WITCH IN ALL OF US

Julia being a Eclectic Witch and Christina, a Solitary Witch, Horsefly Chronicles World of Psychics offers spell packages and will help guide you through your spell workings or even perform spells in your favor with your distinct intentions.

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Other services include a Open Your Third Eye Meditation Classes, Intuitive Tarot Classes and a Talk to a Friend Service that provides a safe and confidential space for people to talk about their problems and feelings. Whether you're going through a tough time or just need someone to talk to, we're here for you.



Julia Siracusa



Philip Siracusa



Christina Corsetti



Mary LaFrancesca

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TAROT MUSINGS WITH AUSET GYPSY



Ostara, the witches' jubilee that dances on the cusp of the Spring Equinox, beckons practitioners to embrace the burgeoning energies of renewal and growth. Woven into the tapestry of this enchanting celebration are the mystical tales told by the Sun, the Fool, and Judgment tarot cards – three arcane companions that guide witches through the labyrinth of Ostara's magic.



The Sun, that celestial charioteer of warmth and radiance, becomes a beacon of joy during Ostara's revelry. As the equinox heralds longer days and the earth blooms with vibrant colors, the Sun card represented here as Apollo Himself, whispers secrets of vitality and empowerment to witches. Its golden rays weave through rituals, infusing practitioners with the life force that mirrors the blossom-

ing of nature. Witches, like sunflowers turning to face the light, are reminded during Ostara to bask in the warmth of their own inner brilliance, embracing the potential for growth and transformation.

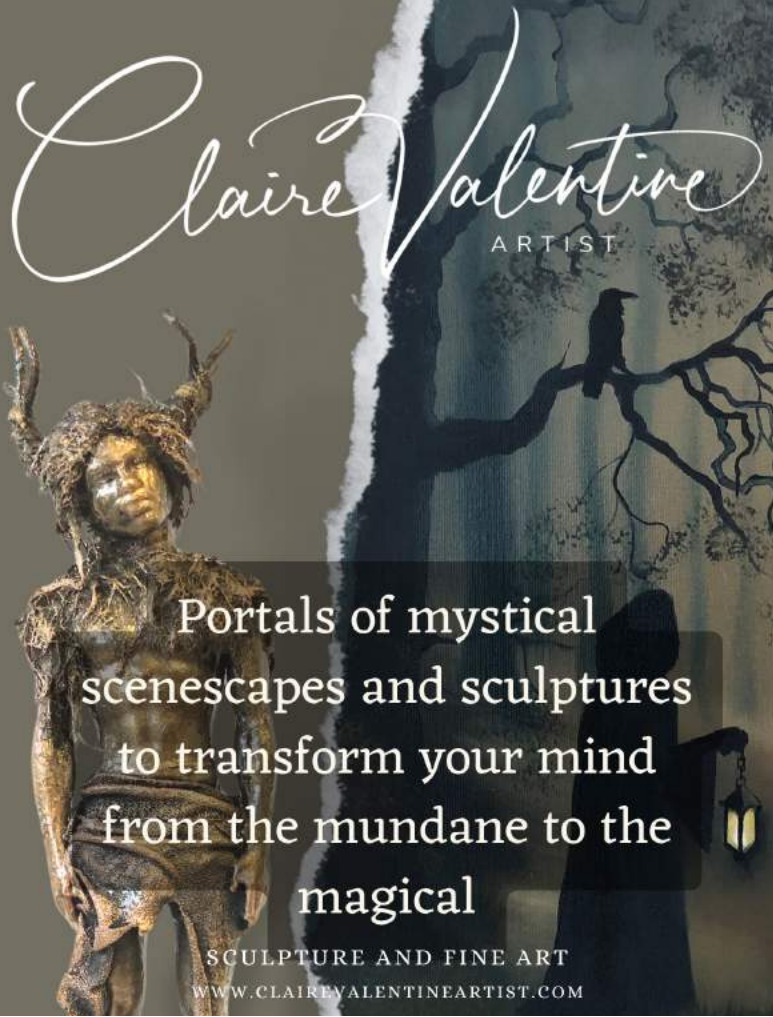
Enter the Fool, that whimsical wanderer dancing on the precipice of new beginnings. With Ostara's air buzzing with the vitality of the season, the Fool becomes the embodiment of carefree exploration. This mischievous companion urges witches to shed the heavy cloaks of winter's introspection and to frolic in the meadows of spontaneity. As symbols of eggs and hares adorn altars, the Fool encourages practitioners to leap into the unknown, embracing the fertile grounds of possibility that Ostara bestows. The dance of the Fool becomes a sacred rite, inviting witches to surrender to the whims of the season and revel in the unpredictable nature of the journey ahead.

In the shadowy corners of Ostara's rites emerges Judgment, a card whispering tales of spiritual reckoning and rebirth. As nature undergoes a metamorphosis, so too do witches stand at the crossroads of self-reflection. Judgment here perceived as Mercury heralds and calls upon practitioners to rise from the ashes of the past, much like the phoenix reborn in the equinox fires. Ostara becomes a potent moment for witches to cast away old wounds and embrace the luminous dawn of a new chapter. The Judgment card, resonating with the echoes of ancestral wisdom, guides witches through a ritual of self-discovery, prompting them to heed the call of their inner truths.

Together, the Sun, the Fool, and Judgment tarot cards become the mystical triad that threads through the witchy fabric of Ostara and the Spring Equinox. In the cauldron of rituals and spellwork, these cards become talismans, unlocking the portals to the secrets of the season. As witches conjure the potent energies swirling around them, they invoke the Sun's warmth, dance with the Fool's whimsy, and heed the Judgment's call to transformation

and one's higher calling or destiny even!

Ostara, bathed in the hues of blossoms and the whispers of ancient rites, becomes a haven where the witchy souls commune with the mystique of the tarot. Through the Sun, the Fool, and Judgment, practitioners find themselves entwined with the pulsating heartbeat of the season, casting spells that echo through the verdant tapestry of the Spring Equinox. In the dance of light and shadow, witches unveil the secrets woven by these tarot allies, embracing the very essence of Ostara's enchantment – a celebration steeped in magic, rebirth, and the ever-unfolding mysteries of the craft.



Carmen Vass

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Christine Bull

I am the creator of Twitch and the Witch and I am just a tad daft. I don't take life too seriously and get bored quickly with people who owlways moan and complain. I owlso love to make up words, especially ones that have 'owl' in them!

<https://twitchandthewitch.com/>



WITCH
Magazine

OSTARA