

Green Book Of Meditations

Volume Nine: Plants, Animals, Food & Drink

2003 Introduction

It was with a bit of regret that I did not include this section in Part 7 of ARDA 2. However, food, plants and animals (things that lived and are eaten) formed an aesthetic wholeness that cried out for a separate book. I figured that what is more green than trees, so it became a green book with less than a month to publishing. I fully expect that this book will expand with more research on trees and various recipes being submitted by members.

Sincerely,
Mike Scharding
March 20, 2003
Embassy of Japan, D.C.

Printing History

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Section One: Food & Drink

The Breakfast of Champions

By Eric Powers, Digitalis Grove of DC

Let's name the first brands that come to mind when we think of Ireland; Guinness, Irish Spring soap, and Lucky Charms. Mike Scharding glommed onto Lucky Charms for St. Patrick's Day, knowing full well they had little to do with Ireland. But they're so "magically delicious" that he's been raving about them, but my idea of Irish Breakfast is bacon, poached eggs, blood sausage, boiled tomato, cheese, and lard on a bagel, and a hair of the dog that bit me. <http://www.irishfestivals.net/irishbreakfast.htm> Well, I'm no Third-Order guru, but I did some of my own research into the "Celticity" of Lucky Charms. You are what you eat, so what DID the Celts each for breakfast?

Lucky charms were invented in 1963 by General Mills worker John Holahan (an Irish immigrant who died in an unlucky car accident in April 2000) as the first cereal with marshmallow bits, or "marbits." Lucky Charms were created in Minneapolis Minnesota, not far from Carleton College. Is there a connection? Lucky's (his full name is L.C. Leprechaun) magic ability was changing the white marshmallows into colorful shapes (i.e. his treasure) with a license from the Leprechaun council. The original four "marbits" were pink hearts, yellow moons, orange stars, and green clovers. An amazing diversity of shapes have been added for special occasions. The current shapes are red balloons, blue moons, pink hearts, multi-colored rainbows, yellow and white shooting stars, Lucky's green hat with a green clover, orange and yellow pot of gold, and purple horseshoes.

As a breakfast of champions, there is some doubt. According to one study(, <http://www.gwally.com/tests/>) "who prefer the cereal usually become accountants, Internal Revenue Service auditors, librarians who work at the reference desk, or low lever government bureaucrats that stagnate in a dead end position."

The question does remain, would the ancient Druids and magicians of the Celts have eaten Lucky Charms if they had the opportunity? Everybody loved milk. The main ingredients are oats and marshmallows, (plus sugar and vitamins) both of which may have been known to the ancient Celts, who inhabited lands from Denmark to Florence and Turkey to Portugal along the Mediterranean Sea in 200 B.C.

Oats were farm as far back as 2500 B.C in Asia Minor and brought to Northern Europe around 1100 BC by the Scythians, about the time of the domestication of the horses as draft animals. Because of their non-glutinous nature, oats are not useful for bread, and have been used primarily for soups or feeding livestock. In ancient Ireland (i.e. Pre-Christian,) oats (along with barley, wheat, rye, kale, turnips, beans, cherries and apples) were a staple of the Irish diet found mostly in porridge, and also in black pudding. Oats have an unusually heavy amount of proteins, fats and vitamins, plus it counteracts the high cholesterol in the Celtic diets. Oats were also especially resistant to climatic variations and austere conditions. Carried in

times of war, oatcakes were roasted on swords over the fire.

Introduced by Sir Walter Raleigh, the potato prospered in Irish damp conditions and became appreciated in the 18th century. Oats soon were grown only as a cash crop while the family ate potatoes. Irish oats are prepared a little differently than American oats (which are mostly rolled); see "before the potato" for details. Some oats companies in Ireland still operate like they did in the 17th century, such as Flavahan. Oats remain the sixth most cultivated cereal in the world (after wheat, maize, rice, barley, sorghum) and have recently become popular as a health food; however, 93 percent of oats produced are still used for animal food. Russia produces 45 percent of the world's supply followed by US 12% and Canada 8%.

As for the marshmallows, they've been around since 2000BC and were a mixture of sap from the mallow plant (found in marshes) and honey. It was so good, it was reserved only for gods and royalty. Now you don't have to be a "Veil of Isis" initiate to postulate a connection with Egypt. According to the famed Book of Invasions, Ireland was colonized by the Milesians. The Catholic Encyclopedia says:

"The Milesians came from Scythia; and from that country to Egypt, from Egypt to Spain, from Spain to Ireland their adventures are recorded in detail. The name Scot which they bore was derived from Scota, daughter of Pharaoh of Egypt, the wife of one of their chiefs; from their chief Miledh they got the name Milesians, and from another chief Goidel they were sometimes called Gadelians, or Gaels."

Probably fictional, Scota was such a popular character it influenced the naming of both Scotland and Ireland:

"In ancient times it was known by the various names of Ierna, Juverna, Hibernia, Ogygia, and Inisfail or the Isle of Destiny. It was also called Banba and Erin, and lastly Scotia, or the country of the Scots. From the eleventh century, however, the name Scotia was exclusively applied to Caledonia, the latter country having been peopled in the sixth century by a Scottish colony from Ireland. Henceforth Ireland was often called Scotia Major and sometimes Ireland, until, after the eleventh century, the name Scotia was dropped and Ireland alone remained. Even yet it is sometimes called Erin-chiefly by orators and poets."

So it is conceivable that Scota was some sort of unnamed historical figure. Perhaps she was an Egyptian trade merchant's daughter from the coast of the Mediterranean? Whoever the influence, they would have been familiar with the Marshmallow recipe and passed that tradition onto the new land. The marsh mallow plant is native to all of Europe, so herbalists in ancient Ireland probably knew it.

So yes, marshmallows could be considered a possibly ancient Celtic treat or medicine in some format. The recipe used in the US until 1890 was mallow sap plus egg whites and sugar, whipped into a meringue. It was a rather gooey thing, which was often prescribed by doctors for sore throats with immune system booster and sold in little tins. However the substitution of gelatin and corn syrup and tube puffing have given them a dryer more stable form that can be mass-produced without the health benefits of the original.

The cereal is rich in symbolism for me. Its overall taste is sweet, reflecting a positive view of life. The oaten shapes are a fish for the Salmon of Knowledge, the clover for divine "three-ness," flowers for herbs and beauty, and the "x" piece for crossed swords of the conflict in life. The current marshmallows invoke; pink hearts for love and society, green hat for those humble times when we must eat our hat, blue moon for those sadder times when life is changing in unexpected ways, shooting stars for those pyrrhic moments in life's accomplishments, red balloon for the desire to grow and move up in life, purple horseshoes for our interaction with the animal and mineral kingdoms, rainbows for the diversity in society, the pot of gold for the goals and dreams in our lives. I haven't tried diving with my cereal yet, but it would be an interesting task.

So, we have the combination of Celtic and Egyptian's culinary traditions, plus American marketing genius. The conclusion is that you can eat Lucky Charms with a clear conscience, knowing that everything in the cereal (with the exception of the corn-syrup, food colors and the tri-sodium phosphate) is a Celtic food substance. I'd still recommend a shank of lamb, some porridge, beer and bangers, but enjoy them if you dare!

Celtic Dietary Health Problems

By Eric Powers, Digitalis Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 2002

Well, you are what you eat, and after discussing junk food and sanitary issues of the Celts, I believe it is time to address the abysmal eating habits of modern Celts, and their health implications. It is a sad fact that as the waves of Germanic people pushed through Europe, the Celts found it was their turn to choose less desirable and more defensible territory. Any visit to a Gaeltacht region of Celtic speaking territory in Brittany or Wales will show you the poor quality of the farming. Now, it is a little known fact that 2,500 years ago, much of Britain and Ireland's barren hills and plains were covered in thick forest full of lions, bears giant deer, and other monsters. Centuries of degradatory farming erosion, poor arboreal harvesting and other ecological disasters have made many of the bogs and moors of the British Isles. So much for being in harmony with nature. Such a fate awaits the Brazilian rainforest.

For the purpose of the remainder of the essay, we will assume the general French and Belgium and Galician populations are not Celtic. According to the genetic test in the last issue, the English are generally of recent immigrant stock (only back to the 8th century,) despite their understandable desire to be aboriginally of the land in which they dwell. Population and ecological pressures have increased the reliance of the Celts to rely on fish, animal and dairy products. The deer hunts of Ireland's roaming army are legendary, as were Robin Hood's in England.

This hunting/gathering/survival lifestyle continues to be eked out in the small crofting communities of the western shores of Scotland and Ireland on the rugged stony coast. A croft is defined as a land holding between one and 50 acres. A crofter's son once defined a croft as "a small area of land surrounded by regulations." For example, there are roughly 2,000 crofts on the Isle of Skye, but of these only 100 or so are large enough to allow a crofter to earn his entire livelihood from the land. The crofts, once laid out to provide homes together with a home food supply are, as one can see, a survival of past economic conditions. Today, the crofter's role is to provide a family home and a side-line to whatever other job the crofter can obtain. The majority of their working age population have to search elsewhere for employment. Some find seasonal work in the building or service industries, while others serve in the oilfields of the North Sea.

I found the health statistics rather surprising. Celtic regions (e.g. highlands) tend to be poorer than Anglo areas, with reduced access to health care, nutritional education, higher incidents of low-weight babies and more farm accidents. Sound familiar? This is all accentuated by the lack of physical exercise among non-farmers/athletes in modern cultures.

We all know that British rockers never smile in photos, not because they are cool and grim, but because they have some of the most nasty teeth in Europe, with about 50% of Scottish adults in 1970 having not a single natural teeth left in their head, now down to "only" 20%; (which is still 12% higher than England) and much worse in the Highlands. So when you think of all those bards, imagine why the music is much better than the singing (which must be hard with dentures.) Of course, it was the introduction of sugar in the 16th century that was a prime culprit.

UK (9%) and Ireland (6%) show the lowest level of mammography for at-risk age women and among the lowest rates for immunization of child-hood diseases in Europe(87%) which is higher than the US (60%) Scotland has the lowest rate of breast-feeding in Europe (only 35% in first six weeks, 15% in highlands) mostly due to factors of poverty and prudity (or at least that's the rumor.) The birth rate of Ireland and Scotland is the lowest since the famines of 1855. Access to family planning is less than easy in Ireland. Drug use is about as bad as the US and worse than most of Europe outside of the Netherlands.

Consumption of grain-based products in last 24 hours:

Netherlands 93% Germany 90%
France 87% Spain 77%
UK 73% (30% in Scotland)
Europe 75% USA 64%

Obesity Percentage(by various BMI stats for Male/Female)

Sweden 5.3%/N.A.
Netherlands 8%/10%
England 13%/15%
Germany 17%/19%
USA 32%/33%

Things are improving, and the drinking and smoking statistics are rosier. Smoking (Male/Female)

Europe 45%/29% Ireland 40%/31%
Scotland 34/32 UK 40%/30%
USA 30%/26%

Note: Lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer and death in Scotland

Alcohol Consumption Frequency

infrequent (below 1 per week)/average (2 to 3 per week)/frequent (nearly daily) for male and female showing remarkably high abstinence in Ireland, despite traditional stereotypes.

Europe 27/35/36 and 66/29/16
Ireland 41/48/11 and 72/16/2
UK 33/47/20 and 60/30/10
USA 32/45/23 and 53/40/7

Note: Average Scottish Male consumes 20 alcohol units per week (females at 8 units,) i.e. a unit is one 12oz. beer, one cup wine or one shot whiskey.

"The national diet is notoriously high in fat, salt and sugar and low in fruit and vegetables. Next to smoking, our diet is the single most significant cause of poor health, contributing to a range of serious illness, which include coronary heart disease, certain cancers, strokes, osteoporosis and diabetes." How bad is the food really? (Where do you think the restaurant McDonalds was inspired?) Yes, it's rather untasty, probably due to the paucity of strong spices in northern Europe. The old worn saying is that if you want to put on two stone spend a month in Belgium, and to take it off, go to England for a few week. (The drink is better in the latter, I believe.) Perhaps Americans are like the pot calling the kettle black.

I remember during my stays at B&Bs in Ireland in 1998, the standard dreaded breakfast "Heartbreak Special" was two links, a thick slice of sweet black pudding (blood sausage,) a banger (sardine,) two fried eggs, some bacon, a boiled tomato, and a slice of toast with heaps of butter. For the porridge, there was a pitcher of heavy cream; and a cup of coffee Lard-made biscuits were available on the side. Last year, Mike told me he had similar fare in the Scottish dormitory, and Mairi said Welsh fare was not much better. I think fish and chips or the ubiquitous "crisps" (potato chips in 50 flavors) and candy/tobacco stores.

This is not a newly acquired taste of an enriched society, but the fulfillment of centuries of cultural dreams. I bring you this ancient story, in which a chronically troublesome incarcerated bard is hauled out of chains and brought to cure the king of a demon who had hid inside his gullet. The possession caused unimaginable hunger in the ruler that was draining the wealth of the countryside. MacGonglinney, on promise of his prompt release, told the following story after starving the king for five days. As the insanely hungry king listened, bound in ropes at the three narrows, the demon inside slowly came further and further out of the King's mouth, until MacGonglinney grabbed it and threw it into the fireplace, curing the king. I leave you with his words:

Vision of Viands

In a slumber visional,
 Wonders apparitional
 Sudden shone on me:
 Was it not a miracle?
 Built of lard, a coracle
 Swam a sweet milk sea.
 With high hearts heroical,
 We stepped in it, stoical,
 Braving billow-bounds;
 Then we rode so dashingly,
 Smote the sea so splashingly,
 That the surge sent, washingly,
 Honey up for grounds.
 Ramparts rose of custard all
 Where a castle muster'd all
 Forces o'er the lake;
 Butter was the bridge of it,
 Wheaten meal the ridge of it,
 Bacon every stake.
 Strong it stood, and pleasantly
 There I entered presently
 Hying to the hosts;
 Dry beef was the door of it,
 Bare bread was the floor of it,
 Whey-curd were the posts.
 Old cheese-columns happily,
 Pork that pillared sappily,
 Raised their heads aloof;
 While curd-rafters mellowly
 Crossing cream-beams yellowly,
 Held aloft the roof.
 Wine in well rose sparkingly,
 Beer was rolling darklingly,
 Bragget brimmed the pond.
 Lard was oozing heavily,
 Merry malt moved wavily,

Through the floor beyond.
 Lake of broth lay spicily,
 Fat froze o'er it icily,
 'Tween the wall and shore;
 Butter rose in hedges high,
 Cloaking all it's edges high
 White lard blossomed o'er.
 Apple alleys bowering,
 Pink-topped orchards flowering,
 Fenced off hill and wind;
 Leek-tree forests loftily,
 Carrots branching tuftily,
 Guarded it behind.
 Ruddy warders rosily
 Welcomed us right cosily
 To the fire and rest;
 Seven coils of sausages,
 Twined in twisting passages,
 Round each brawny breast.
 Their chief I discover him,
 Suet mantle over him,
 By his lady bland;
 Where the cauldron boiled away,
 The Dispenser toiled away,
 With his fork in hand.
 Good King Cathal, royally,
 Surely will enjoy a lay,
 Fair and fine as silk;
 From his heart his woe I call,
 When I sing, heroical,
 How we rode, so stoical,
 O'er the Sea of Milk.-

Aniar MacConglinne--Irish,
 12th century-trans.
 G. Sigerson, in
 Bards of the Gael and Gal
 (London Unwin, 1897)

The Salmon of Knowledge

By Mike Scharding, D.C. Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Spring 2002

The Salmon have been migrating from the Atlantic to the headwaters of British and Irish streams since the retreat of the glaciers of the Ice Age 20,000 years ago. In doing so, they have captured the imagination of many a Celt in the Islands and Continent with their ability to transcend boundaries and their heroic struggles.

The Salmon is a fish that has adapted to both fresh and salt water. They spawn in freshwater and as tiny fish enter the great ocean. The Salmon of the British isles travel to the area of Baffin Island and Greenland to grow up. After three or four years, they return in the spring to their native stream head. They stop eating for the duration of the trip, relying on body fat during the journey. They will brave dams and leap up over nine feet into the air to surmount any barriers in their quest, or die of exhaustion, and do not turn back. Strangely, the female always dies after spawning, but those returning for a second spawning are called a "Celt."

Plentiful details on their ecology can be found on the internet, especially these two sites. Pacific Salmon details Atlantic Salmon details

<http://www.asf.ca/Overall/atlsalm.html>

Mythology of the Salmon

Of all the fish in Celtic legends, the Salmon is the mostly popular. There are reportedly many Pictish stones bearing Salmon inscriptions preceding the Gaelic take-over of Scotland. The oldest story is from the Book of Invasions (Leabhar Gabhala) which tells of successive waves of colonization of Ireland. Tuan mac Carell describes the primeval invasions of Ireland, which he witnessed, to Saint Finnen. He also claims to have been reincarnated successively as a stag, boar, eagle, and salmon. During his various shape-shiftings he witnessed all the great events that took place in Ireland and he passed on this knowledge to the historians before he eventually died. In this last form he was caught and eaten by an Irish queen, who conceived him as a human child. Similarly, the legendary Welsh poet Taliesin claims:

I have been a blue salmon
I have been a dog
I have been a stag
I have been a roebuck on the mountain
I have been a grain discovered...\
I rested nine nights in her womb, a child
I have been dead, I have been alive.
I am Taliesin.
[Matthews 1991]

The Salmon is mythically famous for its association with Hazelnuts. The primary story is that of young Fionn (nicknamed Demne) who as a boy was learning bardic skills from Finegas on the rivers of Boyne. Finegas had been patiently fishing for seven years for the Salmon of Knowledge, which had fed on fallen hazelnuts from nine magical (non-descript) hazel trees. The Salmon gained a spot for every hazelnut that it ate. Soon after Fionn's arrival, the fish was caught. Fionn was frying the fish for

Finegas, who was off on a trip, and a boil rose on the fish, he pushed it down with his thumb and burned himself. When he put the thumb in his mouth, the knowledge had all transferred to him. Finegas was, of course, a little disappointed, but Fionn shared the remainder with him and promised another Salmon would come along soon.

Fionn's way of discovering whatever was happening and hidden was always the same. A shallow, oblong dish of pure, pale gold was brought to him. This dish was filled with clear water. Then Fionn would bend his head and stare into the water, and as he stared he would place his thumb in his mouth under his "Tooth of Knowledge," his "wisdom tooth."

The ancient Fianna warband had many special fighting techniques that would be the envy of any martial art movie. One of the most famous besides Caber tossing (to throw bridges for chariots over rivers) was the "Hero's Salmon Leap," which consisted of leaping on top of a standing shield and leaping high up for a "smackdown" on your opponent.

There are also references in Goidelic lore to Salmon being kept in wells (near Hazel tree orchards) for oracular consultation. In the ancient text "Cormac's Vision" the hero sees a royal fortress with four houses in it, and a "bright well" surrounded by ancient hazels. In the well were five salmon, which ate the nuts as they dropped. In the palace, Cormac meets Manannan the sea-god who reveals the Land of Promise to him and presents him with a magic cup and branch. www.enya.org/stories/story06.htm. Later on, Cormac MacArt, king of Ireland in 266 AD, died at Cleiteach, the bone of a salmon sticking in his throat, on account of the siabhradh genii which Maelgenn, the Druid, incited at him, after Cormac had turned against the Druids, on account of his adoration of God in preference to them. So beware Druids bearing dinner. In Christian monastic communities, there were often salmon ponds for eating. In May 11, 1113AD; "A salmon was caught at Cluain-mic-Nois this year, which was twelve feet in length, twelve hands in breadth without being split, and three hands and two fingers was the length of the fin of its neck." (This is the site of the ruins of the monastery of Clonmacnoise in County Offaly on the River Shannon below Lough Ree and above Portumna, which is in County Roscommon. The arms of Co. Meath incorporate the salmon also.) Christ is also known as in t-eo sénta cas corcra, "The Blessed Curled Purple Salmon." This seems strange, considering that grown salmon prefer salt-water, but I suppose they can remain in fresh-water if not given a choice;

Virtually all salmon live in the ocean, and return to streams to spawn (or are farmed in net pens along the coastline) but Atlantic salmon have been experimented on in terms of stocking in lakes, and they seem to do well, but still won't self-propagate. In other words, they have to be re-stocked to remain as a stable population. There are now some types of Atlantic Salmon called "freshwater salmon." Apparently, they have been farmed and adapted to freshwater by people. This, in fact, makes them much more like trout than salmon.

Water spirits are plentiful in Celtic countries as quoted below :

"the spirit of the waters was often embodied in an animal, usually a fish. Even now in Brittany the fairy dweller in a well has the form of an eel, while in the seventeenth century Highland wells contained spring fish so sacred that no-one dared to catch them. In Wales Saint Cybi's well contained a huge eel in whose virtues the villagers believed, and terror prevailed when any one dared to take it from the water. Two sacred fish still exist in a holy well at Nant Peris, and are replaced by others when they die, the dead fish being buried. This latter act, solemnly performed, is a true sign of the divine or sacred character of the animal. Many wells with sacred fish exist in Ireland, and the fish have usually some supernatural quality, they never alter in size, they become invisible, or they take the form of beautiful women." [MacCullach]

Salmon, like the proverbial "Frog in the Well" can plum the depths of the unconsciousness for lost treasures and truths. Gantz's Early Irish Myths and Sagas has the story of Froech and Findabair. Findabair loses her ring and her father accuses her of lying to him in order to date Froech. Findabair later prepares a salmon for him that had swallowed it. Saint Kentigern is similarly associated with the Salmon. The story of St. Kentigern is similar. He was the patron saint of Glasgow, from which he proselytized in Cumbria. Folklore makes him the grandson of Urien of Rheged. He and his mother were set adrift in a coracle but were miraculously saved. He vindicated the virtue of a queen who had given her ring to her lover: when the king demanded to see it, it was discovered in a salmon's belly. The salmon is Kentigern's device. During a time of drought St Kevin fed his community with salmon brought to him by an otter. He was reputed to have baptized Merlin before his death. This last story is borrowed from the legend of SUIBHNE GELT, who was confessed by Saint Moling after a life of paganism and madness.

There are many legends of holy wells that held salmon in them and suddenly became great rivers due to an accident. One legend tells of the origin of the river Shannon in Ireland. The Boyne and well of Segais has a very similar story with a young lady named Boan whose curiosity was too great. Latis was a Lake Goddess who later became a Goddess of ale and mead. Evidence of her worship still remains at Birdsowald, England. Latis fell in love with a salmon, which represents knowledge, and out of pity for her, the other deities turned him into a warrior. However, each winter he must submit to becoming a salmon again until spring.

In Brythonic Lore (i.e. Welsh,) the Mighty Salmon of Llyn Llyw (The Lake of the Leader,) was so ancient and powerful that he gained a truce with the Eagle of Gwern Abwy, who agreed to take 50 fish-spears out of the venerable Salmon's back for him. In the Arthurian tale of Culhwch and Olwen, it is the salmon--and only the salmon--who carried Kai and Gwrhyr Gwalstawd Ieithoe on its shoulders to find the Mabon, the Divine Child of Celtic tradition, the being who brings eternal life and vigor. Indeed, fairies are known to wear stylish salmon-skin caps, showing a link to the afterworld.

Magical Lore of the Salmon:

The salmon was revered by the Celts. It was from eating the Salmon of Knowledge that Fionn mac Cumhal gained his wisdom. The salmon has been substituted by the herring in modern Scottish Samhain customs. You must eat a raw or roasted salt herring, in silence, just before going to bed. You will dream of your future partner offering you a drink of water with which to quench your thirst. A similar version is found in the Isle of Man:

* "A Manx girl should eat a salt herring, bones and all, without drinking or speaking; she must then retire to bed backwards; in her dreams she will see her future spouse coming to bring her a drink." [Hull, p. 237]

* In the Hebrides, the salt herring may be substituted with the Bonnach Salainn (salt bannock)--a cake made from meal, with a substantial amount of salt added.

* Traditionally, Salmon was presented at royal banquets with honey and butter.

* Among commoners, salmon was popular during Lent and on days of fast and abstinence. In folk medicine, Salmon gall was used as a remedy for blindness or to correct poor vision.

* The Salmon is referred to as the "King of Fish," and is never spoken of directly while fishing or in a boat; being referred to as "The Red Fish" or "The Spotted One." To this day, in some parts of Ireland, the Salmon is invoked for curses and blessings:

The treatment of the boiled broken little fish to you
The Roasting of the salmon to the very end on you
Slainte an Bhradain Chugat: The health of the salmon to you.

Druidical Diet Decision Dilemma Discourse

By Mike Scharding, Digitalis Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2002

After reading Eric's article (see A Druid Missal-Any Samhain 2002,) I felt inspired to write about my only eating decisions. There are no precedents in the RDNA regarding vegetarianism, so it seems to be a personal choice. Of course, I will try to offer a balanced view, from my own perspective. The choice(s) by the esteemed reader (in either direction) may be made easier by a familiarity with all the issues involved.

There seems to have been little doubt that the ancient Celts enjoyed meat, eggs, honey and dairy products. Examination of ancient trash dumps near ancient villages has shown a healthy multitude of bones, shells, and clay hives. Feasts, at least for the elite, were the highlight of year, and many a ferocious competition ensued for the choicest part of a deer. The Celtic descendents still love them, perhaps too much for their own good. Certainly harvest conditions may have hindered choice of farmed animal products, but hunting and fishing in communal lands continued well into the 19th century. Crofting, as mentioned before, still provides food and income for many tens of thousands in Celtic lands; enjoying a close link with the creatures that would become dinner.

After numerous fitful attempts at vegetarianism at Carleton, I eventually cut out mammalian meat during my stay in Japan, three years ago, but continue to eat poultry, fish and reptilian dishes (I call it a dinosaur diet.) While Japan is changing to a more Western meat-based approach in meals, you can still get balanced meals, especially if you permit seafood in your diet, as I have chosen. I don't think about it too much anymore, except for considering the "next-step," removing my beloved cheese and milk, and substituting soy products.

There are, in fact, several forms nowadays; ranging on the "carnivorous-vegetarian" spectrum, that have increasingly filled the gap between extremes. The educated mind is said to understand two opposing viewpoints, and come up with a third. Most Druids naturally gravitate towards a moderate choice in the middle.

* Carnivorous -The Eskimos are the most well-known group to have lived almost wholly on animals and partly digested sea-plants from their digestive tracts. They also enjoy remarkable good health, due to the prevalence of fish, with the occasional sea-mammal.

* Carnivorous when possible - this is the average American and Celtic diet dream of having three servings (or more) of animal meat and a few servings of dairy products. It is a hefty protein diet, providing about 40% to 50% of the calories.

* Religiously Qualified Omnivores - certain faiths forbid certain animals for "purity" reasons or "taboos" (e.g. horses, dogs, and cats are taboo in America,) but these are not always followed in practice. Hindus avoid eating cows out of respect, and their economic importance to the non-mechanized farming economy. Buddhists generally advocate different degrees of vegetarianism for reasons of respect to reincarnated ancestors and living beings. Catholics generally avoid meat (but not fish) during Lent. Certain monastic orders (Trappists) are vegetarian mostly for ascetic reasons. Seventh Day Adventists, many Hindus, and Jainists (who also avoid red vegetables) also avoid meat.

- * Pollovegetarian: eats poultry and not other types of meat.
- * Pescatarians: Vegetables and non-mammalian seafood.
- * Lacto-ovo vegetarian: eats dairy and egg products; no meat.
- * Ovo vegetarian: eats eggs, no meat.
- * Lacto vegetarian: eats dairy products; no eggs or meat
- * Vegans: Only plants and perhaps fungi. No meat, leather, milk (except Mother 's milk,) honey, feathers, lard.
- * Fruitarians: Only eat the "expendable" portions of plants; seeds, flowers, fruits. The main plant should survive unharmed during the harvest procedure.
- * Breatharianism: Believe it or not, there are some groups that believe that eating food actually poisons the body, and that clean air and sunlight are all we need. A few dozen have died trying to follow this diet, but the leaders complain that perhaps polluted air and lack of spiritual exercises were at fault.

From my conversations with Druids over the years, I've deduced the following top ten reasons why people continue to eat meat.

1. Never thought about it much. This is also known as the "disassociation" or "culture" reason. My family, friends and co-workers always incorporated animal products, and now it is second nature to me. Society has made the choice, and I follow their guidance. These people have not, in fact, made a conscious choice either way. One elementary class, when asked to draw a salmon, invariably drew a nice "D" shaped pink slice of meat, rather than a living creature.
2. Taste and Texture. In the gourmet's rainbow of flavors and chewability, nothing matches a nice succulent piece of meat. There is a reluctance to give up the variety of their palette (palate?) in artistic terms, regardless of the vast unexplored territory of vegetable options; they enjoy what they have already discovered in the meat realm.
3. Health Reasons. Without animal protein, I'd become skinny, decrepit, and waste away to nothing. Most plants can't provide certain key minerals and vitamins that our body can't make. Besides, even if vegetarians live longer, life is about choosing what you like.
4. Simplicity. Nothing is simpler than sticking a piece of roasted meat between two breads or on a plate. Saves time and fills you up. It also feels "good."
5. Intelligence. The strong and smart will eat the weak and stupid. Of course, this argument doesn't go well; when a camper gets eaten by a bear, we want revenge! "Animals don't feel like us" and "animals can't vote" fits in here.
6. Divine. The Monotheistic God gave us dominion over the Earth. We can choose to eat them with no fear of angering God.
7. Economics. Supporting the jobs of ranchers and livelihood of traditional pastoralists.
8. Hunting. I feel at one when I shoot one. Hunters carry on traditions, provide conservation volunteers and finance many ecological projects.
9. Life Force. This is rarely brought up, but it runs instinctively, "You are what you eat." By eating certain animals, people believe they absorb their spirit or "energy" and gain positive characteristics. This is found in Chinese medicines, Native American hunting practices, and American football players eating

steak to increase their bullish nature. I had a lot of trouble with this argument in Japan, where they "welcome" the spirit to join with them by saying "itadakimasu" ("I will receive") not to the chef, but to the meal. I always argued that the animal rarely ever wanted to do this before they died. Perhaps after dying, they change their minds?

10. "I'm not prejudiced, I eat everything." My wife proffers this one, driving me crazy. By "excusing" any one species (except Homo Sapiens,) you are being unfair to all the others. She argues that plants have spirit(s) too, and we have to eat something, so accept whatever fate brings to you, animal or plant. We live on a pyramid of death, and should humbly accept this. Even cows inadvertently eat bugs in the grass, or squash a frog. That's life (and death,) get used to it.

There are, of course, several counter-arguments, on behalf of the Vegetarians;

1. Compassion. Like many animal-rightists, vegetarians often consider animals to have feelings similar or equal to our own in sensitivity, especially in self-preservation, comfort, pain, and family ties.

2. Method. Centers around the painful cramped nature of mass-farms (idyllic family farms are almost extinct,) lack of stimulation, movement, painful and frightened deaths. This encompasses a huge range of stomach-turning descriptions. To me, this still leaves open the possibility of accepting meat from an animal that receives a peaceful anesthetized death, on a big rolling farm after many years of productive live experiences. Douglas Adam's futuristic vision of a cow that is bred to desire being eaten, and which can eloquently explain this to the diner, comes to mind.

3. Health Reasons. Cardiovascular disease, colon cancer, obesity, transmitted diseases (both sanitary and parasitical) and pesticide/antibiotics/hormones should dissuade us, especially in semi-raw products. Meat eating people are especially stinky. Oddly enough, those countries noted for their high protein consumption have the worst rate of osteoporosis in the world, while the disease is almost unheard of in the poorer nations that cannot afford meat or drink milk.

4. Diversity. Heavy reliance, or preference for meat, blinds us to the dazzling variety of protein and calcium substitutes. The five vegetables that Americans eat most are French fries, tomatoes (mostly as sauce or ketchup,) onions, iceberg lettuce, and other potatoes; that's not my idea of fruits and vegetables-that's garnish on burgers." Did somebody say "vitamin supplements?"

5. Intelligence. If animals have some ability to react to their environment at all (i.e. "think") we should respect it, no matter how rudimentary; and choose food sources that don't injure their lifespans. This is found most prominently in the protection of robustly intelligent critters like whales, monkeys, dogs and lawyers.

6. Divine. As mentioned before, many specific animals are revered by certain religions.

7. Environment/Economics. Revolves around the fact that by going through an intermediate step (the animal) 90% of plant proteins and carbohydrates and huge amounts of scarce water are "lost" that could have grown food for hungry people. Many forests and marshes are destroyed to make pasturage for cattle/sheep/crops; not to mention methane. Animal protein naturally is more expensive than vegetable protein, except in very unusual regions of the world.

One acre of land (two acres equals one hectare):

a) Can produce enough feed for about 50 pounds of animal protein with only 15% of that available for human consumption.

b) Can feed 20 vegans or 1 meat eater.

c) Can produce enough soybeans to yield about 500 pounds of protein.

d) Can produce enough wheat to meet the protein requirements for one person for 877 days, whereas soybeans would produce enough protein for 2,224 days.

e) Can produce enough food to feed 4 vegans.

f) Can produce (in pounds): potatoes (40,000,) onions (40,000,) carrots (30,000,) tomatoes (50,000,) celery (60,000,) beef (250.)

g) Requires (in gallons of water): tomatoes (23,) lettuce (23,) potatoes (24,) wheat (25,) carrots (33,) apples (49,) eggs (544,) chickens (815,) pork (1630,) beef (5214.)

8. Friendship. It is said that it is easier to approach animals if you're a vegetarian, because either you smell safe or emit friendly vibes. On hunting trips, take pictures not pelts.

9. Life Force. According to some, similar to intelligence, eating an unwilling victim (carrion is okay?) might result in unfriendly spirits joining your collective spirit, and giving you "spiritual indigestion." Many religions advocate restricting meat before religious festivals. One case of the Tarbh Feis in Ireland, actually had the visionary gorge on beef and wrapped in a fresh hide to predict the future of a king. There is also an infamous Irish King rite of eating a whole mare (after making love to it.)

10. Prejudice/Social Reasons. As below so above. Basically, by incarcerating animals, denying their rights, separating familial creatures, and eating them, it shows a predilection and unconscious support for racial, class, and gender prejudice.

To me, both arguments can range into the moral high ground and practicality. I don't expect you to change your diet or follow my own choices, but I hope I've opened up a new area of your life to examination and contemplation.

Irish Spring and Irish Cleanliness

By Eric Powers, Digitalis Grove of DC

Okay, I wrote the "Lucky Charms" article for Beltaine, so I had to do the follow up. It is a fact of life for us mortals, as I am sure Nozomi will attest, that things get dirty, smelly and unpleasant to the touch; especially our friends. Until our not-so-distant ancestors, people didn't mind the smells to "risk" bathing, and the oils protected the skin and made wrestling easier. But to prepare wool and clean clothes, you need to remove the grime and so soap was invented. Soap was usually just boiled animal fat, wood ashes (or Pot ash,) water and lye.

Then 30 years ago, people learned the advantages of adding perfume, artificial green color, a country's name, a season, and calling it "Irish Spring." But why not call it "Prussian Autumn" or "Ukrainian Winter"? Colgate-Palmolive yields millions of dollars in annual profits from the sale of Irish Spring soap, a product that was only created to improve their image with a bitter and angry Irish community. In fact, Colgate-Palmolive was one of the last large corporations to abandon an officially stated anti-Irish policy. It was well into the 1950s, just a few short decades ago, that Colgate-Palmolive in adherence with that policy, routinely refused Irish and Irish-Americans employment based on their nationality. When Colgate-Palmolive was asked in 1993 to support a National Irish-American Heritage Museum, the request was refused because Colgate-Palmolive was focusing on "the educational needs of youth and minorities." A look at their official web-sites, conspicuously avoids giving a product history (there are five varieties now) or any reasoning why they chose the name. They only describe it as:

"Irish Spring Original launched in 1972 with its classic green striated bar and quickly established Irish Spring as a leading brand for deodorant soap. Irish Spring Original's great, invigorating scent helps keep you feeling clean and fresh." Their selling points are:

Helps keep you feeling clean and fresh,
Great invigorating scent
Rich striated emerald green bar
Used by men and women everywhere
Long-lasting deodorant protection

And of course, "keeps you clean as a whistle" (followed by dirty sexually inviting whistle.) This phrase means "Neatly and effectively done; pure." As in the example: "He maneuvered himself out of that sticky situation as clean as a whistle." The reasoning is that a whistle needs to be clean and free of moisture and debris to produce a clear sound. The oldest literary example is Planche(1851) in Extravaganza where a character says, "Or else his head cut off, clean as a whistle." Which is quite a Celtic feat.

The Celts are in a rather wet area of the world and many legends revolve around bathing and washing, more so than their Saxon neighbors (King Arthur stories aside.) In both Irish and Scottish legend, there is the legendary washing woman at the ford (where water was shallow and lots of rock.) The warrior, who would encounter her washing bloody linen, may rightly suppose that his death on the battlefield is not far off. Morgan ap Modron appears in this connection in a sixteenth-century folk-tale.

CuChulainn saw two maidens washing his bloody garments on his way to his last battle. The Washer is also one of the guises of the Morrigan. Legends are replete with her, as are ban-sidhe legends. They vary on whether by sneaking up on her you can change your fate, or whether her mere gaze would kill you. I suspect they originate from women robbing the corpses after battle, cleaning them up and taking back spoils. Somehow the legend is a foresight of this event.

Bathing incidents are such a great opportunity for story-tellers to get their characters naked, see each other naked, be consumed by their passions, and make poor life-decision choices without any blame. Valuable items like Swan Princess/Selkie/Mermaid items can be stolen and wives gained, great warriors can be disarmed, and hearts can swoon during bathing scenes. Modern movies have not under-used this technique; but since Psycho, have added it as a good opportunity to kill off characters, after gratifying the young male audiences.

Examples are replete in legends. Angus Og had a palace at the river Boyne at whose estuary the Milesians landed. It was there that Eithne loses her veil of invisibility while bathing in the river. I would think that you would keep that on, while bathing outdoors? The church on the banks where Eithne died was named Cill Eithne by St Patrick. Midhir is a lord of the Otherworld. He lives in the mound of the sidhe at Bri Leith. He is one of the Tuatha De Danann and the foster father to Oenghus, who is the child of Eithne, the result of her seducing by Eochy. The seduction comes about when Elkmar, her husband, is put under a spell where he loses track of time. He believes himself to have been away overnight whereas he has slept for nine months, allowing the birth of the child. Midhir, himself, falls in love with a mortal, a girl called Etain, who he also sees bathing. She is the daughter of Aillil. They fall in love with each other at first sight and are soon in bed together. This creates something of a problem when he returns home and presents Etain to his wife, Fuamnach, who (like Juno) finds no ends of means to torment him and young lovers; starting a tragic cycle of stories. This was quite a mess out of trying to get clean.

Nessa, the wife of Cathbad the Druid was another bathing beauty. Her name was originally Assa or "Gentle," but after Cathbad had killed all her tutors, she took up arms as a woman warrior and was afterwards called "Ungentle" or Niassa (Nessa.) Cathbad surprised her bathing without her weapons, but he spared her and granted her only to have her as his wife. She bore Conchobar on the day prophesied as the birthday of Christ. I'd have rewritten the ending a little differently.

There is a place called Abbeyfeale in County Limerick (Gaelic on map: Mainistir na Fiale meaning from the river Fiale,) that is traditionally derived from the legendary Fial, wife of Lewy. She was spotted by him while she was bathing naked in the river and not realizing that the voyeur was her husband expired from shock and shame. The abbey was founded by Brian O'Brien in 1188, upon an earlier foundation.

Maurice was walking one day by the shore of Lough Gur when he saw the beautiful other-world woman Aine bathing. He seized her cloak, which act magically put her into his power, and then lay with her. He probably did something else, for in this way Gearoid Iaria was conceived, and when he was born, Aine appeared at the castle of the Earl to present the child to him. There's a shocker for him!

One book I read mentioned:

Certain Irish social customs are also recounted in the *Hisperica Famina*. The early Irish frequently bathed frequently and considered bathing of guests as an act of hospitality. One text describes the custom of cleaning the feet of travelers: "Fill the steady hand basin with water and wash your dirty feet with flowing draughts; wipe clean your muddy soles with the clear liquid," and again: "pour a clear draught from the wooden tank and wash your dirty feet." The early Irish had a highly developed vocabulary for bathing, with separate words for washing the feet, the hands, hair, or immersing the entire body. For example; *Osaic* was the Old Irish word for washing the feet.

Now we know, the Celts used soap long before the Romans did, because those new-comer Romans build their empire long after the Celts arrived in the region, but they used it to wash their hands in the morning and during bathing. After bathing they would comb oil and scented herbs into their hair. The Romans rubbed their bodies with olive oil and herbs and then scraped it off with a device called a *speculum*. Another little tidbit about this type of "bathing" is when the gladiators did it, the "residue" of combined sweat dirt and the oil concoction was sold to wealthy women as a virility drug that was taken internally. Of course the more famous the gladiator the more expensive it was. (And the Romans called us barbarians) Pretty disgusting isn't it?

While the Celts on the other hand used soap made from vegetable oil and herbs (kind of like what we have now) the only difference per se was the inclusion of lye. Another odd little tidbit about Celtic grooming is that they used stale urine to bleach their hair white; possible inspiring tales of blond Celts, when (touristic commercials aside) in fact most Celts are dark or brunettes. We also know from tales of Celtic grooming habits of all the body-paints, make-up and cosmetics that the Celts (or at least the upper-class) used, and this requires something to remove them before reapplication, i.e. soap.

There are also several *Fulacht Fiadh* (kidney or horse-shoe shaped mounds of burnt stone surrounding a wood or stone lined trough set into the ground,) such as in Lochadoon Valley in Cloghane. Warriors of the *Fianna*, or anyone on extended summer hunts, wouldn't want to haul around a big iron pot and a deer, so they need to cook big hunks of deer or boar somehow. First a stone or timber-lined trough near a stream would be filled with water and then rock would be heated in an adjacent fire before being dropped into the water, a process that was continued until the water boiled. The joints of meat were then placed in the water to boil. It may sound pretty unlikely, but modern archaeological experiments have shown it to be a quite economical and effective method of cooking. It has also been suggested that *Fulacht Fiadh* were used for bathing or as saunas.

According to a link (listed below,) the Gaels were also into building Sweathouses known as *Teach an Allais*, which may have been derived from all the Viking colonies in the Gaeltacht region, perhaps lasting as long as 1902 in distant rural areas without running water? 80 sweathouses existed in Co. Leitrim in the late 19th Century, but seem to be limited to Co. Leitrim, Fermanagh, Cavan, Sligo, and a few isles of western Scotland; Jura, Colonsay, Argyll, and Kilmartin Valley. They are highly dismantable stone-igloos, and possibly were recycled in other regions. Sweating removes poisons in the body, improves appearance by unclogging

pores, combats the persistent rheumatism of North Europe and (surprisingly) warms you up on cold nights. Peter Berresford Ellis in *The Druids* describes one as:

"The further development of the medicated bath was the hot-air bath, used in Ireland as a cure for rheumatism until recent years. The structure in which these baths were given was known as *Tigh an alluis*, or "Sweating house" One such ancient structure survives on *Inishmurray* in Donegal Bay and several have been described in the last century particularly in the north of Ireland. They are small constructions of stone, five to seven feet long. A turf fire was kindled inside until the house was heated like an oven. The fire was removed. The patient, wrapped in a blanket, crept in and sat down on a bench. The door was closed up. The patient remained until in a profuse perspiration and then, on leaving, was plunged into cold water and then rubbed warm. The patient was encouraged to meditate (*dercad*) to achieve *sitchain* (state of peace.) It is not beyond the realm of possibility that this act, found in many cultures in the world as a religious action, had similar religious connotations in the Celtic world." [6]

Most dwellings of the *Sidhe* (people of the hills) are old raths (now submerged lake forts,) duns (old dirt embankments of ruined castles,) disused *par-terre* root-cellars/homes, or still-buried *cromlechs* (those stones stacked on top of each other were once covered by mounds of dirt.) This has brought up the idea to me, that perhaps those *sidhe* or fairies (in certain cases) were not so much a primordial displaced race, a distant race of gods, but memories of vision-crazed mystics who came out of their little sweathouses, still entranced, and performed healings or other magical activities? Those fairy-tales of people out in the night could be stumbling in upon a clandestine meeting of folk-shamans/what-have-yous in their sweathouses, high on who knows what kind of local weed. A nearby stream, which fairies can't cross, might be based on ancient cures for madness. Suddenly surprising the patient with a plunge into cold water was practiced from ancient times to the 19th Century. Boats were constructed which would break up and force patients to swim to the shore in the cold water and there were bridges which would collapse when patients were crossing them. The cold water shower or plunge was a "shock" treatment designed to bring a deranged person to his/her senses. It is an intriguing idea.

Several other culture/religions are obsessive about cleanliness, possibly because it's healthy, but perhaps to distance themselves from the grubby peasants who don't have the time to clean things up as well as a church with excess lazy layman's labor. Shinto revolves around purity, if Nozomi's articles are true; and certainly the Judeo-Christian bible is frantic about being clean (which was interpreted by the Christians to be a spiritual matter, thus bringing on several plagues, and moralistic catastrophes): [most of Leviticus, 1 John 1:9, 15:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1, James 4:8, Ephesians 5:26-27] No where in the bible does it say "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," which is derived from a sermon by John Wesley (1703-1791) or possibly Francis Bacon (1605) "Cleanness of body was ever deemed to proceed from a due reverence to God."

But the evidence does not show that this was the Celts made the spiritual connection, except as described above, they just wanted to look good, and who can blame them? Regardless, you should be able to buy Irish Spring now knowing that, advertising hype aside, soap is a Celtic innovation to Europe (as is the deep plough and iron.) Even without your personal home sauna, you'll come out of your bath, invigorated, spiritually purified (Shower Shugyo, anyone?..) and not so stinky.

Gandalf's Reflections On The Arts Zymurgical

By Gandalf, Amon Sul Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 2003

The Discovery of Beer

There are those who claim that one of the main reasons that our distant ancestors gave up their nomadic ways and began the practice of agriculture was to assure a supply of grain for the making of beer. Think of a time, eons ago, when our ancestors had learned to use fire and to make storage containers (tightly woven baskets or clay pots.) Wild grain had been gathered and stored. Water was added to soften the grain. For some reason the grain was not eaten and sat for a day or two. Someone realized that the grain might be saved if it was dried over the fire. After being roasted, the grain had an odd sweetness to it. When it was needed, the grain was once again put in to soak. Someone drank the water and/or ate the uncooked grain and it was good. Grain gathering became a major activity. Someone discovered the cause and effect relationship between covering grain with dirt and new plants sprouting. One of the great things about it was that after you made the beer, you still got to eat the grain. What a concept! Why wander around taking your chances on where your next meal might come from when you could get drunk and eat well at the same time?

The Basics

Yeast are fungi that break down sugar molecules and by doing so produce alcohol and carbon dioxide. When one works out the physics involved, this molecular division process results in a release of energy that is used for metabolic and reproductive processes. Try this link if you are interested in the underlying science: <http://www.yeastgenome.org/VL-yeast.html>.

Home Brewing and Vinting

First and foremost, this is not rocket science. There is an abundance of websites that are dedicated to beer and winemaking. Most stores that sell equipment and supplies also stock books. You can probably get everything you need for thirty to forty dollars. If you stay with it, you'll recoup your investment in a short time. You will know exactly what's in your libation. There's also a genuine satisfaction in drinking something that you made yourself.

Equipment Basics

If you have access to a major metropolitan area, there is almost certainly a location that carries everything that you need. If you are really out in the boonies, everything is also available through the Internet. The following is a list of essentials:

Primary fermenter. I used a plastic garbage can for a long time. A few years ago, the place that I get my supplies started stocking Ale Pales which are essentially seven gallon plastic buckets that have a spigot near the bottom. They have a bail, which makes them easy to pick up, and the spigot facilitates racking off (draining.)

Secondary fermenter. Not an absolute necessity, but helpful for many projects. Usually a five gallon bottled water jug. The use of a secondary fermenter requires an airlock, because alcohol turns to vinegar with prolonged exposure to air. Since secondary fermentation still involves the production of carbon dioxide, any air in the container is forced out and the carbon dioxide protects whatever you are making. Using secondary fermenters produces a clearer product that has less sediment. Beer that is made using a secondary fermenter may take longer to build up a head.

Hydrometer. A hydrometer measures the specific gravity (SG) of the mix and indicates the potential strength of the end product (potential being the term because all of the sugar is not processed by the yeast.) Bottling beer at the correct SG is essential to having the right amount of carbonation. A word of caution: malt liquors (beers with over six percent alcohol) are often a recipe for a hangover. I usually make mine at four-five percent. In making wine, knowing the potential strength is important for predicting whether or not the wine will be dry or sweet. The maximum alcohol content that can be achieved through natural process is eighteen percent, but that's under ideal conditions. Taking the SG to a potential of eleven will usually produce a relatively dry wine. Anything over fourteen may taste syrupy.

Beer containers. The best containers are rubber-stoppered bottles such as those used for Grolsch and Kulmbacher. That way, if you bottle with a little too much residual sugar, the excess gas forces its way through the gasket. No exploding bottles or beer that spews out when opened. It's also an excuse to drink some good imported beer. I originally used quart bottles. However, since there's usually some sediment in homemade beer, sometimes the second pint was a little murky. Twelve ounce returnable bottles can also be used (no twist offs.) Bottles, caps, and capping tools are sold by most suppliers. The basic math for a five-gallon batch is 20 quarts, 40 pints, or about 53 twelve-ouncers. A few years ago, I inherited an old refrigerator. For about two hundred dollars I was able to convert it to a draft beer dispenser. The home brew goes into five gallon Cornelius kegs (their primary use is for fountain soft drinks.)

Wine containers. Once again, this is an excuse to indulge oneself. If you frequent your local pub, the bartender may also be able to help you out. Especially if you have demonstrated that Tipping is not a city in China. If my math is correct on the metric conversion, you'll need around twenty-seven bottles for a five-gallon batch. There are different types of wine bottles and some work better than others, primarily due to sedimentation issues. The best bottles are the tapered ones that many German wines come in. Sherry bottles do not work as well work because the air has a tendency to bubble as it goes in stirring up the sediment.

Boiling pot. Unless you are really into beer making, you'll be using malt extract, which needs to be boiled. When making wine, an alternative to using sulfites (which I am allergic to) is to bring the wort (your mix before fermentation) to a low boil.

Stirring stick. During initial processing and primary fermentation, everything needs to be stirred a lot except for the last few days before racking off. I use a wooden spoon and dowel.

Funnel. Get one that has a groove in the side of the spout so that air can come out as liquid goes in.

Supplies

Beer. As mentioned, making beer usually involves malt extracts. Malt comes in a variety of shades from pale to dark and can be hopped or unhopped. What one uses is a matter of personal preference. Please note that even the light varieties will usually produce a beer that is darker than the American Pales that most of us are used to. The cans of malt sold by suppliers are intended to make five gallons. This is a manageable quantity that can be consumed while still fresh. The malt extract, by itself, will not have enough sugar to make the beer strong enough. I recommend powdered malt for the booster but in a pinch I've used regular sugar. Incidentally, most modern beers contain two drugs: alcohol and hops. The hops are one of the reasons that beer makes you sleepy. Hops are also a preservative (probably their original use.) Since home brews are not pasteurized, the hop can be essential in extending their shelf life. If your supplier is well stocked, there will be a wide variety of hop available. Some brewers are very picky about their hops, but I've never found much difference between the different varieties. Hop is easy to grow but it needs to be trellised. The hop that I raise is a generic variety that I ordered from the Gurney Seed Company. Email me around March if you would like a root cutting.

Wine. I've never used the concentrates, so I cannot speak to results from their use. I've been fortunate enough to have access to real grapes (usually Concord but I have used whites.) If there's a farmer's market in your community, check with the sellers there. Wine can also be made from a variety of other ingredients. There are those who scoff at non-grape wines, but I am not one of them. I have peaches, pears, apples, strawberries, and kiwi planted but they're not producing yet. A bushel of grapes is sufficient for five gallons of wine, but unless you have wine grapes, there won't be enough natural sugar to get the job done. I typically use plain old beet sugar for wine. Grapes are easy to grow but take time and need a lot of room. We've been at our current location four years and the first vines that I planted (Concord) are just starting to produce. If you know someone who grows grapes, the prunings can be used to start new vines. Once you get started, you have an unlimited supply. For the last two years I have been buying wine grape cuttings from this location: <http://www.bunchgrapes.com/>. I should be able to start propagating my own wine grapes by next year. I may even have a few Concord cuttings that I won't need. Email me around March if you're interested. Mead requires using some honey for sugar content and taste. I have blackberry mead in a secondary fermenter as I write this. Mead can also be flavored with spices such as ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg.

Yeast. Once again, there are many varieties available and some individuals are very passionate about what they use. Since the basic process is the same, I'm pretty indifferent. I typically use a top fermenting beer yeast. Incidentally, it's easy to keep a starter bottle. Just stir up the sediment, fill a pint with it, and keep it in the refrigerator until it's needed. Miscellaneous. If making wine, you'll need corks and a corking tool. There are many flavorings, clarifiers, chemicals, etc. available. I usually forego them.

The Process for Beer

Boil the malt using about three gallons of water. The boil takes about 45 minutes. If using unhopped malt, add hops at the beginning and end of the boil. Let the wort cool; add malt or sugar to obtain desired SG. Add yeast. If using a top fermenter, in about two days, the mix will develop a corona. Use a stainless steel strainer to skim off the solids in the corona. In about a week, the SG will drop to bottling level (.10.) If not using a secondary fermenter, rack off and bottle. If using a secondary fermenter, rack off and airlock. Let settle for about a month or so, rack off, add priming sugar to get mix to .10 SG, and then bottle. Store in a cool, dark place if you have one. In 2-4 weeks sufficient additional fermentation should have occurred to build up a head. Getting the head right is one of the most difficult parts of beer making. If you're using resealable containers, you can reprime if you don't get enough carbonation. If you're using screw caps and you get too much carbonation, you can loosen them and let them sit for an hour or two and then reseal. Rubber stoppered bottles will bleed off any excess carbonation. Since there will always be some sediment, pouring requires a steady hand and practice. When making beer, it may be a good idea to not start out trying to make Pales. I've found Ambers and Darks to be much easier.

The Process for Wine

I usually puree the grapes in a blender and then heat them to a low boil. Let cool. Some water can be added but you have to be careful or the end product will lack color and body. Add yeast. In a few days the solids will begin to float to the top. Skim off with a stainless steel strainer. If you are not using a secondary fermenter, bottle at around 10 SG. If using a secondary fermenter, rack off and airlock. Two months in the secondary fermenter is usually sufficient but I've left it longer. Wine should be stored on its side so that the corks stay moist. To deal with sedimentation, shake the bottle and let it sit upright for a few weeks before opening. Uncork and rack off the entire bottle. Once again, a steady hand is beneficial.

Potcheen

Whiskey is essentially distilled beer and brandy is distilled wine. Unfortunately, in the United States, making your own spirits, even for personal use, is illegal. However, I'm getting tired of boiling the hell out of green beans in a water bath canner to get them properly sterilized when half as much time in a pressure canner would get the job done. Pressure canners are also easily converted to pot stills. Be sure to spend the extra money for stainless steel. A friend of mine had an aluminum pot still and although it wasn't a poisoning hazard, his product had a definite metallic taste. Do some research before building a still. Lead poisoning is a serious hazard. I no longer drink moonshine unless I personally know the person who made it. Two drinks and you can go blind or die!

The Internet has a lot of designs for making refractory stills and some suppliers are selling them for around three hundred dollars. Refractory stills are much more efficient, producing an output that is up to 170 proof with a single run. Pot stills usually require triple distillation to achieve a final product that is around 120 proof (hence the designation XXX.) My understanding is that there is pending litigation about the legality of selling refractory stills. My suggestion is, if you buy one, do so in person and pay cash. Otherwise there will be a

shipping or credit card trail that might be used to track you down if the federal government and liquor lobby prevail. It is relatively easy and inexpensive to get a permit to make ethanol for fuel, which then makes your still legal. However, once again, you are on record as owning a still. The law requires that anything removed from the premises must be denatured (rendered undrinkable.)

Cleaning Up

In general, zymurgy is a messy process. Many books and articles on home fermentation dwell at great length on all kinds of sterilization activities that involve chemical compounds of questionable utility. Zymurgy had been around for millennia before microbes were ever identified. In over thirty years of practice, the only time I ever lost anything was when I used some ground fall apples to make applejack and I didn't boil the mixture first. That was clearly an error on my part. Soap should be used sparingly. Small traces of soap can throw off the taste. Soap also impairs the ability of beer to make a good head. I use lots of hot water and paper towels.

Epilogue

The preceding is an overview. Zymurgy is a learn-by-doing art. Almost everyone who practices it has the occasional batch that doesn't taste very good. However, considering some of the commercial products that I've had, even my failures have their counterparts in the marketplace. Even if the taste is a little off, the alcohol is still there. Just remember that, with modern techniques, what you will be drinking is almost certainly much better than some of the stuff that the ancients had.

Section Two: Tree Research

Cad Goddeu or The Battle of Goddeu

Translation by Revd. Robert Williams

I have been a multitude of shapes,
Before I assumed a consistent form.
I have been a sword, narrow, variegated,
I will believe when it is apparent.
I have been a tear in the air,
I have been in the dulllest of stars.
I have been a word among letters,
I have been a book in the origin.
I have been the light of lanterns,
A year and a half.
I have been a continuing bridge,
Over three score river-mouths.
I have been a course, I have been an eagle.
I have been a coracle in the sea.
I have been complaint in the banquet.
I have been a drop in a shower;
I have been a sword in the grasp of a hand.
I have been a shield in battle.
I have been a string in a harp,
Disguised for nine years.
In water, in foam,
I have been a sponge in fire,
I have been wood in covert.
I am not he who will not sing of
A combat though small,
The conflict of the battle of Godau of sprigs.
Against the Guledig of Prydain,
There passed central horses,
Fleets full of riches.
There passed an animal with wide jaws,
On it were a hundred heads.
And a battle was contested
Under the root of his tongue;
And another battle there is
In his occiput.
A black sprawling toad,
With a hundred claws on it,
A snake speckled, crested.
A hundred souls through sin
Shall be tormented in its flesh.
I have been in Care Venenir,
Thither hastened grass and trees.
Minstrels were singing,
Warrior bands were wondering,
At the exaltation of the Brython,
That Gwydyon effected.
There was a calling on the Creator,
Upon Christ for causes,
Until when the Eternal
Should deliver those whom he had made.

The Lord answered them,
 Through language and elements:
 Take the forms of the principal trees,
 Arranging yourselves in battle array,
 And restraining the public.
 Inexperienced in battle hand to hand.
 When the trees were enchanted,
 In the expectation of not being trees,
 The trees uttered their voices
 From strings of harmony
 The disputes ceased.
 Let us cut short heavy days,
 A female restrained the din.
 She came forth altogether lovely.
 The head of the line, the head was a female.
 The advantage of a sleepless cow
 Would not make us give way.
 The blood of men up to our thighs,
 The greatest of importunate mental exertions
 Sported into the world.
 And one has ended
 From considering the deluge,
 And Christ crucified,
 And the day of judgment near at hand.
 The alder-trees, the head of the line,
 Formed the van.
 The willows and quicken-trees
 Came late to the army.
 Plum-trees, they are scarce,
 Unlonged for men.
 The elaborate medlar-trees,
 The objects of contention.
 The prickly rose bushes,
 Against a host of giants,
 The raspberry brake did
 What is better failed
 For the security of life.
 Privet and woodbine
 And ivy on its front,
 Life furze to the combat
 The cherry-tree was provoked.
 The birch, not withstanding his high mind,
 Was late before he was arrayed.
 Not because of his cowardice,
 But on account of his greatness.
 The laburnum held in mind,
 That your wild nature was foreign.
 Pine-trees in the porch,
 The chair of distribution
 By me greatly exalted,
 In the presence of kings.
 The elm with his retinue,
 Did not go aside a foot;
 He would fight with the centre,
 And the flanks, and the rear.
 Hazel-trees, it was judged
 That ample thy mental exertion.
 The privet, happy is his lot,
 The bull of battle, the lord of the world.
 Morawg and Morydd
 Were made prosperous in pines.
 Holly, it was tinted with green,
 He was a hero.
 The hawthorn, surrounded by prickles,
 With pain at his hand.

The aspen-wood has been topped,
 It was topped in battle.
 The fern that was plundered.
 The broom in the van of the army,
 In the trenches he was hurt.
 The gorse did not do well,
 Notwithstanding let it overspread.
 The heath was victorious, keeping off on all sides.
 The common people were charmed,
 During the proceeding of the men.
 The oak, quick moving,
 Before him, tremble heaven and earth.
 A valiant door-keeper against an enemy,
 His name is considered.
 The blue-bells combined,
 And caused a consternation.
 In rejecting, were rejected.
 Pear-trees, the best intruders
 in the conflict on the plain.
 A very wrathful wood,
 The chestnut is bashful,
 The opponent of happiness,
 The jet has become black,
 The mountain has become crooked,
 The woods have become a kiln,
 Existing formerly has the great seas,
 Sine was heard the shout:---
 The tops of the birch covered us with leaves.
 And transformed us, and changed our faded state.
 The branches of the oak have ensnared us
 From the Gwarchan Mwelderw.
 Laughing on the side of rock,
 The mold is not an ardent nature.
 Not of mother and father was I made,
 Did my Creator create me.
 Of nine-formed faculties,
 Of the fruit of fruits,
 Of the fruit of the primordial God,
 Of primroses and blossoms on the hill,
 Of the earth, of an earthly course,
 When I was formed,
 Of the flower nettles,
 Of the water of the ninth wave.
 I was enchanted by Math,
 Before I became immortal,
 I was enchanted by Gwydyon
 The great purifier of the Brithon,
 Of Eurwys, of Euron,
 Of Euron, of Modron.
 Of five battalions of scientific ones,
 Teachers, children of Math.
 When the removal occurred,
 I was enchanted by the Guledig.
 When he was half-burnt,
 I was enchanted by the sage
 Of Sages, in the primitive world.
 When I had a being;
 When the host of the world was in dignity,
 The bard was accustomed to benefits.
 To the song of praise I am inclined, which the tongue recites.
 I played in twilight,
 I slept in purple;
 I was truly in the enchantment
 With Dylan, the son of the wave.
 In the circumference, in the middle,

Between the knees of kings,
 Scattering spears not keen,
 From heaven when came,
 To the great deep, floods,
 In the battle there will be
 Four score hundreds,
 That will divide according to their will.
 Are they neither older or younger,
 Than myself in their divisions.
 A wonder, Canhwr are born, every one of nine hundred.
 He was with me also,
 With my sword spotted with blood.
 Honor was allotted to me
 By the Lord, and protection (was) where he was.
 If I come to where the boar was killed,
 He will compose, he will decompose,
 He will form languages.
 The strong-handed gleamer, his name,
 With a gleam he rules his numbers.
 They would spread out in a flame,
 When I shall go on high.
 I have been a speckled snake on the hill,
 I have been a viper in Llyn.
 I have been a bill-hook crooked that cuts,
 I have been a ferocious spear
 With my chasuble and bowl
 I will prophesy not badly.
 Four score smokes
 On every one that bring.
 Five battalions of arms
 Will be caught by my knife.
 Six steeds of yellow hue
 A hundred times better is
 my cream-colored steed,
 Swift as the sea-mew
 Which will not pass
 Between the sea and the shore.
 Am I not pre-eminent in the field of blood?
 Over it are a hundred chieftains.
 Crimson (is) the gem of my belt,
 Gold my shield border.
 There has not been born, in the gap,
 That has been visiting me,
 Except Goronwy,
 From the dales of Edrywy.
 Long white my fingers,
 It is long since I have been a herdsman.
 I have traveled the earth,
 Before I was proficient in learning.
 I have traveled, I made a circuit,
 I slept in a hundred islands.
 A hundred Caers I have dwelt in.
 Ye intelligent Druids,
 Declare to Arthur,
 What is there more early
 Than I that they sing of.
 And one is come
 From considering the deluge
 And Christ crucified,
 And the day of future doom.
 A golden gem in a golden jewel.
 I am splendid
 And shall be wanton
 From the oppression of the metal-workers.

The Wood Song

Taught to Mike by Sam Adams
 A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2001

You don't have to live in a forest to have a Yule log, just a saw, a car, and a nearby park with some dead or fallen wood. But what kind of wood do you want? Here's a song that's been around awhile and should help you.

Oaken logs will warm you well, That are old and dry;
 Logs of pine will sweetly smell, But the sparks will fly.
 Birch logs will bum too fast; Chestnut, scarce at all.
 Hawthorn logs are good to last, Burn them in the fall.

Holly logs will burn like wax, You may burn them green;
 Elm logs, like to smouldering flax, No flame to be seen.
 Beech logs for the winter-time, Yew logs as well.
 Green elder logs it is a crime For any man to sell.

Pear logs and apple logs, They will scent your room.
 Cherry logs across the dogs Smell like flowers of broom.
 Ashen logs, smooth and grey, Burn them green or old;
 Buy up all that come your way, Worth their weight in gold

Some Notes on Oaks

Druid Chronicler, 1978

By Rachel

This article is by Rachel, the Grove Botanist for the Mother Grove. She has over twenty years experience in the biological sciences and is an expert on the medicinal and magical properties of herbs and fungi.

There are 275 species of Oak inhabiting the temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere and the high altitudes of the tropics. They extend as far south as Columbia and the Malay Archipelago. So if you live north of the Equator, you should be within easy reach of at least one oak tree.

Among American Druids there are certain fallacies concerning something called an "English Oak." Just what are people referring to? There are at least a half a dozen kinds of oak that grow in England and all are more closely related to oaks in other places than they are to each other! Many believe that a California oak can never measure up to the grandeur of an English Oak. But the largest oak tree growing in England is only 80 feet high (and is in its old age,) while California Valley Oaks and Black Oaks frequently measure over a hundred feet high. The largest White Oak in the world lives in San Bernadino County in southern California (my books don't give its exact height.) *Quercus Schneckii* averages 180 feet and grows in the Mississippi Basin. This inferiority complex about California oaks must come from comparing them to the surrounding Redwoods and Sequoias.

The first step in tracking down your local oaks is to go to your nearest library. In the "Nature" section you should find a Flora Key for your area. Look up "quercus" in the index. "Quercus" is the scientific name for Oak and rather than being Latin (as is usually the case with western scientific names) it is Celtic and means "fine tree." Usually there will be more than one sort of Oak listed, each with a paragraph describing the tree. If the key is highly scientific, you may be tempted to give up after a few words of impossible language. But don't surrender yet! Scan down the paragraph and somewhere near the end you will run across a sentence like this one out of Munz' California Flora (on *Quercus KilZoggii*--the Black Oak):

"Common in hills and mts, mostly, 1000-8000 ft, mixed evergreen F., Yellow Pine F., N. Oak Wd. San Diego N. through Sierra Nevada and Cost Ranges to Ore."

Now if you can figure out the abbreviations, you now know where to look. Elsewhere in the paragraph should be the average height of the tree and whether it is evergreen or deciduous (drops its leaves in the fall.)

All oaks have one thing in common and that is acorns, whether the oak involved is one foot high or 180. Late summer is the best time to locate your local oaks, since the acorns are big enough to see easily. Knowing the average height and general location of the trees you are looking for should combine with these acorns to make it easy to find one, two, possibly even an entire grove of oaks. Once you find an oak of a particular sort and make friends with it, you will be able to spot its sisters and brothers easily.

To be continued

More Notes on Oaks

September 22/23, 78 c.e.

This article, begun last issue, is by Rachel, the Mother Grove's Botanist. She has over twenty years experience in the biological sciences and is an expert on the medicinal and magical properties of herbs and fungi.

It takes twenty years for an acorn to become a mature oak tree, and it can then live for two or three hundred years in some species. Oaks are not the biggest trees, nor the tallest, nor necessarily the most "impressive." What then makes them so special? Why did they become the Sacred Trees throughout all of Europe? One explanation is the observed fact that oaks are hit by lightning (the "fire of the Gods" --IB) seventeen times more often than any other sort of tree.

(This made the oak sacred to the Fire/Sun/Storm Gods of Europe and made the mistletoe that grew in its branches the most highly prized of all. The Germans and Slavs had their oak cults too, so the Druids of the Celts weren't the only ones. --IB)

When people lived as hunter-gatherers, the oak was considered important for many reasons other than the religious ones. It fed people, tanned their clothes, and cured their ills. Let's analyze the tree by parts.

The wood is valued in Europe for its hardness and toughness. Though there are harder woods and tougher ones, only the oak combines these qualities in its wood. Beams cut 800 years ago in England are still sound in old buildings. Logs dug up from peat bogs have been found in good preservation, despite having been submerged thousands of years ago.

The bark has been used for centuries to tan leather--something very important in a hunting culture that does not have weaving. The active ingredient, tannic acid, is also a medicine with slightly tonic, strongly astringent and antiseptic actions. It is used for chronic diarrhea and dysentery and as a gargle for sore throats. The bark also makes a number of dyes ranging from yellow to dark brown, black and a purplish brown. In England, after the tannic acid had been extracted, the bark (then called "tam") was dried and used for fuel and as a mulch around tender plants (since it generates warmth.) In addition, some species of oak (such as the Cork Oak in England and another in California) produce cork from their bark.

Oak galls (swellings caused by parasites) have an even higher amount of tannic acid, and are used to make ink and as a strong local astringent applied externally to stop hemorrhaging (naturally, they are also used in tanning.)

Then we have the acorns. These nuts are easy to open and can be quite tasty if left to leach out their tannic acid in running water for a day or two. They seem to have been the main staple in European hunters' diets until the invention of agriculture replaced them with grains. Acorns are still easier to process than wild grasses, and can be easily stored all winter in a dry place or ground into a flour. In Europe today, acorns have been pretty well forgotten as a food and are used only in times of famine (and then they forget to leach them!) or to feed hogs. But in the Americas, however, acorns are still eaten by Indians and by a growing number of foraging buffs. According to an analysis by Lancet, acorns are 6.3% water, 5.2% protein, 43% fat and 45% carbohydrates.

To see how well the oak can help humans, look at the Northern California Indians. They fished and tended their oak groves, growing strong and happy until the Europeans came. The only crop they raised was tobacco, since everything else was provided freely by the environment without work (I'm not sure it was that easy,--IB.)

So look upon the oak tree as the Lady before Kore, the Wheat Goddess, and remember how much it can give you if you ask. Remember too that the deciduous oaks are the best for getting acorns to eat and the evergreen oaks for medicinal uses.

In future articles I'll be discussing Giant Sequoias and other Redwoods, Ashes, Birches and other trees of interest to Druids.

Bristlecone Pines

Article & photos by Shirin Morton
Pentalpha, March 1979

One day in May after purchasing a used Toyota and arranging time off work, I bounced home and said to my double Libran mate, "Guess what, pack your bags, we're going to the Bristlecone Pine Forest." Despite concern about finding camping spots on a holiday weekend, we loaded up the "Federation Shuttle-craft" to the air ducts and started off for a four-day Memorial Day weekend. From Berkeley we took 580 to Manteca where we turned up 120 towards Yosemite. That evening we camped at Tullock Reservoir for \$1.50 a night. The following morning we started off through Yosemite on Tioga Pass Road. (Tioga Pass is a toll road and is only open during good-weather months. Alternately, one can go south on 395 from Reno, Nevada, or north on 395 from Mojave, CA. But by any route, when traveling in mountainous areas during bad- weather months, always check road conditions with the Highway Patrol.)

Tioga Pass Road ended at Lee Vining, a sleepy mountain town on the edge of Mono Lake, a large alkaline (or salt) lake which was fascinating for its mineral deposits on the edges. We walked with care as one can sink in the muck which in many places appears to be solid.

From Lee Vining we went to Mammoth Lakes where we camped the next night. Mammoth Lakes, a bountiful recreational area, had snow still on the ground. Where we camped there was a spectacular waterfall. Outside of Mammoth lakes we stopped at the Inyo National Forest Ranger Headquarters for maps and information. (I suggest people visiting our National Parks and Forests make similar stops. Much information can be obtained at these headquarters from the friendly and cooperative Forest Smokeys.)

From the Inyo National Forest Headquarters, we continued down 395 to Big Pine. Here we stopped, filled the gas tanks and water bottles, and stocked up on extra food. We knew that after turning on to the road going to the Forest there would be no services. The turn to the Bristlecone Pine Forest was well-marked by a large sign proclaiming "The Oldest Living Things."

The Bristlecones live at an elevation of 10,000 ft. in the White Mountains. Temperatures drop 5° for every thousand feet climbed, so carry appropriate clothing. If your car is not in shape for mountain driving, have it serviced before you leave. The road is hilly and becomes very rocky if you go deep into the pine forest, and sharp rocks ting things to bald tires.

The Bristlecone, *Pinus aristata*, is a small to medium sized tree living near tree line in the high Rocky Mountains and Great Basin areas. It has a smooth gray bark, irregularly fissured, scaly and reddish brown. The needles are numerous and densely crowded, with five 2 to 3 1/2" long dark green needles to a cluster. The cones are short stalked, 3 to 6" long, and are yellow-brown with thick rounded scales and large seeds 3/8-1/2" long. (This scientific description is from a U.S. Forestry pamphlet titled, "Important Forest Trees of the U.S.," Agriculture Handbook No. 519. It can be had for the asking from any local Forest Department Office.)

John Muir had this to say about the Bristlecones: "Some stand firmly erect, feathered with radiant tail tassels down to the ground, forming slender, tapering towers of shining verdure; others with two or three specialized branches pushed out at right angles to the trunk and densely clad with the tasseled spray, take the form of beautiful ornamental crosses, while on the roughest ledges of crumbling limestone are lowly old giants five or six feet in diameter that have braved the storms of more than a thousand years. But whether young or old, sheltered or exposed to the wildest gales, this tree is ever found to be irrepressibly and extravagantly picturesque, offering a richer and more varied series of forms to the artist than any other species I have yet seen."

The Bristlecone grows only about 1" every hundred years. A very thin veil of living tissue is all that is required to keep the tree alive. Because the tree grows very slowly, part of it can be dead while another part is quite alive. Even the oldest trees produce fertile seeds. Often known as "Living Driftwood," Bristlecones cling tenaciously to life in one of the harshest climates of the North American mountain ranges, on rocky alkaline soil, with rainfall a very sparse 8-10 inches a year. Wind, ice, and snow all work together to sculpt these graceful ancient beauties into beautiful living abstract forms.

Tree coring (a process of drawing a core of wood out of a living tree by inserting a hollow metal tube so the rings can be counted) has proven that some of these trees are over 4,000 years old, which is older than the oldest known Sequoia. Some of these trees were growing when the Egyptian Pyramids were being built. Many were hundreds of years old during the Golden Age of Rome.

Their longevity under extreme survival conditions is what awes me most about these beauties. A whole meditation of life and survival is achieved by visiting these trees. In this high elevation, in thin crisp air, there is an impression of being in a strange world, almost reminiscent of a lunar landscape. The tree's extreme lifespan is linked to the extreme conditions it lives in poor soil with a minimum of moisture and short growing season. Not all Bristle cones attain great age. Those growing the slowest produce dense highly resinous wood which is resistant to rot and disease, and are more likely to join the Fraternity of the 4,000 year old Ancients. Trees anchored to more moist slopes grow fat and tall, produce less dense wood, and succumb at an earlier age. Longest life is granted to trees able to cling to life under situations of severe duress.

The Bristlecone Pine Forest is in two sections: Schulmann Grove and Patriarch Grove. Schulmann Grove is the first fully pure stand of trees you come to. At Schulmarm Grove there is a ranger station, picnic tables and marked nature walks. One of the nature walks, "the Methuselah Trail," takes you to the Methuselah Tree, 4,700 years old.

If your tires are good, nerves for bad driving conditions adequate and time sufficient, you can drive to the Patriarch Grove eleven miles up a very rocky mountain road. The effort is rewarding, for here are some of the most exquisite trees I've ever seen. Be prepared, the temperature may be quite cold. When we were there snow still covered some of the ground making walking without boots difficult. Patriarch Grove is a must for photographers as it is set within a large open bowl, well exposed to wind and weather, which have molded the trees into unusual abstract sculptures.

Back down the road from the ranger's station is a very nice undeveloped (no showers, no running water, no lights, no cabins and outhouses only) U.S. Forest Service Campground. Sometimes in the evening after dark the ranger shows movies and gives talks

about the Bristlecones. This is a fitting climax to a marvelous journey.

If you decide to visit the Bristlecones, please remember that the Forest Department has rules for the protection of these trees. Find out what they are ahead of time.

The Hawthorn

June 1982

Volume 6 Number 3

UATH Late May to June.

The name for this time of the year is taken from the hawthorn, whitethorn, or mayflower. In ancient Britain, this was the time of rest and abstinence after the Beltaine festivities. Old clothes were worn, and the temples cleansed in psychic and physical preparation for the summer. The time is associated with the Goddess Cardea, who casts spells using hawthorn, and it was she who had to be appeased at marriages as such unions were hateful to her, she being associated with chastity and solitude. She is the benefactor of crafts people and the guardian of hinges, having the power to open what is shut and to shut up what is open. She is able, as well, to look forward in time, and back to the hidden past, Cardea lives at the hinge of the Universe, in a starry castle, behind the North Wind. She was worshipped in Britain, and perhaps in the lowlands of Scotland, in Strath-Clyde.

Mistletoe

By Emmon Bodfish

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 1982

The Druid cutting of the mistletoe (Uilioc in Gaidhlig, derived from the phrase "ever young") is described by the Roman writer, Pliny, in his work on the Gauls, "The Druids hold nothing in so sacred respect as the mistletoe, and the tree on which it grows, provided it be an oak. They select certain woods of oak, and they do not perform any sacred rite without the leaf of that tree; so that hence it is likely they have been called 'Druids', explaining the name from: the (Greek root 'drus' an oak; Druidae, oakites.) Whatever grows on that tree, more than its natural growth, they think has been sent from Deity, and is a sign that the tree has been chosen by Deity as select. However, that species of mistletoe is very rarely found, and when it is it is sought after with great devotion, and especially at the sixth day of the moon, which is the beginning of their months. Having prepared sacrifices and feasts under the tree, they bring up two white bulls, whose horns are then first bound; the priest in white robe, ascends the tree, and cuts it off with a golden knife" (sickle) throwing it down, it is received in a white sheet. Then, and not till then, they sacrifice the offerings, praying that Deity will render gifts on those on whom the mistletoe is bestowed. When mistletoe is given as a potion, it can remove animal barrenness, and it is remedy against all poisons."

Life is a Birch, Whose Bark is Appealing!

By Sam Peebles, 1st Order, Ex-Stanford Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Oimeic 2002

Birch is derived from "Bright" in Indo-European and related to Sanskrit "bhurga," "Birkana" in German, "Beorc" in Saxon, "Bedwen" in Welsh, "Bjarkan" in Norse. "Beith" in Gaelic is the first month of a lunar calendar and as the start of the Ogham alphabet, it is appropriate for beginnings and entry into Druidism. S.T. Coleridge named it "Lady of the Woods." As birch is one of the first trees to come into leaf it would be an obvious choice as representation of the emergence of spring. Often it is the wood of choice for the Maypoles, Yule Log of last season, anytime, really! But, because of its associations with spring cleaning and babies, it is appropriate for Oimeic or Spring Equinox. Its wood is good for starting fires for any season.

Birch trees are one of the most recognizable trees in the forest, with its slender trunk, banded bark, light branches, alternating serrated leaves and thin peeling bark. It usually grows in copses with multiple shoots in the same spot. They grow to 50-70 feet and are common to Europe and America. They tend to live 60 years. Birches are wind pollinated with little "catkins" in April, appearing with their leaves. Male catkins release pollen and fall apart while female catkins catch the pollen and release the winged seeds in mid-Autumn. The seeds are "pioneers" and tend to like bare sunny patches. Fallen Birch twigs from the parent tree have the capability of rooting and beginning a sapling. Never take a complete ring from around the trunk as this would halt the flow of nutrients and would kill the tree and only prune in late spring after leaves are out and past the "collar." A healthy Birch's thirsty roots will spread twice as wide as the height of the tree. The Birch populations are currently being pestered by "Bronze Birch Borers," "Birch Leaf Miner" worms, and the Birch Canker fungus.

In Britain there are three varieties:

- 1) The Dwarf Birch (*Betula nana*), a Scottish Highland shrub that grows even on tundra.
- 2) Silver (warty) Birch (*Betula pendula*) whose twigs are hairless and droopy but bear tiny warts and found on well-drained ground. It grows quite tall.
- 3) Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), like the name, this smaller tree has peach fuzz, found on moors and swamps.

In addition to the Silver Birch, America's major varieties are:

- 1) Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*), famed for its peely white bark and black stripes. Popular with children who pull off its bark. A quick growing tree, it is often sought by timber companies.
- 2) River Birch (*Betula nigra*) is less common. Naturally found near rivers.

Associations are: Birth, pioneering, fresh endeavor, purity, one of the three pillars of wisdom (Oak, Yew, Birch,) exorcism.

Folk and Magic Use:

(as always consult your Doctor)

- Brooms handles and sweeps made of wood and twigs especially for new year cleaning
- Russians attached a red ribbon to a branch to fight the evil-eye.
- Norse Farmers connected it to Thor and attached it to a house to avoid lightning.
- Scandinavians flail themselves in saunas with birch twigs.
- Scandinavians wrapped the bark around their legs to keep out the wet - gaiters.
- Siberian shamans used Magic Mushrooms (*Amanita muscaria*) to climb the skies.
- Dutch boys lashed young women to make them fertile. (eh?)
- Anglo-Saxons beat criminals and children with switches of it.
- Irish often used it for making doo-dads and writing Ogham.
- In Pembrokeshire (now Dyfed) girls would give their lovers a twig of birch as a sign of encouragement; if they were not so lucky they often got a hazel twig.
- The Celts made cradles of Birch for protecting the babies
- Native Americans used the bark was used for buckets, canoes, and as a sugary drink.
- The pitch was made into a glue for fixing flint arrow and spear heads onto shafts.
- Parchment or rune sticks of a Birch struck by lightning can be gathered during the moon.
- The inner bark contains methyl salicylate, which is a counter-irritant and analgesic.
- Bark infusions for rheumatism.
- Poultices of leave, catkins for skin problems
- Lotions from bark's oil
- Tea for mouth sores, kidney stones and provide a diuretic
- Young leaves and shoots for laxatives
- Small amulets of Birch will protect you from Faery and lunatics (useful!)
- Wine can be made from the rising sap in March
- Birch beer brewed from the branches.
- Thatchers and wattlers used its branches
- Birch charcoal often used for gun-powder and indigestion
- The timber is tough, stiff and fairly easily worked and is used in joinery, carving, cabinet and furniture making, clogs, spools and bobbins, plywood and flooring
- The bark, when dried and twisted into a rope, is used for candles.

Winter Birch Tree Cookies

Christmas Baking (1997 Pillsbury Classic Cookbook)
<http://southernfood.about.com/library/holiday/blxm193.htm>

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 3/4 cup of sugar (possibly birch sap sugar?)
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 egg
- 2 cups Pillsbury BEST All Purpose Flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 package (12 oz) vanilla-flavored candy coating or almond bark, melted

2 ounces bittersweet chocolate, melted Heat oven to 400 degrees. Grease cookie sheets. In large bowl, combine sugar and butter; beat until well blended. Add milk, vanilla and egg; beat well. Lightly spoon flour into measuring cup; level off. Add flour, baking powder and cinnamon; mix well. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. On lightly floured surface, roll balls into logs, 6 inches long. Place on greased cookie sheets. Bake at 400 degrees F. for 5 to 8 minutes or until light golden brown. Immediately remove from cookie sheets. Cool completely. Place melted candy coating in pie pan. Dip logs into candy coating; place on waxed paper to cool. Drizzle melted bittersweet chocolate over logs to resemble birch trees. 3 1/2 dozen cookies.

Highland Birch Sap Wine

- 8 pints sap
- 1lb chopped raisins or dried fruit
- 2lb sugar
- juice of 2 lemons
- general purpose yeast

Collect the sap from a number of trees so as not to overtap an individual tree, which could kill it. The sap should be collected in early March whilst it is still rising. Select larger trees, bore a hole about 1"-2" deep, around 4ft off the ground, place a tube or something similar in the hole and allow the sap to run down. Then put a suitable container underneath and allow to fill. The hole will heal naturally, but it wouldn't hurt to wedge a piece of birch bark over the hole to aid it. Boil the sap as soon as collected, add the sugar and simmer for 10 minutes. Place the raisins in a suitable bucket, pour in the boiling liquid and add the yeast and lemon juice when it has cooled to blood temperature. Cover the bucket and leave to ferment for three days before straining off into a demi-john and sealing with an air lock. Let stand until fermentation finishes, then rack off into a clean jar and let the sediment settle. Bottle the wine and store in a cool place for at least a month. Good for Vernal Equinox.

Birch Tea

This is an old and effective remedy to combat cystitis, urinary problems, gout, rheumatism and arthritis and to remove excess water from the body. To make the tea, collect the birch leaves (the best time is in the spring when the leaves are fresh) and dry them out of direct sunlight. Put 2-3 teaspoonfuls in a cup and pour on boiling water, then cover and allow to stand for 10 minutes. Take the tea 3-4 times daily or just occasionally if you need a mouthwash. Fresh leaves can also be used but as the months progress the leaves deteriorate.

Hazel & Salmon

By Emmon Bodfish
A Druid Missal-Any, Fall Equinox 1989

One of the basic myths of Druidism is the story of Finn, a young renegade of the warrior caste and his encounter with the Druidic Salmon of Knowledge and the awakening of his psychic and spiritual self. This is in a psychological sense his ascent to the Druid caste and Awareness. The myth was popularized by a nineteenth century author under the name of "Ossian," who added a good deal of "Celtic twilight" of his own, but the myth is very old.

"Around a sacred well, in the heart of Erin, grew nine Hazel trees which bore crimson fruit." (This is most likely a cognate of the well and the World Tree in Germanic mythology, and part of the basic Indo-European World Tree cosmology.) "It was the property of these Hazelnuts that whoever ate them immediately came into the possession of knowledge of everything that ever existed in the world. One class of creatures alone had the privilege of feeding on them: the magical species of immortal Salmon who lived in the well." The human who ate one of the Salmon would attain instant Awareness of everything. However, only a person selected by destiny, or probably originally by a deity, could secure the sacred flesh; from all others it would be taken away before they could taste of it.

Finn, having mastered all the skills of the warrior while he was still a youth, did not go into the service of any chieftain, but, perhaps dis-satisfied with that life, wandered alone over the plains of Ireland. At length he came to the banks of the River Boyne, which sprang from the sacred well of the Salmon of Knowledge. There he found a Druid, a woods hermit called Finn the Seer. (He was probably one of a class of Druidic hermit-mystics who were a feature of Pagan Celtic society and probably cognate with the solitary forest Yogis of Brahmanism.) He had been living beside the pool for seven years, hoping to secure one of the salmon and total Awareness, it having been prophesized that one called Finn would attain the Ultimate Knowledge at this well. Finn the Seer approves of the young man and agrees to take Finn MacCumhal as one of his servants, not knowing the youth's real name. (In place of servant, we should probably read student, apprentice, disciple, as that is how one learned mystic skills in most ancient cultures, by ingratiating oneself to an accomplished shaman or mystic and serving him or her as a master.)

Soon after Finn MacCumhal's arrival at the well, the old Seer catches one of the salmon. He hands it to the young man to cook, warning him to eat no portion of it. When Finn brings his master the cooked fish, the Seer immediately perceives the change in his young servant. He has attained All-Knowledge. "Have you eaten of the Salmon?" he demands. "No indeed!" replies the youth. "But while cooking it, a blister arose on the skin of it and I put my thumb on that to push it down. It burnt my thumb, and in pain I put my thumb under one of my teeth to cool it." The old man was perplexed. "You told me that your name was 'Deimme'. Have you another name?" "Yes," answered the youth, "in my warrior trials I was known as 'Finn'." "That is enough." Said the old man. "It is for you that the Salmon was intended. Eat." Finn MacCumhal ate the rest of the Salmon of Knowledge, and in the rest of his life he had only to place his thumb under his tooth (a valid concentration, meditation technique) to receive foreknowledge and divine counsel.

This and other early exploits of Finn MacCumhal are contained in a little tract written on a fragment of a ninth century Psalter of Cashel. I have used the Ossianic Society's translation, from Charles Squire.

The Hazel is one of the sacred trees of Druidism. Its seeds symbolize wisdom. This fall, when I came across some organically grown Hazel nuts in a local market I decided to try this experiment. I have been on a salt-free, vegetarian diet for a dozen or so years, now, and sense the effects of different foods fairly rapidly. After fasting for half a day, I ate just enough hazel nuts to satisfy the hunger. I was surprised at how few this required. They produced a clear, calm, and satisfied state of mind, contemplative and appropriate for taking a wide and long perspective on things. And they kept me from feeling hungry again for a long time. I could see that these effects would be helpful in scholarly pursuits or in a contemplative lifestyle. We cannot know, of course, whether this effect was any part of the reason that the Ancient Celts had the Hazel tree standing beside the pool of knowledge in their mythology, where the Teutronics had the Ash. "There Yggdrasil stand over the three Welssprings of the World." I think Celtic Hazel pool is a cognate of Mimir's well in the German system. Both point back to some Proto-Indo-European myth of a World Tree and sacred springs.

A fellow Druid pointed out in Professor Frerick's reference in his book, Proto-Indo-European Trees, University of Chicago Press, 1970, to evidence that the Hazel may have been one of the first native European plants to have been deliberately cultivated by the inhabitants of central Europe before the arrival of grain from the Fertile Crescent.

Hazel *Corylus avellana*

Local names for nuts: cobnut, filbert; filbeard, glos (Oxford,) hale, haless, (Cornwall,) Hasketts (Dorchester); Woodnut (Yorkshire.)

Abundant throughout the British Isle, except in very damp areas. Grows in woods, hedgerows and scrubland. A shrub, 4-12 feet high, with roundish, downy, toothed leaves. Best known for the yellow male catkins, called 'lambs' tails, which appear in the winter. Nuts from late August to October, 1/2" to 1" long, ovoid and encased in a thick green lobed husk.

The problem with hazelnuts is that if you hold back from picking them until they are fully ripe, the squirrels and jays will get there first. If you pick whilst the nuts are still abundant on the tree, you will not have the same flavor.

The Hazel Tree

By Sam Peeples, free-roaming Druid
A Druid Missal-Any, Spring 2002

Greetings everyone, due to the thunderous applause (i.e. three people) on my birch article, I've been requested to write an article on the Hazel Tree. Its natural side topics of Salmon and Wells (in a Celtic context) will be discussed by Mike and Naomi. I can't attest to all the following information's validity, but it will provide a good overview of its associations.

Etymology

The European Hazel tree's scientific name is *corylus avellana* and America's Filbert tree is named *corylus americana*. (Witch Hazel, although externally resembling Hazel, is actually *hamamelis virginiana*, with exploding seed pods, but it is apparently native only to New England.) The genus' name *Corylus* comes from the Greek *korys* meaning helmet, a reference to the calyx covering the nut; *avellana* commemorating the small town of Avella in Italy where the nuts were famously cultivated. The English name for the tree and its nut is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *haesel knut*, *haesel* meaning cap or hat, thus referring to the cap of leaves on the nut on the tree (or *haesl* possibly signified a baton of authority.) The Gaelic word for hazel is *Coll*, pronounced "cull," and it was popular in men's names. See also: German *Haselnuss*, French *Noisette*, Dutch *Hazelnoot*. Its nickname is "Lamb's Tail." There is often a resident spirit.

Hazel appears frequently in place names in the western Scotland, such as the Isle of Coll and Bar Calltuin in Appin, both in Argyll-shire where the tree and its place names are the most common. Perhaps even Caledonia (Hill of Hazels) is a derivative. In Gaelic, a hazel grove was *calltuin*, (modern Scots Gaelic *calltainn*) and various places called *Calton* are associated with entrances to the Otherworld, one being the famous Calton Hill between Leith and Edinburgh. It also appears in the name of Clan Colquhoun whose clan badge is the hazel. Tara, the chief seat of the kingship of Ireland was possibly built near a hazel wood, and the great monastery of Clonord was build over a sacred pagan place known as The Wood of the White Hazel: Ross-Finnchuill.

Physical Characteristics

The Hazel has quite the reputation in European lore as a potent source of magical might (the other two being Oak and Hawthorne,) probably due to its ability to coppice into dozen young trees. Hazel is considered a small deciduous tree, usually with multiple stems and a spreading habit of its roots. It is actually an enormous shrub that can grow into a tree (but is usually coppiced) that may reach a height of 20-60 feet. It is hardy, moderately shade-tolerant and grows best on heavy but well-drained soil. Hazel, rather like Alder, prefers to be near water but is very accommodating as long as it is not too dry. Its narrow-pointed, toothed leaves are about 5-12 cm and are alternating. As a tree, its maximum life span is about 60 years, but when coppiced back it can survive up to 600 years and still produce a good crop of poles. Their wood is white to reddish, tough and flexible

Magical and Medical Uses

for the Hazel

It is naturally an under-story plant, particularly in oak and ash woods. Hazel trees grow as a clump of slender trunks. When they do adopt a one-trunk-and-canopy tree shape, they readily respond to coppicing, practices which can actually extend and even double the lifespan of a hazel. Either way, people have put the young shoots or whips and the thin trunks to a variety of uses. The management of hazel coppice and "coppice with standards" is a precise and ancient craft. Traditionally, a coppice would be cut on a 7-15 year rotation and the woodland divided into the same number of sections as years in the rotation so one part of the wood was harvested every year.

The hazel would be identified in the late winter by its branchy, hairy twigs carrying greenish buds. The opening of the leaves in April are large and rounded, and double teeth on its edges. The bark of the hazel tree is very smooth, with shades of brown and grey. Male and female flowers grow on the same plant--the male catkins open as the first warm days of spring arrive into bunches of bright yellow, drooping "lamb tails;" female flowers on the same branches appear as tiny pink tufts on plump buds. The fertilized flowers develop into the well-known clusters of nuts, which turn brown in October.

I hate to imply that trees are only good when we can use them for some purpose. Trees have certain rights to unfettered existence as do all living creatures. That said, this is how you could utilize their bounty.

Practical Uses for the Tree's Wood

The interior of the walls of many ancient homes were "wattle and daub," using coppiced hazel branches, woven into a lattice, and mud or clay daubed onto it. Some consider this the origin of Celtic art interlacing. The Glastonbury Abbey is rumored to have been built on a Druidic "hedge school" built of wattle. Daub is made of wet clay, dung, chopped straw and lime powder. When this dried, a thin wall could last hundreds of year if not dampened.

- * Coppicing is a skilled job that requires practice and only minimal hand tools; usually, just a billhook, axe, and mallet, as well as a drawknife for stripping the trees of their bark.
- * Hazel stems split lengthwise and twist easily to make hurdles, thatching, liggers, spars, sways, and pegs. Hazel is or was used for fencing (which blessed a home,) hurdles, barrel hoops, walking sticks, fishing rods, fish weirs, whip handles, ties for fastening thatch, pegs, fuel for ovens, torches, and charcoal for gunpowder, domestic fires, and ovens.
- * Woodland crafts using hazel are also enjoying a resurgence, and hazel wattle hurdles have even been used as sound screens along motorways.
- * Like willow, young coppiced hazel shoots were used to weave a variety of baskets and other containers.
- * Hazel has long been a favorite wood from which to make staffs, whether for ritual Druidic use, for medieval self defense, as staffs favored by pilgrims, or to make shepherds crooks, bishop's crosiers and everyday walking sticks. In the case of the latter two, the pliancy of the hazel's wood was used to bend the stems into the required shape, though it was also customary to bend the hazel shoots when still on the tree to "grow" the bend into a crook or walking stick.
- * Hazel leaves are usually the earliest native ones to appear in spring and often the last to fall in autumn, and were fed to cattle as fodder.
- * Hazel nuts (see article below) were a popular source of food.

- * Hazel indicates intuition to lead to the source, poetry, divination and meditation.
- * It is said the Hazel tree takes nine years to bear fruit from the time of planting; nine years of experience before it will imbue its fruit (or offspring) with its essence. A Hindu teaching says, "keep to yourself what you have been taught until it is yours to share," for only then can it truly be taught again. Hazel asks us to learn the values of time, patience, and experience, and allows us to express ourselves in art, poetry and music.
- * Hazel represents letter "C" in the "ogham alphabet ("C" is for Coll.) and often used for constructing Ogham wands. The wands of the Druids were made from hazel branches and even the staffs of the Celtic Christian Bishops were made from hazel to this day. Hermes' magic rod may have been made from hazel.
- * MIDIR--An Irish god, lord of the wondrous land of Mag Mor, the tutor of the god Oengus, was struck by a stake cut from a hazel tree. Midir loses an eye which is replaced for him by the god of healing Dian-Cecht. Aonghus Og also carried one such wand. Sabd, mother of Oisin (son of Fionn,) is turned into a deer by such a wand of a Druid.
- * It is one of the nine woods of a Beltaine Fire (Birch, Oak, Rowan, Willow, Hawthorn, Hazel, Apple, Vine, Fir) www.iit.edu/~phillips/personal/lore/belfire.html
- * Until the seventeenth century, a forked Hazel stick was used to divine the guilt of persons in cases of murder and theft. Forked twigs of hazel were also favored by diviners, especially for finding water or treasure.
- * Rain-bringing methods included sprinkling water on stones whilst reciting a charm, or tossing a little flour into a spring and stirring with a hazel-rod.
- * Diarrhea and menstrual bleeding can be aided by mixing the dried husks and shells with red wine. Hamamelis virginiana in "Witch Hazel" oil is an outstanding treatment for hemorrhoids.
- * Newfoundland: An old custom to cure a child of hernia was to split a green witch hazel tree and pass the child through it.
- * Russia: Sometimes the cowherds symbolically beat the cattle three times with a willow or hazel branch to make the animals grow well
- * Yorkshire: Soil taken from under a hazel bush was fed to Nidderdale cows that had lost their cud, while the earth underneath a freshly cut turf was reckoned good for scour in Swaledale calves. Hazel lambs-tail catkins were placed around the hearth to help the ewes at lambing time and rowan collars were put around lambs' necks; while if a lamb died unexpectedly, its corpse would be hung in a thorn or rowan tree, a custom found elsewhere not restricted to sheep.
- * Hazel also has protective uses as anti-lightning charms. Gather hazel tree branches on Palm Sunday and keep them in water. Possibly a continuation of a Norse association of Hazel with Thor.
- * A sprig of Hazel or a talisman of two Hazel twigs tied together with red or gold thread to make a solar cross can be carried as a protective good luck charm.
- * A cap of Hazel leaves and twigs ensures good luck and safety at sea, and protects against shipwrecks.
- * Finland: The stripped hazel stick was a sacred symbol. If there was struggle about a sown field they just set up a stripped stick until the matter was solved

* The week called Karwoche in German, or week of mourning or sorrow, begins with Palm Sunday. In lieu of palms, in Bad Kohlgrub and Mittenwald, the pussy-willow branches are bundled, tied with ribbons and attached to the end of a much longer hazel branch. Parishioners parade their creations as they proceed to church to have the bushels blessed. A good-natured competition usually arises as to whose branches are the longest, especially among the young boys.

* Earlier, in the fifteenth century, a recipe for summoning a fairy involves burying hazel wands "under some hill whereas you suppose fayries haunt."

* If you sleep under a Hazel bush you will have vivid dreams.

* Hazel trees were often planted near holy wells and strips of cloth were hung on them to remove illness of the supplicant.

* In English villages, country-dwellers associate a prolific show of hazel catkins with the advent of lots of babies, and late as the 1950s, the saying, "Plenty of catkins, plenty of prams" was taken quite seriously.

* Any Hazel twigs, wood or nuts should be gathered after sundown on Samhain since it will be at the peak of its magickal energy. On the waning moon, hazel and willow were not cut for baskets, nor was wood cut for boats. Hazel for magickal purposes must not be cut with a knife, but with a flint.

The Hazel Nut Itself

In days gone by, hazelnuts would have provided a source of protein since Neolithic times in England (South Cadbury and Avebury digs,) and they were often ground up and mixed with flour to be made into nourishing breads. Hazelnuts, of course, can be eaten, and are a good source of phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, copper, protein and fatty acids. The Gaelic word for hazelnuts is cno, and wisdom is cnocach. From the hazelnut we find the phrase "in a nut shell," because all wisdom and knowledge was compacted and contained within the nut. There are many stories of salmon eating hazelnuts, who then gained one speckled spot per hazelnut. Eating of hazelnuts would bestow wisdom on the recipient (such as bears or humans) and would then bestow gray hairs or freckles. Cultivated hazelnuts, called filberts, take their name from St. Philibert's Day on August 20th, the date by which hazelnuts were supposed to start ripening. They should be sown immediately after gathering, to keep them moist.

* Holy Cross Day on 14 September was traditionally given as a school holiday for children to go nutting, a custom which persisted in England until the First World War. An old saw proclaims that a girl who goes nutting on Sunday will meet the Devil and have a baby before she can wed.

* Various places celebrated Nutcrack Night sometime during November, when the stored nuts were opened, though apparently some parishioners were in the habit of taking hazelnuts to church on the following Sunday to be cracked noisily during the sermon. These people were called "crackers."

* On Halloween (also known as "Nut-Crack Night") The custom of "burning nuts" involves two nuts being placed in the fire, one is to bear your own name, the other that of the person you love. If the nuts burn quietly side-by-side then the relationship will be prosperous.

* Girls were told to place hazelnuts along the front of the fire grate, each one to symbolize one of her suitors. She could then divine her future husband by chanting, "If you love me, pop and fly; if you hate me, burn and die."

* Assign the name of your passion to a nut and throw it in the fire while saying:

"A Hazelnut I throw in the flame, to this nut I give my sweetheart's name, If blazes the nut, so may thy passion grow, For 'twas my nut that did so brightly glow."

* In England, the Hazelnut is a symbol of fertility--a bag of nuts bestowed upon a bride will ensure a fruitful marriage, often by an older woman in the village at her threshold or thrown like rice at the wedding.

* Greek: After an arrangement was made, the matchmaker would return to the house of the bride where the announcement that the "Scartsofoli" was accepted without a problem. There was a custom and "Andeti" of the bridegroom to send hazelnuts and walnuts with the matchmaker so that the bride would treat relatives and friends who would visit her to express their felicitations.

* Children born in the autumn could have the "milk of the nut," said to be of great benefit in their future health.

* There was also a belief that hazelnut feed could increase a cow's milk yield.

* The milk taken from the nuts can be used to treat a chronic cough (add honey and water,) and when mixed with pepper helps stop runny eyes and noses.

* Finn as a youth ate a salmon, which was fed on hazelnuts of knowledge. Finn's mighty shield was of hazel wood. An old Fenian story tells how Maer, the wife of one Bersa of Berramain, fell in love with Finn and tried to seduce him with hazel-nuts from the Well of Segais bound with love charms. Finn refused to eat them, pronounced them "nuts of ignorance" rather than nuts of knowledge and buried them a foot deep in the earth.

* Today hazelnuts continue to be eaten, though more frequently in luxury foods such as chocolate and as hazelnut butter, and as a Christmas delicacy.

Hazelnuts were carried as charms in pockets to ward off rheumatism, lumbago ("elfshot,") and toothache in some parts of England and Ireland

* "Hazel Rings"--make a string of nine hazelnuts and tie the ends to form a circle. Bless the ring in the smoke of the Samhain fire. You can hang the ring in your home for protection in the coming year

Ivy and the Vine

By Sam Peebles, free-roaming Druid
A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 2002

Why do modern Druids go gaga over trees? Well trees are really cool if you look at them, I mean REALLY look at them. They also tend to stay in one place, which makes it hard for them to avoid our affections. But some plants have the itch to roam, such as the vines, sometimes even abandoning their roots for sunnier destinies, as do some Reformed Druids.

In the famous Battle of Cad Goddeau, finally written down in the 9th century, the writer describes a huge army composed of plants going off to war. Privet and woodbine And ivy on its front. Celtophiles, naturally enjoy guessing at the hidden meanings in the epithets given to each plant. The modern neo-pagans also like to associate these trees with ogham, planets, emotions, colors, shoe-sizes and months of the year. Two of the listed trees, aren't trees at all, they're creepers, which is vine with me.

In these exceptional plants is a lesson. We've all heard the expression "standing on the shoulders of giants?" Nobody makes up a culture in a vacuum, we build on the work of our ancestors, occasionally throwing out a new leaf. Not everybody can be the stout tree in our society; some of us must attach ourselves to giants and build on their achievements to reach the same heights. However, left untamed, they tend to obliterate the intent of the original, leaving a monotonous conformity.

Ivy

Gort was the Irish word for ivy, *Hedera helix* L., and it should be planted in the fall, with greenish flowers also blooming around Samhain. It is an ever-green plant like holly, and is actually part of the Ginseng family (*araliaceae*.) It is native to Europe and not to America. Its berries are poisonous in large amounts to blood cells, but used to be considered a cure for hangovers. The leaves were brothed and places on wounds and sores. The ancient Greeks used it to garland poets and heroes and counteract the effects of wine. Romans fed it to cattle and gave it to newlyweds. Interestingly, Gort is also the name of the giant robot in the Day the Earth Stood Still.

Unfortunately, Ivy has a dark side. Its tendrils can push through bricks and stones, destroying a wall slowly. It can also run rampant in forests, cloaking and choking the trees and darkening the forest floor so that other plants cannot grow. It has all the characteristics of a weed: Rapid, widespread dispersal, very tolerant of a variety of ecosystems, rapid reproduction, opportunistic, quickly dominating ecological disturbed areas, resistant to eradication. A friend of mine says this sounds like most missionaries he knows.

Modern people associate Ivy with traditions and old-age. Many old mansions, colleges and castles are covered with ivy, softening the sharper details of a building. In the use of the term Ivy League, the word Ivy implies those pretentious snots and the parasitic upper class feeding off the common folk. Whoops, sorry about that rant.

Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, and Poison Sumac are relatives of the Cashew family (*Rhus*) and not related to English ivy. However their three-some nature, shows that not all good things come in three and that only through experience can fakes be recognized.

Vine

Muin was the Irish name for the grapevine (*Vitis vinifera* L) and it grows about 110 feet. Grapes rarely grow wild anymore and are culturally being replaced by blackberries. Grape cultivation was widely-known in pre-Roman Celtic regions, even remote areas like ancient Slovenia, since the 6th Century B.C. Gaulish wine became indispensable in later Roman times especially since the Christian churches had such a fondness for their drug of choice.

The boiled leaves can be used for skin inflammations and grapes are good for coughs and ingestion. We all know the side-effects of grape-wine by intoxication. However, we have heard about the benefits of a glass or two of wine every day. It is a pity that Americans can't follow the French in drinking wine from youth at meals, as I believe it would result in more responsibility in drinking under the guidance of their parents rather than frat-brothers. Perhaps the greatest lesson of wine is that even rotting (i.e. fermenting) can be a beneficial process to us.

Both vines grow spirally, which some modern pagans associate with reincarnation or the ever-returning nature of search for self. Some postulate the two as enemies since Ivy prefers wet climates, and the vine prefers dry. Ivy also counteracts intoxication, supposedly, although also being linked with the fairy world's altered state.

The Ash Tree

By Sam Peebles, free-roaming Druid
A Druid Missal-Any, Summer 2002

One of the easier trees to spot, this sturdy and reliable tree naturally features prominently in Celtic Lore and in the customs of various Indo-European peoples. Modern pagans are well familiar with the phrase "by oak, ash, and thorn," which is used as a blessing during ritual or to affirm a charge of power in spellcraft.

There are about fifty species of the genus *Fraxinus*, and cultivation has produced and perpetuated a large number of varieties. The Common Ash and the Privet are the only representatives in England and Ireland of the Olive family *Oleaceae*, of which is the furthest northern species. It is the fourth most common tree in the British isles, and traces of pollen date back 7000 years. Other species include White Ash--*fraxinus americana*; European Ash--*fraxinus excelsior* (Including British Isles); Flowering Ash--*fraxinus ornus*. Rowan (or "Mountain Ash") is from a different family. The ash tree is known by several folk names: Nion, Asktroed, Jasen Bell, and Freixo. The word 'ash' derives from the Icelandic *aske* which means "great fire blaze," or from the Anglo-Saxon word *Asech* a poetic word for spear, while the botanical name *Fraxinus* means "great fire-light" due to its high flammability.

It grows 40' to 70' tall (some as great as 40meters) with a potential canopy of 20' to 50' in width. Unless cut back, it will have a long straight trunk. They take 45 years to mature, with a life span of 200 years, and longer if coppiced every 12 to 20 years. It likes rich, well-drain soil, with ample moisture, like the olive family. It is often found near limestone, but is adaptable to a wide range of pH. It can tolerate salt. Extreme cold and winter contraction can damage rapidly growing young trees.

Leaf: Opposite, pinnately compound, seven to 11 sessile, serrated leaflets, total leaf 10 to 14 inches long, dark green above, lighter below with tufts of brown hair. Normally very late coming into leaf, it can then be one of the earliest to loose its leaves.

If the oak come out before the ash

There's sure to be a splash

If the ash be out before the oak

Why, then you're sure to get a soak.

Feathery foliage allows many shrubs and plants to grow beneath it. Yellow in the fall. A wind pollinated species, the ash is generally a bisexual tree but you do get male and female trees but these can change sex! Some ash trees have flowers with both male and female parts, some have only male or only female flowers, and some produce separate male and female flowers on different branches. Some branches which produce only female flowers one year may produce all male flowers the following year. The fruit of the ash are the ash-keys: an oblong seed chamber with long strap wings. The keys hang from branches in little bunches and turn from green to brown. The seeds, or keys, stay on the trees through the winter, and only fall in spring. They can be carried quite long distances by the wind, and spring up quickly in almost any type of soil

Physical Uses of the Wood

* Laboratory tests show that ash has the greatest "impact strength" of all native hardwoods in the Isles. It will also bear more weight than any other tree when used for joists. It grows very quickly and has great elasticity. The wood is best used for interior purposes, works well, is subject to insect damages, polishes well, shrinks little in seasoning, and is excellent for steam-bending.

* The Anglo-Saxons used the fine-grained and springy Ash wood for making spears, shields, baskets, baseball bats, tool handles, arrow shafts, cricket bats, hop poles, hockey sticks, snooker cues, hurley ("The clash of the ash") and Shillelaghs. Before the development of light alloys ash wood was used for the construction of carts, boat frames, furniture (such as thrones,) joists, carriages, coaches, wagons,, aircraft wings. It dents easily, but rarely warps with age, but achieves a smooth polish and molding to the hands with usage.

* It rots easily when wet, so it should be kept away from the ground

* The longs burn well, even when freshly cut, but gives no smoke and its ashes are good for potash. It also makes good charcoal.

There is a traditional poem various woods and the ash is considered good for royalty;

"...but ash new, or ash old is fit for Queen with crown of gold"

Herbal and Magical Uses

(consult a doctor or herbalist, of course)

Nordic Customs

Ash is well known to be sacred to Odin since the Ash is often known as the *Yggdrassil* (or the "Ash *Yggdrassil*") amongst the Scandinavian nations. In Norse mythology, the *Yggdrassil* supports the Universe, has three main branches and is believed to have sprung from the beginning of time out of primordial slime and ashes. The world tree extends throughout all the worlds from the gods home in *Asgard*, the mortal realms of *Midgard*, to the dark underworld of *Nifelheim*. The sacred waters of the Well of the Wyrd were used by the Norns to water its branches, and the Norns were associated with fate. Any site of great significance within the Norse cosmology usually is placed by a root of the tree. The leaves fed Odin's goat, *Heidrun*, which supplied the mead for the gods. The leaves also fed four stags (*Dain*, *Dvalin*, *Duneyr* and *Durathor*) whose horns' dew fed the rivers of the world.

Odin is especially associated with the spear, for which the ash was often chosen, as he owns the mythological *Gungnir*. The Northern races often employed cremation of the dead, for which Ash is unrivaled. Men were created from Ash by the Norse gods ash and the first woman from rowan. Odin hung himself from *Yggdrassil* to obtain the runes, of which it is the 26th (Anglo-Saxon version) and resembles a barbed spear.

The rune-poem says "The ash is precious to men and very tall. Firm on its base it keeps its place securely though many men attack it." Northumbrian runes refer to "Gar" meaning spear. Some Norse used the *Nidding Pole* to pester foes; which was a 9 foot ash pole, surmounted by a horse skull facing an enemy's home.

- * Red ash buds were eaten at midsummer to protect from enchantment.
- * Ash divination wand was cut at mid-summer to attract.
- * One version of the Yule log was a bundle of ash faggots burned at the midwinter solstice and the wassail bowl was carved from ash wood.
- * In Northern England, it was once believed that if a woman placed an Ash leaf in her left shoe, then she would be fortunate enough to immediately meet her future spouse
- * Locally there were traditions associated with the ash. In Yorkshire it was said to be a sign of disaster if the ash did not produce keys in a year.
- * Another old belief, recorded at least in the nineteenth century, was recorded in Lincolnshire and Frankish law codes. In the north of England, until the 19th century, the ash used to be known as esh and men believed that if they freshly cut an "esh-plant," no thicker than their thumb, they had the right to beat their wife with it. (Some customs are best forgotten.)
- * The Ash tree gave warriors silent warnings about war. To die under an Ash tree while in battle, was a guarantee to be selected by Odin to go to Valhalla.
- * Also in German forests Christian folk, in previous centuries, feared "demons" in the trees. They told tales of the Askafroa (Eschenfrau) who was the wife of Ash and did much damage. So people would sacrifice to her on Ash Wednesday (despite this being a Christian festival in origin.)

Greek Customs

The Greek goddess Nemesis carried an ash branch as the symbol the divine instrument of the justice of the gods, the scourge. In iconology she is also depicted with an eight-spoke wheel symbolic of the solar year. The wheel is also a symbol of the Fates who dispensed her justice under and through the ash tree, metering out happiness or misery and ensuring that fortune was shared and not cosseted by the few. If anyone hoarded the favors she had given or didn't sacrifice some or part of it to the gods, or didn't try to alleviate the poverty and misery of fellow man. Nemesis would step in and withdraw what was given dispensing justice through humiliation with a scourge made of ash.

In later Greek myths Nemesis was identified as Andrasteia, daughter of the sea god Oceanus and goddess of the "rain making ash tree." In this aspect her scourge was used for ritual flogging to bring fruitfulness and productivity to the trees and crops. This association with Oceanus the god of the sea through his daughter Andrasteia, connects the ash tree with thunderstorms, which waters the earth and fertilizes the land. The ash tree is said to attract lightening. As well as the ash branch, wheel and scourge Nemesis also carried an apple branch as a reward for heroes.

Celtic Customs

- * Wood being taken without touching the ground, would cleave to the element of air, flying straight and true. One of the most famous spears in Celtic mythology was the Spear of Lugh, one of the four treasures brought to Ireland by the Tuatha De Danann from the city of Gorias. This was a spear of power and direction which would not miss its target. So keen was it that it was kept hooded when not in use.
- * In Ancient Wales and Ireland, oars were made of this wood. Ash protects against drowning and oars and coracle slats were often made of ash.

- * Gwydion, the Celtic equivalent of this Norse God, was known to choose the thick, strong twigs of the Ash for his wands and was renowned for his magical abilities.
- * The staff of the good god and chief of the Tuatha De Danann, the Dagda, is believed to be made of ash wood.
- * The Staff planted by Fintan the Ancient was an ash.
- * Of old, a staff of ash was hung over doorframes to ward off malign influences, or ash leaves were scattered in the four directions to protect a house or area, or a garter made from its green bark was worn as protection against sorcerers and physic attacks.
- * Of old, a staff of ash was hung over doorframes to ward off malign influences, or ash leaves were scattered in the four directions to protect a house or area, or a garter made from its green bark was worn as protection against sorcerers and physic attacks.
- * Carve a piece of ash wood into the shape of a solar cross (an equal-armed cross) and carry it with you when traveling across sea or water for protection against drowning. Healing wands are also carved out of ash wood and healing poppets can be carved from its roots.
- * It is the second most common tree found near Holy Wells in Ireland, the first being Hazel. The Ash was often the selected tree for Maypoles.
- * Ash is one of the trees were protected by Brehon Law of Ireland. Cutting down one of these trees was a fine of one cow. These Trees are Oak, Hazel, Apple, Holly, Yew, Ash and Pine. The Ash was a sacred chieftain tree, believed to "court the flash" since it was prone to be struck by lightning. The ash tree has a particular affinity with lightning, which it attracts. Under an ash tree is not the place to be during an electrical storm.

Several Famous Ashes:

- * Tree of Creevna-Ireland-emigrants to America carried pieces of this ash tree before they left. This tree was considered a charm against drowning.
- * Tree of Uisnech. Standing upon the mythological fifth province of Ireland, it was the centre point of Ireland, performing in wood what the Umbilicus Hiberniae; the centre stone of Ireland did as it also lay upon the Hill of Uisnech.
- * Tree of Totu, Dathi, and Uisnech-Ireland-these Ash trees were some of the five magic trees cut down in 655 AD as a sign of Christianity conquest over paganism. The other two were an oak and an elm.

Generic Lore

- * In folklore it was believed that the fairies could be seen and conversed with by mortals wherever the three trees grew together.
- * As a cure for rickets the baby was passed widdershins through a cleft made in an ash sapling. The tree was then tied-up and sealed with clay, and afterwards a bond grew between the child and the tree, any later damage to the tree also happened in the health of the child and vice versa, therefore the ash tree could never be cut down as this would result in the disease. If you want your newborn child to be a good singer bury its first nail parings under an ash tree.
- * The ceremonial Yule log is often made of Ash--this huge log is kindled each Yule with a piece from last years fire and allowed to smolder for 12 days before it is ceremonially put out.
- * Ash is often used for making both mundane and magical tools--it's said that tools with handles of Ash are more productive than tools with handles of other wood.

* The flowering Ash has sap that contains a sugary exudate called "manna," which can be used as a laxative.

* The leaves have diuretic, diaphoretic and purgative properties and are employed in modern herbal medicine for their laxative action, especially in the treatment of gouty and rheumatic complaints proving a useful substitute for Sienna, having a less griping effect. The infusion of the leaves (1 oz to the pint of water) may be given in frequent doses during any 24-hour period. The distilled water of the leaves can be taken every morning and was considered good for dropsy and obesity, and a decoction of the leaves in white wine had the reputation of dissolving stones and curing jaundice. The leaves should be gathered in June, well dried and powdered and kept in well-corked bottles

* Ash leaves and the tender tops can be used in the spring to make a fasting tea that is a diuretic and can be used as a help for weight loss. Put fresh ash leaves under your pillow to stimulate psychic dreams.

* Scatter some ash leaves in a bowl of water and place it under a bed over night to prevent and heal illness. The next morning the water and leaves should be discarded outside on open ground then repeat the procedure each evening until well. Leaves can also be sewn into small sachets and worn as health or protection charms. To gain the love of the opposite sex, carry some loose ash leaves in your pockets.

* The ash was said traditionally to combat viper bites and boiled leaves were given to afflicted animals and laid on as a poultice.

* Ash talismans can be worn as protective amulets. Ash is known to keep away serpents and to protect against their bite. If there are no snakes to be found, Ash can be used instead to keep away nasty people who are bitchy, quick to criticize, impatient, or psychic vampires.

* Ash can be used in medicine pouches or can be used in magic for wart remover: the wart is stuck with a pin that has first been thrust into an Ash, while these words are said: "Ashen tree, Ashen tree, pray these warts off of me." The pins are then stuck back in the tree and left.

* "Beware the ash, it courts a flash, beware the oak, it courts a stroke" says the old rhyme, meaning that these two trees, above all others, attract lightning.

Songs about Ash Trees

"The Ash Tree" is a poem, that was given a Welsh melody, and has become extremely well known in American folklore with dozens of versions. I've always found it a bit creepy, seeing the images of the dead in the branches. But, in a way, I've found that it is a pleasant Druidical song. The second song uses the same music and is a whimsical parody poking fun at those factious Celts.

The Ash Grove

By John Oxenford

The ash grove, how graceful, how plainly 'tis speaking,
The wind [harp] through it playing has language for me.
Whenever the light through its branches is breaking
A host of kind faces is gazing on me.
The friends of my childhood again are before me,
Each step wakes a memory as freely I roam.
With soft whispers laden its leaves rustle o'er me,
The ash grove, the ash grove again [alone] is my home.

My laughter is over, my step loses lightness,
Old countryside measures steal soft on my ear;
I only remember the past and its brightness,
The dear ones I mourn [long] for again gather here.
From out of the shadows their loving looks greet me
And wistfully searching the leafy green dome,
I find other faces fond bending to greet me,

The ash grove, the ash grove alone is my home.
My lips smile no more, my heart loses its lightness
No dream of my future my spirit can cheer;
I only can brood on the past and its brightness,
The dead I have mourned are again living here.
From ev'ry dark nook they press forward to meet me;
I lift up my eyes to the broad leafy dome,
And others are there looking downward to greet me;
The ash grove, the ash grove alone is my home.

Borderlands

Sung to "The Ash Grove"

Author Unknown – Someone in the SCA

If ever you wander down by the Welsh border
Come stop by and see me and all of my kin.
I'm Morgan ap Daffyd ap Gwion ap Hywell
Ap Ifor ap Madoc ap Rhodri ap Gwyn.
We'll feast you on mutton and harp for your pleasure
And give you a place to sleep out of the cold
Or maybe we'll meet you out on the dark highway
And rob you of horses and weapons and gold.

My neighbour from England has come across raiding
Slain six of my kinsmen and burned down my hall.
It cannot be borne this offense and injustice
I've only killed four of his, last I recall.
I'll send for my neighbors, Llewellyn and Owain
We'll cut him down as for the border he rides
But yesterday Owain stole three of my cattle
And first I'll retake them and three more besides.

We need a strong prince to direct our resistance
Heroic, impartial, of noble degree.
My brother's wife's fourth cousin's foster-son, Gruffydd
Is right for the job as I'm sure you'll agree.
What matter that Rhys is the old prince's nephew
He's exiled to Ireland and will not return
I know this for every time boats he is building
I send my spies money to see that they burn.

Last evening my brother and I were at war
Over two feet of land on a boundary we share
But now that I hear he has been foully murdered
I'll not rest until I avenge him, I swear.
Yes, we are just plain folk who mind our own business
Honest and loyal and full of good cheer.
So if you should wander down by the Welsh border
Come stop by and meet all the friendly folk here.

The Willow Tree

By Sam Peeples, free-roaming Druid
A Druid Missal-Any, Lughnasadh 2002

Found throughout the British Isles in various species, the Willow is also common in Europe, North Africa and America. It is known as Saille in Irish Gaelic. The botanical name of the willow *Salix* purportedly comes from the Celtic word *sal* meaning near, and *lis* meaning water. Other Gaelic words for willow are *seilach* and feature in Scottish place names such as *Achnashellach* in Ross-shire and *Corrieshalloch* on Speyside. These names would have referred to both the presence of willow and related industries utilizing the willow's gifts. The verb and girl's name *Sally* may be derived from the Willow. In Cornish it is called *Helygenn*. Other names include: Willow, Witch 's Tree, Pussy Willow, *Salicyn* Willow, *Saille*, *Sally*, *Withe*, *Withy*, *Witches' Aspirin*, *Tree of Enchantment*, *Osier*, *Tarvos Tree*, and *Sough Tree*. The Greeks called it *Helice*, and thus is associated with *Helicon* (abode of Muses.) The Anglo-Saxon *welig*, from where the name willow is derived, means pliancy. It represents S in Ogham script.

Willows just love water and are often found in moist soils or near running water, along with alder, hazel and birch. It is occasionally found in the under-story of other trees or on the edges of meadows or in areas cleared by fire. Most of the 20 British willow species (330 in total and related to poplar, 100 in America) are bushy, but the White, Black (i.e. Pussy Willow) and Weeping Willow often become tree sized (50'to 80') and most well known for long, thin, variably droopy, flexible branches with few twigs. Its long thin leaves are easily recognizable as yellow in the fall. Yellow flowers arrive in April or May along with the Robin, and easily cross-breeds with other willows. The bark is most removable in the summer, containing 13% tannin and small amounts of salicin. Be careful not to ring the tree when removing bark or it will die, take vertical slices.

The dispersal of thousands of small windblown seeds is used by yellow willow to reproduce itself (2.3 million seeds per pound.) Male and female flowers (in the form of catkins) occur on separate plants. Like other willows, it is reliant on insect pollination, especially from bees [31]. After fertilization, a capsule develops which eventually splits open during spring or summer, dispersing the myriad of minuscule seeds. The production of large quantities of seeds ensures that some will fall on favorable sites. The seeds have a cottony down which allows them to float long distances in the wind, and on water. Seeds are non-dormant, remaining viable for only a few days. They germinate rapidly, usually within 12-24 hours if a moist seedbed is reached [6].

Practical Uses of Willow

First and foremost, trees are quite happy the way they are without being utilized by us, and serve their own niche in the ecosystem without being exploited. 'Nuff said.

Irregardless of size, willows are easily pollarded and make straight poles in 4-5 years, which is good for fencing and baskets, and very munchable to horses, moose, beaver and elk and nested in by birds.

Willow's ability to absorb shock without splintering is still utilized in the making of cricket bats and stumps (note also the similarity between "wicket" and "wicker") and polo balls. (<http://www.rfs.org.uk/totm/cricket.htm>)

- * The Dutch use it for making clogs.
- * The Celts used it for chariot wheel spokes.
- * The Romany use it for clothes pegs
- * The bark's tannin was used for reddish dye and tanning leather.
- * Before the advent of plastics, willow was widely used to make a variety of containers, from general basketry to specialized applications such as lobster pots and bee hives.
- * A 6th century basket was discovered by archaeologists on Shetland, and apparently made of willow, used the same weaving techniques as those still practiced in Scotland
- * Some people twist living willows into outdoor furniture and odds shapes.
- * Many plant willows on riverbanks to prevent erosion and control flooding.
- * Artificial limbs were once made from this light wood.
- * Willow is used as core wood for laminated furniture (esp. Ikea)
- * The wood was preferred for making charcoal for gunpowder.
- * Used as bottoms of wheelbarrows, chariots, mills and washboards.
- * Roots make a purple dye used in France/Sweden for Easter eggs.
- * Willow wood is light but strong enough to make roofs and rafters, boats and carts.
- * Do not plant close to septic tanks or sewer lines as the roots will invade!
- * If you do have a low, wet area in your yard, this tree will actually "dry up" that area.

Mythological Connections

Even in the *Adventures of Neera* it is a withy ring of willow that must be placed around the ankle of a hanging corpse if Neera is to win the golden sword of Aillil. The placing of this withy plunges Neera into an Otherworld adventure. He is held captive in the Sidhe world and set to physical work but wins through with the support of a Sidhe woman. When he returns to Cruachan, no time has passed. It is still Samhain. He proves his story by showing the fresh blossoming twig he has carried out with him

British and Irish mythology is also rich with legends of the beguiling, Willowy Spring Maiden who is called *Olwen*, *Niwalen*, *Gwenhyver*, *Cordelia*, *Blodeuwedd* and many others, who initiate the young King into a deeply sexual experience.

The ancient Celts believed that the spirit of the dead would rise up into the sapling planted above a grave, which would grow and retain the essence of the departed one. Throughout Britain many cemeteries, particularly those situated near rivers, lakes or marshes, are often to be found lined with willow trees to protect the spirits in place.

In Sumer, 4000 BCE, *Ishtar's* predecessor, *Belili*, was known as the Willow Mother.

Often associated by the Greeks with water and the moon; it is linked to legends of *Ceres*, *Apollo's* harp, *Minerva's* bird "Wryneck" who only sleeps in willow, and *Orpheus* who gained bardic skills by touching willows in *Proserpine's* grove.

In Athens, it was an ancient custom of the priests of Asclepius to place willow branches in the beds of infertile women. This was done in the belief that it would draw the mystical serpents from the Underworld and cure them. The ancient Spartan fertility rites of the goddess Artemis, also demonstrates the willows connection with fertility and fecundity. In that ceremony, male celebrants were tied to the tree's trunk with willow thongs, they were then flogged until the lashes produced an erotic reaction and they released, fertilizing the land with their seed and blood. How quaint. The Greek sorceress Circe is said to have had a riverside cemetery planted with willow trees dedicated to Hecate and her moon magic. Here male corpses were wrapped in un-tanned ox-hides and left exposed in the tops of the trees for the elements to claim and the birds to eat.

In Jerusalem, for the worship of Jehovah, the Feast of Tabernacles was also called the Day of the Willows. Willow branches were carried in processions, used to roof the small temporary shelters (sukkah) during the festivities, the branches were later burned in the Temples. (Lev. 23:40.)

In Britain the more recent, "Christianized" use of willow to symbolize grief probably originated with Psalm 137:

By the rivers of Babylon
we sat down and wept
when we remembered Zion.
There on the willow-trees
we hung up our harps.

(Biblical scholars point out that these 'willow-trees' were probably Euphrates poplar (*Populus euphratica*) and not the weeping willows (*Salix babylonica*) which originated in China.) During the 16th and 17th centuries the association became particular to grief suffered by forsaken lovers, who also adopted the custom of wearing a cap or crown made of willow twigs and leaves. By the nineteenth century illustrations of weeping willows were commonly used as ornaments on gravestones and mourning cards. Willow boughs were also used to decorate churches in Britain on Palm Sunday instead of largely unavailable palm leaves.

The Seneca, a North American indigenous tribe, has a loving bond with all Trees, calling them The Standing People. They consider the Willow to be a source of gentle humility, charm and grace, adding elegance as She touches Her fronds to the Mother Earth, sweeping away fear to nurture peace.

One old tradition concerning the willow is still celebrated today by Rumanian Gypsies. This is the festival of Green George, which takes place on the 23rd of April. A man wearing a wicker frame made from the willow represents the character of Green George, which is then covered in greenery and vegetation from the land. This is symbolic of the willows association with water that fertilizes the land bringing fruitfulness to the fields. On the eve of the festival and in a gay and lively manner, everything is prepared in readiness. A young willow tree is cut down and re-erected at the place of the festivities, there it is dressed and adorned with garlands. That same night all the pregnant women assemble around the tree, and each places an article of clothing beneath it. The belief being that if a single leaf from the tree falls on a garment over night, its owner will be granted an easy child delivery by the willow goddess.

At dawn on the 23rd Green George appears in all his splendor and knocks three nails into the tree, removing them again he then proceeds to the nearest river, lake or stream from whence the tree was cut and throws them into the water, this to awaken the goodwill of the waters spirits to their proceeding. Returning he collects the willow tree and takes it back to the river, lake or stream, and dips its branches and leaves in it until they are heavy with water, thus awakening the tree's beneficial and fertile qualities. The water spirits and the willow tree's beneficial qualities evoked, all the communities animals, flocks and herds are led to Green George who raises the tree and shakes water onto them in blessing ensuring fertility for the coming year. This done the tree is taken back to the place of festivities and re-erected. Feasting, drinking and merriment then commences in thanks to the tree and water spirits.

Magical Uses of Willow

(user beware)

White Willow is a tonic, anti-periodic and astringent. It has been used in dyspepsia connected with debility of the digestive organs. In convalescence from acute diseases, in worms, in chronic diarrhea and dysentery, its tonic and astringent combination renders it very useful. one dram of the powdered root. one or two fluid ounces of the decoction

Black Willow: The bark has been prescribed in gonorrhea and to relieve ovarian pain; a liquid extract is prepared and used in mixture with other sedatives. Largely used in the treatment of nocturnal emissions. Fluid extract, 1/2 to one dram

Country folk have long been familiar with the healing properties of willow. They made an infusion from the bitter bark as a remedy for colds and fevers, and to treat inflammatory conditions such as rheumatism. The decoction is made by soaking 3 teaspoons (15ml) of the bark in a cup of cold water for two to five hours. Then bring to the boil. Strain and take a wineglassful each day, a mouthful at a time. The bark can be dried, powdered and stored in an airtight container. The sap gathered from the tree when it is flowering can be used to treat facial blemishes and dandruff. Young willow twigs were also chewed to relieve pain. In the early nineteenth century modern science isolated the active ingredient responsible, salicylic acid, which was also found in the meadowsweet plant. From this, the world's first synthetic drug, acetylsalicylic acid, was developed and marketed as Aspirin, named after the old botanical name for meadowsweet, *Spirea ulmaria*. Aspirin is now derived from coal and petroleum. The amount swallowed to date in the USA is approaching an annual 35 million lb. or five tablets a week for every man, woman, and child.

In times of hunger the softer inner bark, the "bast," was dried and ground into a flour. Although very bitter it provided nourishment and a source of vitamins and minerals. In colonial times the bast was brewed into tea, which was considered a specific against malaria and a poor man's alternative to quinine.

Willow can additionally be useful in cases of hysteria and nervousness and as a Quinine substitute (although this is used only when Quinine is unavailable.) Willow can be used to loosen tightness in the chest produced by pneumonia, whooping cough and other respiratory infections.

* For a wish to be granted, you must ask permission of the willow, explaining your desire. Select a pliable young shoot and tie a loose knot of it while expressing what you want. When the wish is hopefully fulfilled, return and untie the knot. Don't forget the last part.

* When willow wood is carried in your pocket, it will give bravery, dexterity, and help one overcome the fear of death.

* Willow is one of the nine woods of a Beltaine Fire (Birch, Oak, Rowan, Willow, Hawthorn, Hazel, Apple, Vine, Fir)

* The wind in the Willows is said to be the whisperings of a fairy in the ear of a poet. It is also rumored that Willow trees can uproot themselves and stalk travelers at night, muttering at them.

* Its leaves are used in love attraction sachets. Willow leaves or twigs can also be used in spells to create loyalty, make friendship pacts, treaties, or alliances.

* To find if you will be married soon, on New Year's Eve, throw your shoe into a willow; if it doesn't catch in the branches the first time, you have eight more tries; success means you will be wed. The rhyme goes:

"Throw your shoe high up
into the branches of a Willow tree;
If the branches catch and hold the shoe,
you soon will married be."

* Willow has the ability to banish depression and sadness; sitting beneath a willow tree calms and soothes the emotions. Try it out, this one works!

* Shavings of the wood, pieces of bark and whole leaves can be placed in a Dream Pillow or placed in a small bag, either under your pillow or under the bed itself.

* The willow has long been used for dowsing and for finding buried objects.

* If you need to share a secret, confess to a willow and the secret will be trapped.

* Because of its coppicing ability, it is a symbol of renewal, growth and fertility.

* Willow is used to bind the birch twigs to the ash handle of a broom.

* Willow caps were presented to all people who were disappointed in love. It is customary in the present day for villagers in Wales to ask a rejected suitor on the morning of his sweetheart's marriage to another man, "Where is your willow cap? We must make you a willow cap." The same applies to a spinster whose lover discards her for another girl.

Green Willow, or All Around My Hat.

Traditional British Song Chorus:

CHORUS:

All around my hat I will wear the green willow
And All around my hat for a twelve month and a day
And if any one should ask me the reason why I'm wearing it
It's all for my true love who's far, far away.

Fare thee well cold winter and fare thee well cold frost
Nothing have I gained but my own true love I've lost
I'll sing and I'll be merry when occasion I do see
He's a false deluding young man, let him go, farewell he and...

(Chorus)

Other night he brought me a fine diamond ring
But he thought to have deprived me of a far better thing
But I being careful like lovers ought to be
He's a false deluding young man let him go farewell he and...

(Chorus)

Quarter pound of reasons and a half a pound of sense
A small sprig of time and as much of prudence
You mix them all together and you will plainly see
He's a much deluding young man let him go farewell he and...

(Chorus)

Sing All a Green Willow

Text by William Shakespeare (1564-1616,) from The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice, Act IV scene 3. Based on an old traditional text.

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow.
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
The fresh streams ran by her and murmur'd her moans,
Sing willow, willow, willow.
Her salt tears fell from her, and softened the stones,
Sing willow, willow, willow,
Sing all a green willow must be my garland.
Sing all a green willow;
Let nobody blame him; his scorn I approve.
Sing willow, willow, willow,
I call'd my love false love; but what said he then?
Sing willow, willow, willow:
If I court more women, you'll couch with more men!
Sing willow, willow, willow.

The Oak Tree: Quirky Quercus

By Sam Peebles, Free-roaming Druid
A Druid Missal-Any, Fall 2002

I have a soft spot in my heart for the Oak tree, both because of its Celtic associations and its general usefulness to society. I had a tree house as a young boy, cradled in those mighty boughs, and could clamper easily up the branches. Many wars were fought from that platform, and many days spent reading comic books and just sleeping in the breeze while leaves rustled overhead. With that in mind, we finally come around to do the most famous of the Celtic trees. There was so much information on the internet, it was hard to narrow down the information that I thought was appropriate. Does one really need to know what color is associated with the oak? Any way, here we go.

Etymology

The Anglo-Saxon root of Oak is "Ac" or "Aik" and the fruit "Aik-com," the Irish called it "daur," the Welsh "dar" or "derw;" which is cognate with Greek "drus." The technical name of the Oak is said to be derived from the Celtic quer (fine) and cues (tree.) We, of course, love to note that the term "druid" is derived from the Indo-European root of *der=oak and *wid=knowledge. Interestingly, the root for oak, is also the root for the English word "door." Many deities associated with portals or doorways are thus associated with the Oak.

Physical Characteristics

Although slow in growth, some species of oak will reach 150' in height, 13 feet in girth and 46' in circumference (some grew much larger) and 800 years of age. There are about 80 species and hybridization is quite common, with the offspring of new species quickly adapting to new climatic conditions by interbreeding with local variants. In America, the most prominent are the White Oak (Eastern,) Swamp Oak (Southern,) and Burr Oak (Central.) Species have adapted to Oak Savannah, Pine Forests, Appalachian mountains, and Southern flood plain forest. The English Common Oak and Sessile Oak are rather similar to their American cousins, except they have this annoying accent and dry sense of humors. It is often a dominant canopy tree, which craves sunlight, and is useful in land reclamation on disturbed sites. It prefers elevations under 2,000 feet, but will be found as a scrub tree until 4,500 feet in altitude. It is resistant to fire, as long as there is little shade during recovery, with heavy damage in growing season killing only 60% of the trees if less than 66% of circumference is charred (and dormant season casualties are only 20%) due to underground reproductive centers. Acorns do not survive fire at all. Nicks or scratches or stumps (under 16 inches) have been known to sprout, and sprout best when cut in dormant season.

Oak leaves are amongst the most easily identified leaves for school children; followed by maple, dandelions and (surprisingly) marijuana. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Society for Creative Anachronism lists the oak leaves and acorns as the most common heraldic plant device. Leaves emerge in Mid-March to May depending on climate.

The yellow staminate flowers grow at the ends of branches. In August at the height of the summer when most other trees are wilting from the heat, the oak produces a new leaf called "Lammas shoots" thus adding new color and freshness to the tree. These new leafy shoots are golden-pink when young, turning from pale to dark green as they harden. In autumn the oak tree is at its most majestic as its leaves change color again turning from dark green to various shades of yellow, orange, russet and a pale golden brown. The leaves sometime stay on the tree until the following spring or until the new buds forming for the next year push them off.

Acorns ripen 120 days after pollination and crops tend to have peaks during their four to ten year cycles during moderately breezy summers (usually traveling less than 200 meters from the base,) and begin bearing acorns usually between 50-200 years of age, but as early as 20 years. Acorns grow quickly in late July, and fall to the ground in September. Acorns do not have a dormancy period, germinating soon after falling, thus they don't store well, and last less than a year, 90% going stale after six months. A 70' tall oak may produce as many as 23,000 in a good year, but 10,000 is reasonable on a big tree or as many as 200,000 per acre, depending on April temperatures and early rains. I personally, have never attempted to count a tree's entire crop. Seeds are often dispersed the farthest by blue jays and other birds, although squirrels are often unwitting assistants. The acorns are a choice food for many species including deer, mice, squirrels, bears, boar, blue jay, pheasant, grouse, and rabbits. The leaves may be eaten in winter by deer and porcupine feed on the bark.

Practical Usage

- * As timber, the particular and most valued qualities of the Oak are hardness and toughness; Box and Ebony are harder, Yew and Ash are tougher than Oak, but no timber is possessed of both these requisites in so great a degree as the British Oak. It is easily machined, accepts finishes well, and glues into strong joints; making it an excellent choice for furniture, paneling, flooring and veneering.
- * Many of the supportive beams in Cathedrals in castles use oak or yew, with specific forests linked to the church for its replacement timbers every 400 years.
- * Oak has also long been used for railroad ties, fence posts, mine-timbers, caskets, shingles, cooperage, and the prime source for whiskey barrels (white oak.) It is also excellent for firewood, and was once a primary source of fuel for eternal sacred fires.
- * Oak bark and wood contains a great deal of tannin, which is what makes Acorns so bitter. It can be used to tan leather and other skins.
- * The roots were formerly used to make hafts for daggers and knives.
- * After the Oak has passed its century, it increases by less than an inch a year, but the wood matured in this leisurely fashion is practically indestructible. Edward the Confessor's shrine in Westminster Abbey is of oak that has outlasted the changes of 800 years. Logs have been dug from peat bogs, in good preservation and fit for rough building purposes, that were submerged a thousand years ago. In the Severn, breakwaters are still used as casual landing-places, where piles of oak are said to have been driven by the Romans.
- * Quercus suber, Cork Oak, is a Mediterranean variety whose spongy bark yields commercial cork. So you can use your bulletin board to encourage rain.

* An infusion of it, with a small quantity of copperas, yields a dye which was formerly used in the country to dye woolen of a purplish color, which, though not very bright, was said to be durable. The Scotch Highlanders used it to dye their yarn. Oak sawdust used also to be the principal indigenous vegetable used in dyeing fustian, and may also be used for tanning, but is much inferior to the bark for that purpose. Oak apples have also been occasionally used in dyeing as a substitute for the imported Oriental galls, but the black obtained from them is not durable.

* In Brittany, tan compressed into cakes is used as fuel. Oak-bark is employed for dyeing black, in conjunction with salts of iron. With alum, oak-bark yields a brown dye; with a salt of tin, a yellow color; with a salt of zinc, Isabelia yellow.

* Acorns were of considerable importance formerly for feeding swine. About the end of the seventh century, special laws were made relating to the feeding of swine in woods, called pannage, or pannage. In Saxon times of famine, the peasantry were thankful for a share of this nourishing, but somewhat indigestible food. The Board of Agriculture has lately issued a pamphlet, pointing out the use as fodder, which might be made both of the Acorn and of the Horse Chestnut. The analysis of the Acorn given by the Lancet is: water, 6.3 per cent; protein, 5.2 per cent; fat, 43 per cent; carbohydrates, 45 per cent. The most important constituent of both the Acorn and the Horse Chestnut is the carbohydrate in the form of starch. Acorns contain a substantial proportion of carbohydrate and fat, and in many country districts are still collected in sacks and given to pigs, but they must also be mixed with other vegetable food to counteract their binding properties.

* After the oak bark has been used for tanning, gardeners then use it to make a decoction called "Tan." Tan is used to cover new plantings encouraging them to grow due to the warmth it generates. However care needs to be taken for it sometimes favors the growth of fungi, harmful to certain plants. Tan is also used as a cover for racetracks and circus rings, and as an adulteration of chicory and coffee. In Brittany tan compressed into cakes was used as fuel.

Ancient Oak Groves

Graves suggest that Oak Cults came to Britain by the Baltics somewhere between 1600 and 1400 BC. This places these people about 500 years before the Celts came to the Islands. Pliny mentions the Gaulish oak sanctuaries in 1st Cent CE, Strabo describes Galatian congregations in "Drunemetons," 2nd Cent Maximus says the Celts worshipped Zeus (Taranis?) in the oak, and "Dryads" were "those who delight in the oaks." Irish holy sites with "Derry" or "dara" in them are associated with oaks, such as Brigit's holy cell at Kildare. Many of these sites in the British Isles were approached with dread and reverence by local farmers until WWII. See the OBOD site for extensive discussion of some of these sites and their mythological connections. The second site of the original grove of the RDNA was the Hill of Three Oaks, a place now found on the Carleton Map, and a haven of kit-flying and Frisbee games. Modern Druids seem to prefer Oak Groves, although Hazel and Rowan are also popular.

Mythological Connections

* Oak is supposedly the most commonly lightning struck tree, perhaps due to a rather deep root system or the ion formation on the tall branches, thus its association with Thor and Taranis.

* Mary was once worshiped as Our Lady of the Oak in Anjou, France. She later appeared to shepherd children in Portugal as Our Lady of Fatima, crowned in roses and hovering over an oak tree.

* In older days, the middle-east was more heavily forested. The oak was held sacred by ancient Hebrews. Abraham saw the angels under an oak tree. Jacob buried the idol of Shechem under an oak. The oak in Shechem made Abimelech king. Isaiah said that idols were made of oak. The angel, who gave Gideon his orders, sat under the oak of Ophra. Absalom sustained his sacred thigh injury in an oak grove at Ephraim. The biblical mother-shrine Mamre at Hebron included a sacred oak in a female-symbolic grove. According to the Bible, when Cain murdered Abel, Cain was obliged to carry the dead body of his brother for seven hundred years before Abel could be buried. To mark the burial place, Cain stuck his staff into the ground, whereupon Seven Oaks (now known as the Seven Oaks of Palestine) immediately sprang forth in a row.

* Blodeuwedd tied Llew Llaw's hair to an oak branch and made him stand with one foot on the rim of a bath and the other on the haunch of a sacred beast, in order to inflict upon him the sacred thigh injury that would allow him to be her husband, and king. When he died his soul escaped in the form of an eagle and perched in an oak tree.

The rapid oak tree,

Before him heaven and earth quake;

In every land his name is mine.

--Taliesin, The Battle of the Trees

* Thor was widely worshiped by Norse warriors but was also revered by farmers and peasants because of his capacity to create rain for the crops. Mjolnir the magical hammer was reputedly made by dwarves from the wood of a sacred oak tree, and not only represented the destructive power of the storms Thor created (the fires from heaven,) but its image was used as a fertility symbol in marriages (in its connection with rain and crops) and in funerals (as a symbol of death and rebirth,) and for accepting newborn children into the community (as a symbol of strength and protection.) Such was he revered that the fifth day of the week Thursday (Thor's day) was named after him.

* When traveling Thor rode in a chariot made from oak drawn by two goats, Tanngnjostr (Tooth-gnasher) and Tanngrinir (Tooth-grinder,) and when moving across the heavens dispensing weather, it produced the rumblings of thunder and sparks of lightening from its wheels. Thor and his followers undertook many expeditions to Jotunheim (Iceland) the land of the frost giants, and there erected high-seated pillars of oak. These they used to hallow new ground enabling the gods to protect their people in new lands.

* Two black doves flew from Thebes in Egypt: one to Dodona and the other to Libyan Ammon in the oasis of Siwwa. They alighted on oak trees and proclaimed them oracles of Zeus, in human speech. The oracles were taken by priestesses who interpreted the sounds of the cooing of doves, the rustling of oak leaves and the clinking of brazen vessels that hung from the trees. The shrine of Zeus at Dodona, where an oak cult grew up, had oracular birds, a sacred spring, a sacred black dove and an iron basin. The black dove priestesses chewed acorns to control the oracle, as they listened to the wind in the trees for poetic inspiration. The iron basin was used as a gong to mimic the sound of thunder.

- * The most famous of Zeus' interpreters was an old priestess called Pelias, who prophesied Zeus' messages from a sacred spring at the foot of a giant oak in the grove at Dodona.
- * Hera left Zeus after a fight. To get her back he pretended to marry the nymph Plataea, cutting down an oak tree and dressing it as a bride to make her jealous. Hera tore off the bridal veil in anger, but became reconciled to her husband when she saw what lengths he had gone to in order to win her back.
- * When the baby Hermes stole Apollo's cows he disguised their tracks by covering their hooves with shoes made from the bark of a fallen oak tree. Erotic statues of Hermes were usually carved of oak.
- * Erisichthon felled an oak tree sacred to Ceres that was inhabited by a nymph, drawing blood when he struck it with his ax. Ceres punished him by sending his entrails to Famine.
- * Orpheus led a dance of wild oak trees down the Pierian mountains.
- * Pan, son of the nymph Dryope and Faunus, son of Picus, were both hatched from the eggs of oak woodpeckers.
- * The Virgins at the temple of Vesta in Rome burned fires of oak wood. The Roman Alban Holiday was the annual marriage feast of the Oak Queen, the nymph Egeria, to the Oak King of the year. The Vestal Virgins coupled with the companions of the Oak King, secretly, in a dark sacred cave, just as they did during the Saturnalia. The new Oak King was the child of the Oak Queen or of one of her vestal virgins. See the Golden Bough for more Sacred King theories.
- * Ovid called the oak the Tree of Jove. White oxen were sacrificed to Jupiter as an oak god on the Alban Mount at Rome. The image of Jupiter at the Capitol in Rome was originally an oak tree. Could this have influenced Pliny's accounts to make them more understandable to the Romans, or was this merely a parallel custom?
- * The oak is sacred to all thunder and lightning gods. Hercules attracted thunderstorms with sympathetic magic, by rattling an oak club in a hollow oak, or by stirring a pool with an oak branch.
- * The Titans were men who had been stretched over oaken wheels.
- * Oak heroes include Ixion, Atlas, Hercules and Telamon. Hercules carried an oak club because oak provides mast. Herculean symbols include the acorn, mistletoe or loranthus, and the rock dove, which nests in oaks.
- * Ancient Prussians revered sacred oak trees. The chief oak in the forest at Romove had priests who tended a perpetual fire of oak wood. This tree, draped with a cloth, was considered the dwelling place of the god. The Prussians adored it and hung images from it. There was a sacred oak tree at Hesse called the Red Jove from which omens were drawn and to which sacrifices were made. Holy oaks were preserved in Germany into modern times.
- * First fruits of the chase were hung on oaks in Saxony and Thuringian until the 13th century. Kirwaido, God's Mouth, ruled ancient Prussians in the name of the god. When he had become weak and sick he immolated himself atop a pile of straw and thorn bushes. The blaze was lit from the perpetual fire that burned before the holy oak tree.
- * Estonians sacrificed oxen to oaks, with prayers for rain and good crops. They also annually smeared oak trees with the blood of beasts.

- * Slavs sacrificed goats and bulls to Perun/ Piorun/ Pyerun/ Peron, a thunder god, in a grove with an oak tree. A perpetual fire of oak wood was kept burning before an effigy of Peroun/Perun at Novgorod, where the death penalty was imposed for allowing the fire to go out.

- * The Bohemian festival of the Little Daedala was held in an ancient oak grove, with boiled meat set out for the birds. When a raven took some meat and flew into an oak tree, that tree was felled. Its wood was made into an image which they dressed as a bride and drew to the river with bridesmaids beside it. A crowd then followed it to town, dancing and piping. The image was saved for the Great Daedala, held once every 60 years, when all the images were taken in carts in solemn procession to the river Asopus and then to the top of Mt. Cathaeron, where there was a wooden altar with a pile of brushwood atop it. Sacrificial animals, the images and the altar were consumed by fire.

Magical Properties and Customs

(Caveat Magicus!)

- * Pieces of lightning struck trees however would protect a house.
- * Tannin is especially strong in oak bark, which is good for treating leather and its astringency for hemorrhoids.
- * Many parish boundaries in Britain are still marked by an old oak tree The following is a quotation from Withers:

"That every man might keep his own possessions,
Our fathers used, in reverent processions,
With zealous prayers, and with praiseful cheere,
To walk their parish limits once a year;
And well-known marks (which sacrilegious hands
Now cut or breake) so bordered out their lands,
That every one distinctly knew his owne,
And brawles now rife were then unknowne."

- * The ceremony was performed by the clergyman and his parishioners going the boundaries of the parish and choosing the most remarkable sites (oak-trees being specially selected) to read passages from the Gospels, and ask blessings for the people.

'Dearest, bury me
Under that holy oke, or Gospel Tree;
Where, though thou see'st not, thou may'st think upon
Me, when you yearly go'st Procession.'
-----HERRICK

- * An old proverb relating to the oak is still a form of speculation on the weather in many country districts based on when leaves emerged.

"If the Oak's before the Ash,
Then you'll only get a splash;
If the Ash before the Oak,
Then you may expect a soak."

- * Oaks were believed to court the lightning flash. The English say: "Beware of an oak. It draws the stroke."
- * British bastards born under an oak were except from censure.
- * Irish churches used to be called "Dair-thech" or "oak house."

- * Cornish toothaches cured by driving a nail into an oak.
- * In modern magick circles, Oak is good at most any purpose.
- * Gauls ate acorns to divine the future, and acorns gathered at night assist fertility.
- * Welsh ensure good health by rubbing left palm on oak at mid-summer.
- * In Wales, the rustling of oaks can inspire a poet.
- * Remnants of old-time superstitions with regard to the oak were to be found in Wales so late as sixty years ago, when it was customary in many districts for the young men and maidens to dance and sing around the oldest oak in the village. This was called a "round dance." It took place as a rule at Easter, but Whitsuntide and Midsummer festivities were held under its branches.
- * King Charles II (mildly Scottish) started "Royal Oak Day" in May 29th to celebrate his restoration, due to the aid of a tree where he hid after a battle (coward.) This displaced Beltane as the most popular maypole day in some counties. Many other people in history claimed sanctuary in the easily climbable branches.
- * Oak is one of the traditional nine woods of a Beltane fire.
- * Successful Roman commanders were presented with crowns of oak leaves during their victory parades, and oak leaves have continued as decorative icons of military prowess to the present day.
- * Germany's put fairy haunts near the base of large oak trees, called Oakmen, who are unfriendly big-headed louts who offer food that will make you ill (usually disguised dung.) Pillywiggins are pixies that live in the flowers under oaks.
- * Fairy magic can be countered by turning your clothes inside out and shaking them at an oak tree.

"Turn your clokes,

For fairy folks,

Are in old oakes."

- * Rain magic: Priests of Zeus dipped an oak branch into a spring on Mt. Lycaeus to make it rain by sympathetic magic. The spring water was said to send up a cloud of mist from which the rain fell. Tapping on an oak door is a charm to bring rain.
- * An acorn in the pocket with preserve health and wood chips attract luck.
- * Mold off of acorns assist in healing scabs.
- * An oak leaf touching your heart will protect you from lies.
- * Oils from pressed acorns alleviates pains in the joints.
- * Oak bark when finely ground and powdered makes a remedial snuff that can be inhaled to arrest nosebleeds. It has also proved beneficial in the early stages of consumption.
- * Sprinkled onto bed sheets it will help to alleviate bedsores.
- * A pinch of powdered oak bark mixed with honey and taken in the mornings will help and aid ladies with menstrual problems.
- * Acorns should be gathered in the daylight, and leaves and wood by night. A waning moon is the correct time to harvest Oak.
- * To catch a falling oak leaf will bring you luck and prosperity, and you shall suffer no colds throughout the winter.
- * If someone is sick or poorly in the home, place an oak log on the fire to warm the house; it will help to "draw-off" the illness.

- * If you wish to know whether you and your present beloved will marry, take two acorns, naming them under a full moon for yourself and your lover, and drop them into a crystal bowl of well water. If they stay close to one another, as though knit by a bond, you will be sure to marry, but if they float away from one another, that is a sign that the bond will end.
- * Knocking on an oak after bragging will protect you from divine retribution.
- * The herbalist Gerard said, "that which growth on the bodies of olde Okes is preferred before the rest: in steede of this most do use that which is found under the Okes..." But rumors are that if done improperly a curse would befall any who came in contact with the item.
- * East Saxon groves were dedicated to Thunor (Thor.)
- * In Scotland, one 19th century farmer said

"It was believed that a sprig of the Mistletoe cut by a Hay on Allhallowmas eve, with a new dirk, and after surrounding the tree three times sunwise and pronouncing a certain spell, was a sure charm against the glamour or witchery, and an infallible guard in the day of battle. A spray, gathered in the same manner, was placed in the cradle of infants, and thought to defend them from being changed for elf-bairns by the Fairies."

Acorn Recipes

These are from THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COUNTRY LIVING by Carla Emery, available at Amazon.com

Acorn Coffee:

Select plump, round, sweet acorns. Shell and brown in oven. Grind in a coffee mill and use as ordinary coffee. Or hull 1/2 c. small sweet acorns. Add 1/2 c. cracked wheat. Mix. Roast in your oven. Pound in a mortar. Boil with water to get your coffee. Add honey, molasses, or brown sugar to sweeten.

Acorn Meal:

Fortunately, tannin is very soluble in hot water. So, peel the acorns. Grind them up. soak the "flour" in very hot water. The water will turn brown because of the tannin coming out. Throw away the water and repeat 4 times. Another way to do this is to line a colander with a straining cloth, put the ground acorns in, and gradually pour a gallon of water, as near boiling hot as you can manage, through. There will still be some dark chocolaty color to the paste, but after exposure to a gallon of hot water, you can be confident that enough tannin has been removed to render the acorn meal edible.

Spread the acorn paste on a baking sheet and bake at a low temperature until thoroughly dry. If it has caked, grind again, and you have your acorn flour. You can substitute acorn meal for cornmeal in any recipe, or use part acorn meal and part cornmeal, or 2/3 acorn meal and 1/3 oatmeal.

[Side note: some Asian marketplaces sell ground acorn powder at a very reasonable price. -Mike]

The Apple Tree: The Fruit We All Know

By Sam Peeples
A Druid Missal-Any, Samhain 2002

This is a more difficult tree to discuss since it is such an ever-present part of our diet. Many scientists believe it is the first fruit tree to be domesticated by humans. Apples are easy to identify by sight and flavor, and as a result they have deep connections to cultures and mythologies. We see them around us all the time in supermarkets, and apples (like corn) is one of the ubiquitous foods.

Etymology

In ogham script, apple is called Ceirt/Quert ("KWAIRT.") "Qu" (like "K" or "Kw") Not sure why the "Ceirt" is associated with the Apple tree, as Scottish translates Apple tree as "abhall" and Middle Irish "aball." Apple is "ubhal," Irish "ubhall/úll," Early Irish "uball," Old Irish "aball," Welsh "afal," Breton "avallen." According to MacFarlane's Online Gaelic Dictionary, "Ceirt" is Scottish for "right, justice, propriety," though I've also been told (by an Irishman) that it's Irish for "rag/piece of clothing." As the most popular fruit of the Teutonic area, the Apple has appropriated, as its popular name, what was once a common Germanic term for fruit of any kind, "Apfel" being once "apl," and often "apulder," connected with "maple" and "mapulder," and being still extended to many totally different fruit-bearing plants, such as thorn-apples and love-apples. The Anglo-Saxon name for the blackberry, for instance, was the bramble-apple; and that rare old traveler, Sir John Mandeville, speaking of the cedars of Lebanon, says, "they beren longe Apples, and als grete as a man's heved." Though both apples and apples of gold are spoken of in several parts of the Bible, the tree now so called is believed not to have been cultivated by the Hebrews, the citron or some other fruit being referred to.

Physical Description

The *Pyrus Malus* has over 10,000 varieties, with over 7,000 types cultivated in the U.S., but with only 20 varieties making up 90% of the commercially sold apples. The bark resembles cherry trees and belong to the enormous Rosaceae (rose) family of plants (as are pears,) and approach 10-13 meters in height, although most commercial trees are cropped to keep the branches closer to the ground. The branches sometimes have thorns. They tend to be found between 30 and 60 degrees of latitude where winters are close to the freezing point, but rarely reach 15 (e.g. New England and Washington.) They like cool air of valleys and shaded hillsides. There are usually three major splayed branches with 90 degree branches. The pale white flowers are quite lovely and appear before the leaves in May, and are primarily pollinated by bees.

Apple trees may begin to bear fruit around six to eight years after sprouting, and may continue for over century (producing about 800 pounds of fruit a year,) but most commercial trees are replaced after 15 years. Most modern orchards take scions, or branches of very fruitful branches, and graft them into base trees to grow better apples, while the rootstock is usually very resistant to frost, making a very robust hybrid organism. Apples are 79% water and 18% air (which is

why they float and shrivel so well.) They generally have a total of 10 seeds in five compartments (carpels) which make a nice star if sliced horizontally. If they don't have as many, it's probably a sign that the tree was stressed by climate, poor pollination (bees help,) or growing difficulties. The better "set" the seeds are, the better the fruit will develop, usually taking 140-170 days, usually ripening in August. The sunnier the climate, the redder the apple on the sides facing the sun. Most apples are dinged or unpretty and go in as "filler" in commercial products. The world's most expensive apples are in Japan and Korea, at \$25 a piece for a perfect specimen. Some unusually well-maintained orchards in Japan, place a parabolic shield under the apple to get a solid red hue to the entire apple.

Physical Use

- * Apples are for eating, silly.
- * Apple wood is sometimes used as a veneer for furniture and music instruments.
- * Crab-apple tree, a wild variant, has a proverbial hard wood, excellent for cudgels.
- * Apple wood is fine for carving and smells beautiful when burned. As the old rhyme says, "Pear logs and Apple logs, They will scent your room."
- * The unripe fruits of the wild Apple are used in the manufacture of verjuice, now chiefly made in France, which, when fermented and sweetened, makes a pleasant drink; but in the sixteenth century the fruit was in more esteem than it now is. Christmas was then the season they being served in hot ale "When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl."

Mythological Appearance

The first and most famous appearance of Apple is definitely in Genesis where many people assume that the apple was the forbidden fruit on the Tree of Good and Evil. It simply doesn't state what type of fruit it was, except that it was good to eat. Most likely it was a late medieval tradition based on the pictorial choice of the apple by various European artists. There were some varieties of apple tree in the middle east, but a citron or fig would have been more likely, if it wasn't just a story. Apple tree, Heb., thappuakh (cf. Arab, tiffah; Egypt. dapih, "apple") and the description of the tree and its fruit indicate the common apple tree, *Malus communis*, which is beautiful, affording shade for a tent or a house (Cant., ii, 3; viii, 5,) and bears a sweet fruit, the aroma (Cant., vii, 8) of which is used in the East to revive a fainting person (cf. Cant., ii, 5.) Apple groves flourished at an early date (Ramses II) in Egypt (Loret, "Flore pharaonique," p. 83); place-names like Tappuah (Jos., xii, 17) or Beth-tappuah (A. V., Jos., xv, 53) indicate that they were a distinct feature of certain districts of Palestine. But this might be renaming of the fruit after a place. We see the apple in many modern Jewish traditions. During Rosh Hashanah, apple slices dipped in honey are eaten in the hope of a sweet new year. Haroset is a traditional Passover dish. It is a mixture of apple, nuts, wine, and spices, representing the brick mortar with which the Jews were forced to build while they were enslaved in Egypt.

Apples appear frequently in Celtic Lore. The Isles of the Otherworld are sometimes called Emain Abhlach, Emain of the Apple Trees. Cormac was once offered a branch (possibly for grafting?) from Manannan Mac Lir. It bore golden apples. When shaken it gives off a sweet sound that soothes sadness, cures illness and brings peace. It is the giving of a similar branch that soon inspired the voyages of Bran in the Immram Curaig Bran MacFerbal. In both cases, the hero soon made a journey to the Otherworld. Because they are seen as an Otherworld gift, it is not really surprising that they appear so frequently in Samhain customs (bobbing for apples on strings or in tubs,) especially those concerned with divining future events. It is true, of course, that round about October and November they are a good wholesome food that is both in season and readily available

Avalon, where the wounded Arthur was taken from the battlefield, is also related. Geoffrey calls it "Avallo" in the HISTORIA and "insula pomorum" (island of the apples) in the VITA MERLINI. It is often seen as having a connection with apples because of the similarity of its name to various Celtic words indicating that fruit: Old Irish ABALL, Middle Welsh Afall, Middle Breton Avallenn, Celtic Avallo. It has also been connected with Avalloc, evidently originally a god who, according to William of Malmesbury, lived there with his daughters. The present case form of the name may have been influenced by the Burgundian place name Avallon. One school of thought suggests that it comes from Irish Oileán (island.) It was perhaps originally a Celtic paradise. It was said to produce crops without cultivation, to be ruled by Guingamuer, Morgan's lover, or by a king named Bangon. In PERLESVAUS, Guinevere and Loholt died before Arthur and were buried there. Avalon was then identified with Glastonbury, probably because Arthur's grave was supposedly found at Glastonbury in the reign of Henry II and, as tradition had had him borne away to Avalon, the two were considered the same. However, because of the first syllable in Glastonbury's name, some may have thought it identical with Caer Wydyr, the Fort of Glass, another name for Annwfn.

The tale of the Sons of Tuirenn combine both Irish and Graeco-Roman elements. The Sons of Tuirenn killed Lugh's father, Cian. Lugh demanded that they do eight "impossible" tasks as blood-price for his father's life. The first was to bring back three apples from the Garden of the Hesperides in the east of the world. They would know these apples from the following characteristics: they were the size of a one-month-old child, the color of burnished gold, and they tasted of honey; eating them healed all wounds and diseases and the apples would not be diminished by being eaten; and if thrown, they would rebound to the thrower's hands. The Sons of Tuirenn managed to accomplish all eight tasks, but were mortally wounded while doing the last one. Lugh refused to allow them to use the healing powers of another object they captured in the second task, a magical pig skin, so they died shortly thereafter.

Another famous apple that caused trouble was given by Eris. She was of such a deplorable nature, that the gods had kept Eris apart, and she was not in the list of guests who were invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, the parents of Achilles. Nevertheless, Eris, being difficult to get rid of, came to the party and threw a golden apple through the door with the inscription: Kallisti ("For the fairest")

And Hera, Athena and Aphrodite started disputing on account of the apple, and were therefore sent by Zeus to Mount Ida near Troy in order to be judged by the shepherd Paris, who chose Aphrodite as the most beautiful, accepting Helen's hand for a bribe. This is one cause of the Trojan War, for Paris, having come to fetch his bribe at Sparta, where Helen was queen, left the city as her lover and sailed with her to Troy. But her husband Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon, against all odds--for war had never before broken up for the sake of a woman--sent a powerful army against Troy, and produced a conflagration that still today causes such an awe and amazement as if the flames of Troy were still burning. The modern followers of Eris, the Discordians, use the Kallisti apple as one of their symbols has another rendition.

In another Greek legend, Atalanta was a powerful warrior who would only marry the man who could outrun her. Desperate to win, Hippomenes prayed to Aphrodite for aid, and she gave him golden apples from her garden which he was to throw into Atalanta's path. The apples did distract Atalanta and he won the race, but he forgot to give due honor to Aphrodite afterwards and as punishment, both he and Atalanta were changed into lions.

The Hesperides were three virgin sisters who, along with a dragon, guarded the tree of golden apples Gaea had given to Hera as a wedding gift in their garden. These were reputed to bring beauty and health. It was the eleventh of the twelve labors of Heracles that he bring back the golden apples to the world.

Pomona was the Roman Goddess of fruit trees, especially of apple trees, and was also know as the "Apple Mother" who gave the "apples of eternal life." Roman banquets ended with apples and an invocation of Pomona's blessing. Pomona had a special priest appointed to her service. Her sacred grove was called the "Pomonal" and was located on the road from Rome to Ostia.

In the legend of Thomas the Rhymer (13th century,) Thomas Learmont, laird of the castle of Ercildoune, is accosted by a hag who takes him on a journey. He is shown three paths, one of leads to the land of the Fay. While ravenously hungry, he resolutely passes by all the luscious fruits of all kinds, but he is warned not to eat of any of them, for he would then be trapped there forever. He is also told that his hunger would soon be relieved with an apple. When they reach a certain spot, the hag climbs down off the horse and offers Thomas an apple from a small yet perfect tree. She tells him that after eating it he will be graced with the gift of Truth. At that time the hag turns into a beautiful woman and together they go to a castle where they feast and make merry for three days. At the end of that time, the woman tells him that he must return to his own world where seven years have passed. When he returns home, he finds that he is given the gifts of prophesy, poetry, and an enchanted harp. He becomes a wise ruler of his territories and is, in time, called back to Fairyland where he remained.

Iduna, wife of the Norse God of poetry, Bragi, kept a box of apples. If any of the Gods felt the approach of old age, they only had to taste of one of these apples to remain young. She was abducted by a giant (aided by Loki) and, in time, the other Gods realized that they were aging rapidly. Loki was sent to rescue her so that she might restore youth to the Gods. He later married her, and whenever he was punished, she would sometimes use these apples as leverage to free him.

Another renowned myth to the Swiss is the story of William Tell refusing to bow to a Hapsburg lord's hat placed on a stick in the town square. As punishment he is forced to shoot an apple off his son's head with a crossbow. After doing so, he then manages to escape from the governor's clutches on a stormy river, effectively drowning the rascal. The legend is a distortion of actual events that led in 1291 to the formation of the

Everlasting League among the forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden. The original story is believed to derive from a 12th century Scandinavian tale of shooting a small object off a loved-one's head.

The next feat of the legendary apple would be Sir Isaac Newton's discovery or realization of Gravity. During a plague in the city, he retired to a country estate. As the tale goes, Sir Isaac Newton was sitting under an apple tree when an apple fell on his head. This, supposedly, was what led him to discover the laws of gravity. Popular legend to the contrary, Sir Isaac was not beamed on the noggin by an apple, although it's said that watching apples fall from a tree in his parents' yard was an inspiration. His treatise on gravitation, presented in *Principia Mathematica* (1687) observed the fall of an apple in an orchard at Woolsthorpe and calculates that at a distance of one foot the attraction between two objects is 100 times stronger than at 10 feet.

The most famous recent example is, of course, Johnny Appleseed, a.k.a. John Chapman (1774-1845,) an eccentric, itinerant pioneer nurseryman and colporteur. He won the respect of many settlers and Native Americans alike as he made his way from his native Massachusetts to the Pennsylvania/ Ohio/Indiana frontier, planting apple nurseries, spreading "news right fresh from heaven," mediating and healing. He exchanged his apple seeds and seedlings for food, cast-off clothing and articles and frontier currency enough to take care of his simple needs. Profits went for copies of Swedenborg's works, which he separated into parts for wider and cheaper distribution. There are several songs about him.

Medicinal and Magical Uses

* The sugar of a sweet apple, like most of the fruit sugars, is amazing. It is practically a predigested food, and is soon ready to pass into the blood to provide energy and warmth for the body. A nice ripe raw apple is one of nature's most easiest vegetable substances for the stomach to deal with, the whole process of its digestion being completed in eighty-five minutes. The juice of apples, without sugar, will often reduce acidity of the stomach; it becomes changed into alkaline carbonates, and thus corrects sour fermentation.

* "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." From an old English advice "Ate an apfel avore gwain to bed, makes the doctor beg his bread."

* "It is better to give than receive." Derived from a fourteenth-century saying "Betere is appel y-yeue than y-ete" (better is the apple you give than you get.)

* Paradise is a word derived from the Persian *paeridaeza*, or walled garden, such as the Persian gardens, normally containing apple orchards. Throughout history, depictions of the Garden of Paradise include apple trees.

* Bartholomeus Anglicus, whose *Encyclopedia* was one of the earliest printed books containing botanical information (being printed at Cologne about 1470,) gives a chapter on the Apple. He says:

"Malus the Appyll tree is a tree yt bereth apples and is a grete tree in itself. it is more short than other trees of the wood wyth knottes and rinelyd Rynde. And makyth shadowe wythe thicke bowes and branches: and fayr with dyurs blossomes, and floures of swetnesse and lykynge: with goode fruyte and noble. And is gracious in syght and in taste and vertuous in medecyne. some beryth sourysh fruyte and harde, and some ryght soure and some ryght swete, with a good savoure and mery."

* The custom of serving fresh fruit, particularly apples, at the end of a meal arose because of digestive qualities attributed to them by such early medical notables as Hippocrates and Galen, the latter a second-century Roman physician.

* The medieval physician's bible, the Salerno medical school's *Prescription for Health*, taught therapeutic applications of cooking apples for disturbances of the bowels, lungs and nervous system, among other ailments.

* The modern tradition of tossing rice at a happy couple succeeds an ancient practice of throwing apples at weddings. I guess, British native apple trees have smaller fruit than modern commercial fruit, or perhaps the Celts were just ornery cusses.

* The game of apple-bobbing began as a Celtic New Year's tradition for trying to determine one's future spouse.

* An Irish and Scottish custom prescribed throwing an apple peel over one's shoulder on the ground, where it would form the initial of your lover's name.

* Eat an apple whole, saving just the pips. An odd number foretells a marriage, an even number means that none is imminent.

* It is said that you may cut an apple into three pieces, then rub the cut side on warts, saying: "Out warts, into apple."

* The once-popular custom of wassailing the orchard-trees on Christmas Eve, or the Eve of the Epiphany, is not quite extinct even yet in a few remote places in Devonshire. More than three centuries ago Herrick mentioned it among his "Ceremonies of Christmas Eve:"

"Wassaile the trees, that they may beare
You many a Plum and many a Peare:
For more or lesse fruits they will bring,
As you do give them Wassailing."

* The ceremony consisted in the farmer, with his family and laborers, going out into the orchard after supper, bearing with them a jug of cider and hot cakes. The latter were placed in the boughs of the oldest or best bearing trees in the orchard, while the cider was flung over the trees after the farmer had drunk their health in some such fashion as the following:

"Here's to thee, old apple-tree!
Whence thou may'st bud,
And whence thou may'st blow,
Hats full! Caps full!
Bushel-bushel-bags full!
And my pockets full too! Huzza!"

* The toast was repeated thrice, the men and boys often firing off guns and pistols, and the women and children shouting loudly. (I do not recommend this part.) Roasted apples were usually placed in the pitcher of cider, and were thrown at the trees with the liquid. Trees that were bad bearers were not honored with wassailing but it was thought that the more productive ones would cease to bear if the rite were omitted. It is said to have been a relic of the heathen sacrifices to Pomona. The custom also prevailed in Somersetshire and Dorsetshire.

* In Danish, German, and English folklore, and in voodoo, apples are used as love charms.

* Roast apples, or crabs, formed an indispensable part of the old-fashioned wassailbowl, or "good brown bowl," of our ancestors.

"And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl
In very likeness of a roasted Crab."

* As related by Puck in *Midsummer's Night's Dream*. The mixture of hot spiced ale, wine or cider, with apples and bits of toast floating in it was often called Lamb's wool, some say from its softness, but the word is really derived from the Irish *la mas nbhal*, "the feast of the apple-gathering" (All Hallow's Eve,) which being pronounced somewhat like "Lammas-ool," was corrupted into "lamb's wool." It was usual for each person who partook of the spicy beverage to take out an apple and eat it, wishing good luck to the company.

Apple Songs

* "Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider" by U.S. minstrel Eddie Leonard (1903.)

* "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree" by Egbert Van Alstyne, lyrics by Henry Williams (1905,) author of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

* "I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time" by Albert von Tilzer, lyrics by Neville Fleeson (1920.)

* "Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White" by Louiguy, lyrics by Jacques Larme (1950.)

* "The Golden Brown and the Green Apple" by Duke Ellington (1965.)

* "Little Green Apples" by Bobby Russell (1968.)

* "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree" words and music by Lew Brown, Charles Tobias and Sam H. Stept (1942.)

The Canny Conifers

By Sam Peebles

A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2002

Pine Trees, Firs, Spruces, Yews, Larches. How wonderful these trees are, the evergreen (except for the larch) that have survived not only millions of years of munching by dinosaurs, but have held their own through bitter winters and ice-ages. Coniferous trees generally don't lose their needles in the winter, and house seeds in cone-like structures, thus their name. Their narrow leaves and flexible branches let snow fall off easily, and conserve moisture in the summer.

Etymology

The Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is known in Irish as *Giuis*, Scots *Gàidhlig* as *Giubhais* (also known as *Peith*), and *Pin* in Welsh, but it is actually found from Spain to Siberia. Its nickname in the timber trade is "redwood" or "deal." The Yew is from the family *Taxaceae* and is known in Irish as *Iur*, Welsh is *Ywen*. Juniper is of the *Cupressaceae* family and found mostly in Southern England, US and Europe, and has no Celtic name, anymore. Sometimes, the name "pine" is used loosely for any tree in the pine family *Pinaceae*. In North America, that family contains larch, true fir, spruce, hemlock, and Douglas-fir. A tree with needles is not a *Pinus* if:

* the tree has bundles of a dozen or more needles; needles are soft, flat, in brushlike clusters on short spur-like shoots; deciduous not evergreen--then the trees are larches or tamaracks, *Larix*.

* its needles are flat, often with a notch at the end; needles grow in two ranks, directly and singly from the branch, and have a plump base that leaves a round depression on the branch. Cylindrical cones are upright and disintegrate on the branch--then the trees are true firs, *Abies*.

* its needles are short and not bundled but have a stalk and four-sides; they spiral from persistent peg-like bases; the naked twigs are rough and warty--then the trees are spruces, *Picea*.

* its needles flat, with blunt ends; the needles are in two ranks like the fir, but blunt, shorter, and fatter; dark-green and shiny above, pale below with two slim lines--then the trees are hemlocks, *Tsuga*.

* its needles are flat with pointed tips and linear; they grow directly from the branch; the leaf scar is small and raised (for the true fir it is larger and depressed); each needle narrows at the base into a short, thin stem. Cones hang down with three-point bracts--then the trees are Douglas-firs, *Pseudotsuga*.

By the way, the verb "to pine" has no direct connection with the tree, but when pines die they often remain standing long after the life has left them, just like unrequited lovers who die of a broken heart. According to Mirriam Webster:

Main Entry: pine

Function: intransitive verb

Inflected Form(s): pined; pining

Etymology: Middle English, from Old English *plnian* to suffer, from (assumed) Old English *pln* punishment, from Latin *poena* -- more at PAIN

Date: 14th century

1 : to lose vigor, health, or flesh (as through grief) : LANGUISH

2 : to yearn intensely and persistently especially for something unattainable < wealth lost their for pined still >

Physical Description

Scots Pine is the only native pine in Britain, it reaches 40 meters and lives about 150 years, with some as long as 520. Sometime you get the tall narrow type, but often it splits trunks. The paired needles are about five inches and last about two to three years. Their spread to the British Isles from the continent preceded the disappearance of the land bridge 10,000 years ago and reaching Scotland by 6,000 years ago. It only inhabits 1% of its original range of 1,500,000 hectare, and is primarily found in the West Highlands, having been supplanted by faster growing trees on tree farms. It has naturally been more common in the mountains and areas of elevation. Male and female flowers appear on the same tree, with the female often a bit higher on the tree, using wind pollination. They flower in May, but the seeds must wait two winters to germinate (on the third year after fertilization) and the seeds are tiny, about 120,000 per kilogram. They travel about 70 meters from the tree, and then can skip across the snows for a few more kilometers. They like to find exposed soil, such as that dug up by a rooting boar or a forest fire. The trees are often coated in lichen, which helps to fix nitrogen and then nourishes the soil when it falls off the tree. Some fungi also work in harmony with the tree. Another 45 types of insects, plants and animals (like the Scottish crossbill and Capercaillie) are only found near pine trees in Scotland. Several larger species like (wild boar, beaver, brown bear, moose, lynx and wolf) used to be denizens of the Caledonian forest.

By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries vast quantities of pine were used for pit props, telegraph poles and railway sleepers. Coinciding with this relentless timber extraction came the Highland Clearances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since much of the countryside was denuded of people, there was nobody to manage the regeneration of the pine woods; instead the often absent landowners introduced huge flocks of sheep and herds of deer which soon held sway across the old forests, systematically munching through the emerging seedlings. As old trees were removed wholesale, the source of seed disappeared; and, unlike broadleaf trees, cut pine stumps will not regenerate new growth but simply die in the ground. What little management there may have been was totally inadequate. The result was that by 1970 only an estimated 25,000 acres of native pinewood was still standing.

The Yew is only a medium sized tree found naturally in dense shade of Oak woods. It is often used for hedging or making weird animal topiary shapes. It is found across the European continent and British Isles. Its flowers are in March and red fleshy berries are in October. Almost all parts of the Yew (except the red fleshy berries) are **EXTREMELY POISONOUS**, so great care should be taken before messing with this plant. Birds swallow the aril (red part) and then deposit the seeds in the course of their work. The seeds go dormant for about 18 months in the ground, but it works well by planting cuttings from the tree. The tree is best known for its extreme longevity, some specimens living two or three thousand years and becoming simply enormous in girth.

Juniper is a small tree or bush. With a whitish bloom in May and whose ripen seeds are distributed by birds in October, and then goes dormant until spring before germinating.

Physical Uses

The pine is a strong, general purpose timber with natural preservative qualities, making it very suitable for use outdoors, fencery, joinery, flooring, boxes, telegraph poles, fiberboard, ship beams and masts (witness Beinn nan Sparra, Hill of Spars, in Glen Affric.) The pitch from the tree was used to fill cracks in planks and beer casks. For higher resin content they were harvested on the waxing moon. The resin content is so high that some pine trees will remain standing for 50-100 years after dying without decay.

Yew produces a very durable, beautifully smooth, gold-colored wood with a wavy grain that is often used for furniture, weapons and tool handles. Sometime used as an expensive veneer, when of good quality. In Europe, yew wood was used for making bows, while on the northwest coast of North America, the Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) is used by the Haida and other tribes for making masks and boxes.

The Juniper is a very aromatic sapwood that is fairly strong and durable. And can be used for charcoal and pencils. Juniper oil can be distilled, and berries are used to flavor meats and Gin.

Mythological Appearance

In *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer relates various stories involving pine trees from classical mythology, which may or may not have been Scots pines, such as how the ancient Egyptians buried an image of the god Osiris in the hollowed-out center of a pine tree. He writes that "it is hard to imagine how the conception of a tree as tenanted by a personal being could be more plainly expressed." As a symbol of royalty the pine was associated with the Greek goddess Pithea, and also with the

Dionysus/Bacchus mythology surrounding the vine and wine making, probably as fertility symbol. Worshipers of Dionysus often carried a pine-cone-tipped wand as a fertility symbol and the image of the pinecone has also been found on ancient amulets as a symbol of fertility.

For the Romans the pine was an object of worship during the spring equinox festival of Cybele and Attis. As an evergreen tree the pine would also have symbolized immortality.

The pine was held sacred to Pan, the Roman Faunus, and in his *Eclogues* Vergil describes the pastoral god's home on Mt. Maenalus in Arcadia. Propertius stresses the god's fondness for the tree, and Horace, for his part, dedicates a pine to the goddess Diana in a famous ode.

The Romans celebrated the winter solstice with a fest called Saturnalia in honor of Saturnus, the god of agriculture. They decorated their houses with greens and lights and exchanged gifts. They gave coins for prosperity, pastries for happiness, and lamps to light one's journey through life.

The Scots pine groves or "shaman forests" scattered over the dry grasslands of eastern Siberia were considered sacred by the Buriats, a Mongolian people living around the southern end of Lake Baikal. These groves were to be approached and entered in silence and reverence, respectful of the gods and spirits of the wood.

While learning about the habits of a bear, I learned the following American Indian saying. "When a pine needle falls, the bear smells it, the Eagle sees it and the rabbit hears it."

Folk Customs

- * All parts of the Yew tree are poisonous except the fleshy covering of the berry, and its medicinal uses include a recently discovered treatment for cancer.
- * Coniferous trees are especially popular for planting in cemeteries and churches with their promise of "eternal life." Many Celtic churches were famous for their enormous Yews planted in the adjoining cemetery.
- * Late in the Middle Ages, Germans and Scandinavians placed evergreen trees inside their homes or just outside their doors to show their hope in the forthcoming spring. Our modern Christmas tree evolved from these early traditions or the yule log traditions.
- * The Christmas tree was popularly believed to have been introduced by Prince Albert (another German) by Queen Victoria (another German) to the British Isles in the 19th century with the custom of hanging blown glass baubles from Thuringia. The custom soon made its way to America in the 1880s. Other believe that the Christmas tree tradition most likely came to the United States with Hessian troops during the American Revolution, or with German immigrants to Pennsylvania and Ohio, adds Robson. The Christmas tree market was born in 1851 when Catskill farmer Mark Carr hauled two ox sleds of evergreens into New York City and sold them all. By 1900, one in five American families had a Christmas tree, and 20 years later, the custom was an early universal. Six species account for about 90 percent of the nation's Christmas tree trade. Scotch pine ranks first, comprising about 40 percent of the market, followed by Douglas fir which accounts for about 35 percent. The other big sellers are noble fir, white pine, balsam fir and white spruce.
- * Romans believed that pine cones imparted both physical and moral strength.
- * Pine was sometimes used to make an expectorant or inhalants, sometimes for antiseptic use.
- * The Pine tree is an evergreen, its old title was "the sweetest of woods." It was known to the Druids as one of the seven chieftain trees of the Irish.
- * Mix the dried needles with equal parts of juniper and cedar and burn to purify the home and ritual area.
- * The cones and nuts can be carried as a fertility charm.
- * A good magickal cleansing and stimulating bath is made by placing pine needles in a loose-woven bag and running bath water over it.
- * To purify and sanctify an outdoor ritual area, brush the ground with a pine branch. The scent of Pine is useful in the alleviation of guilt.
- * A persistent theme in the folklore of Scots pine is their use as markers in the landscape. In the Highlands there is a recurrent theme that they were used to mark burial places of warriors, heroes and chieftains. In areas further south where the sight of Scots pine may have been more unusual and their use would have stood out more, they can be seen to mark ancient cairns, trackways and crossroads. In England they were commonly used to mark not only the drove roads themselves, but also the perimeters of meadows on which passing drovers and their herds could spend the night.
- * Glades of Scots pines were also decorated with lights and shiny objects, the tree covered in stars being a representation of the Divine Light.
- * Juniper grown by the door discourages thieves.
- * The mature Juniper berries can be strung and hung in the house to attract love.

Obligatory Food Reference

"Alba," the name is Gaelic for Scotland. Introduced by the Vikings, spruce and pine ales were very popular in the Scottish Highlands until the end of the 19th Century. Many early explorers, including Captain Cook, used spruce ale during long sea voyages since it prevented scurvy and ill health. Shetland spruce ale was said to "stimulate animal instincts" and give you twins. Alba is brewed to a traditional Highland recipe from Scots pine and spruce shoots picked during early spring. Pure malted barley is boiled with the young sprigs of pine for several hours then the fresh shoots of the spruce are added for a short infusion before fermentation. Tawny brown strong ale with spruce aroma, rich Malt texture, complex wood flavor and lingering finish. Described by the Scottish press as "Light pale ale with champagne."

Quotes and Notable Literary References

Who leaves the pine-tree, leaves his friend,
Unnerves his strength, invites his end.
--Ralph Waldo Emerson, Woodnotes

I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines.
--Henry David Thoreau, 1817 - 1862

The pine tree seems to listen, the fir tree to wait: and both without impatience: they give no thought to the little people beneath them devoured by their impatience and their curiosity.
--Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, # 176.

You can live for years next door to a big pine tree, honored to have so venerable a neighbor, even when it sheds needles all over your flowers or wakes you, dropping big cones onto your deck at still of night.
--Denise Levertov, *Threat*

Acts of creation are ordinarily reserved for gods and poets. To plant a pine, one need only own a shovel.
--Aldo Leopold

There was a handsome male mockingbird that sang his heart out every morning during the nesting season from the top of a tall Norfolk Pine tree. Last week the tree was cut down. The mockingbird and his song are gone. I can't put a dollar value on the tree nor on the mockingbird nor on his song. But I know that I--and our whole neighborhood--have suffered a loss. I wouldn't know how to count it in dollars.
--Jacquelyn Hiller

Two Coniferous Songs

"Only Yew!"

Filked by Patrick Haneke,
Akita Grove, Year 2001.
For the Public Domain.
Original "Only You" By the Platters

(Spoken Intro by William Watson)
Old emperor Yew, fantastic sire,
Girt with thy guard of dotard kings
What ages hast thou seen retire
Into the dusk of alien things?

Only yew is found near every church.
Only yew will neither lean nor lurch.
It grows a hard, tight grain,
Makes bow staves both straight and true.
It fills my heart with awe for only yew.

Only yew can live o'er four thousand years
Only yew can outlast our worst fears.
Only yew and yew alone
Laughs at the passage of time.
Whose name is famed and so easy to rhyme.

Only yew can guard the graves at night.
Only yew's leaves can kill with just one bite.
I understand the magic that you do
Making dreams come true.
Yes! The one and only yew.

"O Tannenbaum"

Words by Ernst Anschuetz
Melody: Traditional folk tune

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie grun sind deine Blatter.
Du grust nicht nur zur Sommerzeit,
Nein auch im Winter wenn es schneit.
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie grun sind deine Blatter!

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Du kannst mir sehr gefallen!
Wie oft hat nicht zur Winterszeit
Ein Baum von dir mich hoch erfreut!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Du kannst mir sehr gefallen!

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Dein Kleid will mich was lehren:
Die Hoffnung und Beständigkeit
Gibt Mut und Kraft zu jeder Zeit!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Dein Kleid will mich was lehren.

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
How steadfast are your branches!
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
How steadfast are your branches!
Your boughs are green in summer's clime
And through the snows of wintertime.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
How steadfast are your branches!

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
What happiness befalls me?
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
What happiness befalls me?
When off at joyous Christmastime
Your form inspires my song and rhyme.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
What happiness befalls me ?

Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
Your boughs can teach a lesson.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
Your boughs can teach a lesson.
That constant faith and hope sublime
Lend strength and comfort through all time.
Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree,
Your boughs can teach a lesson

Christmas Plants & Picking the Yule Log

By Mairi Ceolbhinn, D.C. Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2001

Druids love and respect their plants and truly wish them to return to full vitality in the spring. Without plants, how'd we do our sacrifices? What we'd eat? What'd we wear? It's nice to know that in the depths of winter, when the days are shortest, that some plants are doing rather well. We wish to celebrate this with Christmas trees and such and bring their blessings into our homes.

Mistletoe, as we all know, was considered sacred, by our ancient Siblings and has remained such throughout the years. Its Gaelic name still means "all healing," although I'm not sure how to use it safely, since it is rather poisonous. Perhaps, it is by its poison, that it fends off winter's blight, and manages to bloom around the solstice? Its persistent fertility is therefore an established trait that gives us that great custom of "kissing under the sprig of mistletoe" which would happen in a night of partying and debauchery. That age-old theme of commemorating the death of the "old Sun" and birth of the "new Sun" is now popularly incorporated into the images of "Old Man Time and Baby New Year" doing a tag-team on January 1st every year.

Holly berries, like Mistletoe, bloom amidst the snow as if to defy winter and encourage the return to life. Its green boughs were of course common decorations on buildings, holy places and public buildings during the winter festival, and this tradition has fortunately continued to this very day. Even the Japanese, Mike Scharding says, have a "kadamatsu" placed in front of the door at New Year's Eve.

Yule Log Tradition:

Not to be morbid, but a sacrifice is necessary to rekindle the life of the dying sun (no, I'm not pro-Aztec, which sounds like a marketable drug,) and it seems the Yule Log has filled that role for several centuries. "Yule" comes from "hweol," meaning "wheel," which is a frequent European symbol for the Sun. So you're basically giving the Sun a good-needed torching to warm it up.

According to various sources, it is widely agreed that the hearth of the Celtic House was the home of a protective spirit, and (for practical and symbolic reasons) the fire was rarely allowed to die out except once or twice a year during the big fire holidays. Special prayers were and are still spoken before leaving the banked fire of turf for the night in rural areas. Much magic also went on around the fire during cooking, story telling, and entertaining of guests. The hearth was basically the pre-modern "Home Entertainment Center." If you've ever noticed, televisions also send comforting relaxing flickers of light into a darkened room while you stare blankly?

Now, back in those days, people had access to common forests surrounding their village. The choice of the wood varied greatly among locales, but one good size tree would provide several logs for a neighborhood. But under no circumstances, should you steal one from a neighbor's private land (and no buying one at a parking lot, good religion is do-it-yourself.) I've not heard of any special methods of cutting a tree down, but a short ceremony, and posting a few days advance notice for malevolent or uninterested spirits to depart, would certainly be in order. (No, that Golden Sickle is no more effective than a haddock, get a good steel axe.) Angry spirits will make the tree conk you on the head; so be forewarned.

Once cut down, a goodly size log was the festooned and regally dragged back to town through the streets. As the Log entered the house, some cultures would give it a hearty drink of oil, salt and mulled wine, with a song perhaps. In more recent times, it was burned on Christmas Eve (which is close enough to the Solstice,) with music, activities and frolicking. To kindle the fire, splinters from last year's logs (saved by the eldest daughter) were used to get the substrate of dry logs going, since those Yule-logs are hard to burn by themselves. Guests were encouraged to toss sprigs of holly on the fire to take away bad luck. The way it burned would prognosticate the future.

Splinters of the log and cinders were taken home to protect against fires, lightning and tax-collectors at their home. Now the Yule Log tradition, widespread since the 12th century, nearly died out with the change to pot-belly stoves and grills in the late 19th Century. The tradition still survives in sizeable pockets today in the country-side today. For fire sensitive areas, a smaller log-shaped cake now decorates the dining room table. I've tried this custom for a few years in my little BBQ next to my house (sneaking one from the River Creek National Park,) and saved some ashes, and no disasters have yet befallen my home (well, except the Pentagon in Virginian Commonwealth, but that's the workplace, perhaps the White House and the "Mystic District" of Washington, D.C. were spared because of their National Yule Log?.)

For me a Christmas tree is just another elaboration on "bringing the greenery in," and it certainly is a younger tradition than the Yule Log, perhaps a merger of pagan Nordic tree worship and perhaps the 13th century morality plays' "Tree of Life" (from the Garden of Eden) which was often the only stage prop, and conveniently performed around the Solstice. Perhaps, the inability to have a Yule Log burning and urbanization led to the soaring popularity of the Christmas tree in the 19th century? So go get your plants!

The Redwood:

If the (Ancient) Druids Had
Lived in Northern California....

By Sybok Pendderwydd, Arch-Druid,
Cylch Cerddwyr Rhwng Y Bydoedd Grove,
OMS-RDNA
A Druid Missal-Any, Oimec 2003

The Druids: figures of romance and mystery. Mention of them evokes images of cloaked figures performing obscure rites in the oaken groves of Gaul. The name Druid, at least according to some sources, means "Oak Priest" and the magnificent Oak was indeed the chief of the trees revered by the ancient Celtic Priests. In ancient Gaul, the Oak was indeed the most impressive of trees. Known for the strength of its boughs, and its sheer beauty it was also the source of the sacred mistletoe.

So what if the Druids had lived in California? Specifically, the northern coast I believe that our own Redwood (Sequoia Sempervivens) would have become the tree revered most by the Celtic priesthood. The poor oak pales in comparison to these magnificent trees, which grow to an average height of 300 feet. The redwood is also the source of the mysterious burl, which gives many of these trees distinctive personalities. From a distance, the formation of burls can make faces appear on the trees, evoking thoughts of the Ents, Tolkien's race of trees.

Redwoods grow in two ways. The first is with seed, and their seeds are among the smallest of any plant known, hundreds of which can be found in the redwoods own pinecones, which average around the size of a jellybean. The second way they grow is by shooting new trees from their root systems, which spread out hundreds of feet around the typical redwood, just a few feet deep in the ground. Typically, these offshoots form "fairy rings" around their mother. As they grow, and the mother tree dies off, the ring is all that is left. I can picture the Druids using these natural rings as the centers for their rites.

The Redwood is illustrative of magickal practice too. Its taproot, which extends into the earth from the center of the tree grounds it, like the familiar grounding meditation many of us do before ritual, to connect ourselves with the Earth Mother. The tree then shoots high into the sky, higher than any other tree, also like the familiar centering meditation, which affirms our connection to the cosmos.

Water brethren may find the Redwood a friend too, since it gives off ten times its own weight in moisture every day. The Redwood also needs a lot of water, which is why it thrives only from the Big Sur area to a few miles into Oregon, and only within a thirty-mile stretch from the coast. They like all the rain and fog we get here. They are true water-kin.

Water was sacred to the Druid as well. Most of their main groves had a spring or stream running near or through them, and water deities played an important role in much of Celtic mythology.

My own wand came from a Redwood, a rather famous one. The Garberville Giant was once listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's tallest tree. When it stood, it rose some 375 feet into the air. Alas, about ten years ago it toppled. Residents in nearby Garberville thought an earthquake had hit, and the sound of the impact was heard thirty miles away. I visited the fallen giant, located in a grove off the famous "Avenue of The Giants" in 1994. It was in the early morning, and I was guided to the top of the tree. There on the ground, like it was placed there, was my wand, a twig from the top branches of the giant. It is exactly the length of the inside of my elbow to the tip of my middle finger.

I remember feeling quite enchanted during our visit, and, although at the time we were the only humans around, I felt the eyes of other entities watching us. I know there were fairies in that grove, and my walks in other Redwood groves have confirmed for me the presence of fairy folk.

I go for hikes in the redwoods as often as I can, stopping at each fairy ring, admiring each old growth tree. I feel the wonder and the majesty of the giants and affirm my connection to the cosmos through them. It's well worth it to take the docent led nature walks through the "tourist groves" at any of the big Redwood State and National Parks. The docents are well versed in Redwood lore and you'll leave with a much greater appreciation of the Sequoia than you had before.

Now I must admit that I am quite prejudiced here. I was raised in Illinois and have only lived here on the "left coast" for a little over ten years. I have yet to visit the cousins of our local coastal redwoods, the Giant Sequoias (Sequoia Gigantica) that grow only in the Kings Canyon area of Sequoia National Park. They don't grow as tall as ours do, but they get much bigger around. I may change my tune once I have communed with them (but I doubt it.)

Celtic Kelp Customs

By Sam Peeples, Free-roaming Druid
A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 2003

The Celtic lands are known for possessing 300 shades of green vegetation over rolling hills and mountains, but we forget that most Celts lived less than 3 miles from the barren rocky shores of sea. Only that they weren't so barren once you went below the water. There was plenty of seaweed, which is not actually a plant. And it has played an important role in the history of the Celts.

Physical Description

Kelp is actually a brown algae, the king of the algae world, producing the largest collective body of single-celled organisms; which is why it is often confusedly referred to as a plant. Its scientific name is Phaeophyta. There are about one hundred kelp species in the world and kelp can live for up to fourteen years. New blades of kelp are produced every year. These plants are simply phenomenal growers. Harvesting kelp is like cutting grass--it grows back VERY quickly. In the right conditions, these plants can grow up to 18 to 24 inches a day! Bull kelp can grow 10-20 meters in as little time as four months. It grows to the surface on a "stipe," and branches out into "fronds" and is buoyed by an air bladder shaped like a light bulb, called pneumatocysts, and may form very dense surface canopies than can stop up to 99% of the surface light from reaching the base (called a "holdfast.")

During the spring and summer, new kelp blades grow towards the sunlight. The new blades are not occupied by colonists (snails, fish, etc.) yet. Later, when the blades become older, they will be literally covered with these animals. In late spring, microscopic larvae from the animals that inhabit kelp forests attach to the blades. In mid-summer, the turban snail population rises in the fronds. Small schools of fish and animals search for food in the Kelp forest. Through all of spring and summer, harbor seals and sea otters raise their young in the forests in California, and seals also hunt there in the Celtic lands also. In the fall, warm water from offshore flows into the forest. Kelp grows at a slower rate because nutrients in the water begin to be depleted. In the winter, seaweed weakens. Old blades decay and are torn from holdfasts and stipes. Storm waves tear away blades of the kelp, littering the ocean floor, where it decays, and becomes a source of food for bottom ocean dwellers; or it washes up on the shore to be collected by humans.

To reproduce, adult kelp releases spores. The spores swim to the ocean bottom and grow into tiny male and female plants which are called gametophytes. The male releases its sperm to fertilize the female's eggs and the embryos grow into kelp plants also known as sporophytes. The sporophytes grow into adult kelp plants and these in turn release more spores. The cycle is completed in one year. Kelp grows well on rocky bottoms. The plants need a lot of light and enough water motion to keep nutrients flowing around the plant. They usually grow in water 20-80 feet deep but some forests grow at depths as great as 130 feet--sometimes even deeper. Kelp competes with small animals and plants for space on the ocean floor. When the kelp becomes older and taller, it competes with other kelp plants for sunlight. The deeper the ocean bottom, the farther the kelp columns grow from each other.

In Gàidhlig it is known as "dùlamán," and I included a song at the end of this article by that name. In Scotland there are five types of Kelp. Oarweed and Tangleweed grows higher on the shore, and is left on the rocks during low tide; resembling fingers about two meters long. Cuvie grows closer to the low-tide line and is rarely uncovered, growing to three meters. Dabberlocks is a long narrow kelp, but much thinner. Sugar Kelp is found in bays and sea loch, away from the waves. The stipe is short with long fronds. Furbellows is rare and not described.

Jellyfish float through the forest, and the thick canopy of the forest slows the flow of water. The most common invertebrates found in Kelp are polychaetes, amphipods, lobsters, squids, octopi and ophiuroids. Outside the holdfasts; sponges, tunicates, anemones, cup corals and bryozoans are probably the most commonly occurring fixed animals within kelp forests. Birds associated with drift kelp, like phalaropes, feed on the associated plankton and larvae. The kelp wrack provides an important food source and habitat for kelp flies, maggots and small crustaceans on which several species of shore birds, starlings, common crows, black phoebes and warblers feed on it.

Physical Uses

In modern times, kelp is painfully associated with the Highland Clearances of the 18th and 19th Century when landlords and chiefs sold clan lands, introduced sheep grazing, and relocated villages to the shore-line into individual croft-homes. Kelp was one of the few high profit industries for the impoverished Highlanders. Whiskey production was only possible for those with sufficient capital. Kelp burning seems to have been introduced into some of the lowland parts of the Scottish coast early in the eighteenth century, but was not thoroughly established in the Highlands until about the year 1750. Kelp contain salts, potash, and chiefly soda, used in some of the manufactures, as soap, alum, glass, etc. It can be used as a substitute for barilla. The weeds are cut from the rocks with a hook, or collected on the shore, and then dried on the beach. They are afterwards burnt in a kiln or in long trenches, constantly stirred with an iron rake until they reach a gooey state; and when they cool, the ashes become condensed into a dark blue or whitish-colored rocky mass. The manufacture was carried on in the summer during June, July, and August.

After several famines in the 18th Century and the collapse of the Kelp market following the Napoleonic Wars, many of the remaining clansmen emigrated to America or Australia. The potato blight in 1835 and 1845 also devastated the remaining populations. WWI, in some parts of the Islands and Highlands, afforded occupation to considerable numbers of Highlanders. Iodine was extracted until the 1930s. Kelp was later harvested as a source of potash for making gunpowder during World War I (Frey 1971, Tarpley 1992) but currently the emphasis is on the production of algin, which serves as an emulsifying and binding agent in food (ketchup, ice cream, lipstick, beer) and pharmaceutical products (such as coatings to prevent infections) and food for use in abalone farms, and sometimes by humans due to its high vitamin and mineral contents. Oarweed can be boiled and served with pepper, butter and vinegar. Sugar kelp is rather sweet.

At first it was of little importance, but it gradually spread until it became universal over all the western islands and coasts, and the value of the article, from the causes above-mentioned, rose rapidly from about £1 per ton, when first introduced, to from £20 per ton about the beginning of the nineteenth century. While the great value of the article lasted, rents rose enormously, and

the income of proprietors of kelp-shore rose in proportion. Throughout the kelp season, people spent the whole day occupied in its manufacture, and the wages they received, while it added to their scanty income, and increased their comfort, it was small recompense in proportion to the time and labor it required, and a pittance compared to the market prices received by those to whom the kelp belonged. Moreover, while the kelp-fever lasted, the cultivation of the ground and other agricultural matters seem to have been neglected and extravagant habits were developed by the proprietors. The consequence was that when the duties were taken off the articles, for which kelp was used as a substitute in the earlier part of the 19th century, the price of that article gradually diminished till it could fetch, about 1830-40, only from £2 to £4 a ton. With this fall in price, the incomes of the proprietors of kelp-shores also plummeted, landing many of them in ruin and bankruptcy, and leading many to sell their estates.

The manufacture is still carried on in the West Highlands and Islands, and to a greater extent in Orkney, but although it once occupied a considerable number of hands, it is now of comparatively little importance, much more of the sea-weed being employed as manure, as shown in the Irish movie, "The Field" about a crofter struggling to gain possession of a small piece of land in the 1920s. He would walk down a steep cliff path every morning, several times, to carry back this natural fertilizer to produce "lazy beds," a type of soil on top of rocky ground to eke out an existence. While at the industries' peak, however, the manufacture of this article undoubtedly increased to a very large extent the revenue of the West Highlands, and gave employment to and kept at home a considerable number of people who otherwise might have emigrated. Indeed, it was partly on account of the need of many hands for kelp-making, that proprietors did all they could to prevent the emigration of those removed from the smaller farms, and coerced them to settle on the coast. Kelp was definitely a mixed blessing for the Highlanders.

Mythological References

Kelpies are famous in the Highlands, and can be detected in human form because they are unable to keep their hair from appearing like seaweed, thus their name. They are sometimes called Each-UISge (Ech-ooshk-ya, meaning "water horse") or Fuath (Foo-ah,) and they are also part of northern Irish Fairy lore, suggesting their migration from Scotland. A Cornish Kelpie is called a Shoney, a name derived from the Norse name Sjöfn, a Goddess of the Sea. In Iceland they are called Nickers, which are similar to the Nix, the water sprites of Germany. In the Shetland and Orkney Islands they are called Nuggies. Another name for the kelpie on the Isle of Man is the *glashtyn*. The *glashtyn* is described as a goblin which often rises out of the water and is similar in nature to the Manx brownie. Like all kelpies, the *glashtyn* appears as a horse--in this case, as a grey colt. It is often seen on the banks of lakes and appears only at night. In Ireland, a faerie known as the Phooka is also said to take the shape of a horse and induces children to mount him. He is then said to plunge with them over a precipice killing them. The Scottish kelpie is also attributed with similar feats. I wonder if there is a possible connection with the aquatic steeds of Manannan MacLir, Irish God of the oceans? Perhaps, the original story brought the heroes to the sub-aquatic kingdom of fairies. Another explanation, is that a lot of children slipped and fell off of cliffs or drowned while horsing around near the water; and somebody made up a story to pass the blame.

These reputedly voracious faeries once densely populated the North Sea and all the lochs of Scotland. Deer and humans who wandered too close to the lochs, were their favorite meals. In northern Scotland there are stories of Kelpies who appear as friendly seahorses and allow passing humans to mount them so that they may be drowned. Kelpies have limited shape-shifting powers and can appear as handsome young men to lure young girls to them. They were probably the forerunners of our current belief in the Loch Ness monster. Kelpies may be captured by placing a bridle over their heads, though it was a difficult and dangerous task due to the beasts strong and willful nature. However, if a person managed to accomplish this task, the kelpie was forced to serve the one who bridled it. Other tricks to unmask one, were pouring boiled water on one, striking it with a holy item, or tricking it to walk over a cross-road. The general advice, don't accept rides from strange horses.

Kelpie Story

Loch Pytoulish is a beautiful little lake, partly in Kincardine and partly in Rothiemurchus. It is 674 feet above the sea, the same height as Loch Dallas, behind Kinchirdy. Its environment is rich in memories of the past. To the west is the Callart, a rocky height, which till lately was densely covered with larch. It stands now cold and bare. At the east end, near the march, is Lag-nan-Cuimcanath, where Shaw of Rothiemurchus, the captain of the clan in the combat at the Inch of Perth, 1392, waylaid a party of Cummings and slew them. The lonely remains of their graves may still be seen in the hollow. There is an island in the loch, which sometimes appears when the water is low. It is evidently artificial, and probably was used as a place of defense. Perhaps it had a crannog (island fort) and it may have been connected with the Stone Fort on the hill above (Creag Chaisteal.) On the east side of the loch there is a well-defined terrace, with the remains of hut-circles and cairns. It is about 30 feet higher than the lake, and makes, with the surface of the water, as striking a parallel as the famous Roads of Glenroy. This terrace, which many mistake for a road, and others at a higher level (700, 800, 900,) may be traced for miles on both sides of the Spey. It was in Loch Pytoulish that Colonel Thornton killed the monster pike, of which he gives so glowing an account in his book. With such a setting, it is not surprising that the loch was said to have been of old one of the haunts of the Water Kelpie.

Once upon a time, the Baron's heir and some other boys were playing by the loch side. One of them cried out with surprise, "Look, the pretty pony!" They went to see. It was a palfrey, gaily caparisoned, with saddle and bridle bright with silver and gems, feeding quietly in the meadow. The boys tried to get hold of it, but could not. They were allowed to come close, and then, with a toss of its head, it was off. Thus frolicking, they drew nearer and nearer to the loch. At last they caught it by the bridle, when, with a wild shriek, it rushed for the water. The lads struggled hard, but their hands were glued fast to the bridle, and they could not loose them. But the Baron's son, who had his right hand free, drew his dirk and gashed at his fingers until he gained release. He alone escaped; the other's perished in the waters.

Kelp Burning Song

Dúlámán na binne buí, dúlamán Gaelach
Dúlámán na binne buí, dúlamán Gaelach
A'níon mhín ó, sin anall na fir shúirí
A mháithair mhín ó, cuir na roithléan go dtí mé

Tá ceann buí óir ar an dúlamán gaelach
Tá dhá chluais mhaol ar an dúlamán gaelach

Rachaimid go Doire leis an dúlamán gaelach
Is ceannóimid bróga daora ar an dúlamán gaelach

Bróga breaca dubha ar an dúlamán gaelach
Tá bearéad agus triús ar an dúlamán gaelach

Ó chuir mé scéala chuici, go gceannóinn cíor dí
'Sé an scéal a chuir sí chugam, go raibh a ceann cíortha

Góide a thug na tíre thú? arsa an dúlamán gaelach
Ag súirí le do níon, arsa an dúlamán maorach

Ó cha bhfaigheann tú mo 'níon, arsa an dúlamán gaelach
Bheul, fuadóidh mé liom í, arsa an dúlamán maorach

Dúlámán na binne buí, dúlamán Gaelach
Dúlámán na farraige, 's é b'fhearr a bhí in Éirinn

Beautiful yellow dúlamán, Irish dúlamán
Beautiful yellow dúlamán, Irish dúlamán
O gentle daughter, here come the wooing men
O gentle mother, put the wheels in motion for me

There is a yellow-gold head on the Irish seaweed
There are two blunt ears on the Irish seaweed

I would go to Dore with the Irish seaweed
"I would buy expensive shoes," said the Irish seaweed

The Irish seaweed has beautiful black shoes
The Irish seaweed has a beret and trousers

I spent time telling her the story that I would buy a comb for her
The story she told back to me, that she is well-groomed

"What are you doing here?" says the Irish seaweed
"At courting with your daughter" says the stately seaweed

"Oh where are you taking my daughter?" says the Irish seaweed
"Well, I'd take her with me," says the stately seaweed

Beautiful yellow dúlamán, Irish dúlamán
Dúlámán from the sea, the best there is in Ireland

Planting Your Own Grove

By Stacey Weinberger
A Druid Missal-Any, Yule 2000

The Live Oak acorns that have fallen over the course of this past Fall at the Grovesite are already showing signs of sprouting. Our Server has collected some in the hopes of growing them at her new house. This has given me the in

spiration and impetus to post the first in a series of see and do articles. My teacher always told me that Druidism is a "See and do" religion versus Judaism or Christianity which are talk-think religions. And so we bring to you a plan for planting your own grove.

Do you have a reverence for trees, particularly oaks? You can grow these mighty trees yourself, from seed.

Start by gathering acorns. Let your favorite kids help or find acorns at the foot of an oak that has a special meaning for you. Make sure the tree is healthy. Use a fishing pole or other long pole to shake them from the tree. Your best chances of successful acorns are those picked directly from the oak.

Gently twist the acorn's hat. If it comes off easily, you're got a candidate for your project. Toss out any cracked, rotten, or hole-y acorns as well as those that seem very light by comparison. As a final test, place the acorns in a bucket of water and get rid of the floaters.

Don't keep acorns too long before you plant them! Once they dry out, they probably won't germinate.

Using plastic bags, mix a handful of acorns with a handful of perlite. (Vermiculite can be added to the mix, if you like.) Seal the bag, date it, and place it in your refrigerator. It may take as much as three cycles of the moon for the acorns to germinate or as little as one cycle, depending on the type of oak. At the full moon and the new moon, check your acorns to see if they are starting to sprout. When several have sprouted, its time to plant all the acorns in the bag.

To plant the acorns, use large plastic pots (this is one time I actually like plastic anything!) I tend to use the large black ones left over from the previous spring's azalea purchase. Use one-gallon size at a minimum. The little oaks will develop loooooong tap roots, so they'll need plenty of depth. Make sure the pots drain well, too, with holes in the bottom.

Fill the pots with potting soil almost to the top. Leave about one inch. Place a single acorn on its side and cover it with half an inch of potting soil. Then water, taking care not to wash the soil away from the acorn.

Place your pots in a protected area so the cold won't freeze them or dry them out. Water them whenever the soil dries on top.

Now sit back and wait! Hopefully in the spring, you'll see the first signs of growth. When the little oaks are growing nicely, you can move the pots to an Eastern sunny spot and fertilize them every Sabbath. At Mabon or Samhain when the little oaks are one to two years old, plant them in a permanent spot.

The thing I really like about having these small oaks in pots is that I can arrange the pots in a circle for special workings. In the side yard, on the back deck, or even in a pasture, I can let them grow (almost) naturally and feel the power of this magical tree. As they grow, I can move them out, away from the center of the circle, to make room for their future growth. Once a lot of rituals have taken place in this circle of young trees, the place becomes sacred, and it's a good spot to plant the trees in a special ceremony.

Winter Tree Care and Planting Tips

By Stacey Weinberger, Baccharis Grove
A Druid Missal-Any, Spring Equinox 2002

From the February edition of Leaf Lines, Newsletter of The National Arbor Day Foundation. Though Spring officially begins on March 20 this year, in many places it is still cold and there is still snow on the ground. These are excellent recommendations until the weather warms.

1. Watching Your Trees In Winter

Take a walk outside to observe the buds and stems of your trees. Look at your mature trees and any new plantings from last fall or spring. What will you find?

Carefully remove a sealed bud and gently open it. Inside you will find tiny immature leaves and perhaps the beginnings of a flower. The buds are triggered to life each spring by day length. Temperature changes hasten or slow down the development of the buds.

Select several trees in your yard and tie a piece of string to their branches. Take just a moment each day, or once a week, to carefully inspect the tightly closed buds on the branches. Plant breeders use this very technique to search for ways to develop cold-hardy trees, particularly for the fruit industry.

Watching the buds awake and noting the date of the event is called phenology* an ancient forerunner of ecology. Mark on your calendar the exact dates the buds actually emerge on each tree. You can also record when your trees blossom and leaf out. Each year you will begin to learn more about the characteristics of your trees. This process of keeping yearly records will prove to be very useful --especially if you are raising fruit trees.

2. Wabbits and Other

Wascals In Winter

While you are on your winter walks you may encounter other signs of life in your orchards or gardens besides simple bud development. Check your trees for signs of rodent damage. It is common for mice or rabbits to chew the tender bark of a young tree right down to the heartwood. Don't worry...if you find a girdled tree, the damage can usually be repaired by a technique known as "bridge grafting." Bridge grafting literally bridges the gap in the living tissues so they can continue the tree's growth as well as transport needed nutrients to and from the leaves and roots.

Mark the site of the damaged tree and return with a sharp knife. Remove all frayed or loose bark from around the wound. Next, remove a sucker or a slender, long, branchlet from the tree and cut it into lengths just a little bit longer than the wound, measured from top to bottom. Sharpen these sticks into wedges at both ends and insert them under the bark at the top and bottom of the wound. Several of these "bridges" will be needed, spaced at intervals around the tree.

Finally, protect the wound by covering the entire area with grafting wax. In a few years, the wound will be healed and the tree will grow normally. If you can't find grafting wax at your local nursery, try searching for it on the web.

3. Consider Your Planting Site

While the act of planting a tree may only involve a few hours, proper care and maintenance may last a lifetime. This winter, care for your new trees by simply taking the time to study the future site upon which they will be planted. Consider the environment in which you'll be working--whether you are planting on your property or planning an Arbor Day tree-planting event at a local park.

In selecting a tree, your first consideration must be what the tree needs. In other words, what environmental factors limit the ability of a particular species to live a healthy life? One indication is to look at the native species in your area. Some non-native species and horticulturally-developed cultivars may also do well on your site. Remember to always select the right tree for the right place.

4. Buy Your Trees Now

for Spring Planting

While you are on those winter walks, consider how your trees define the scenery. Now is the time to create plans for your desired landscape. What would you like to see when you take this same walk in future years? Imagine planting trees and shrubs to create a beautiful, productive, "edible landscape" surrounding your home with delicious fruits and nuts to benefit your family and the wildlife outside your back door.

Consider planting some of our fruit trees...a Stayman Winesap Apple, an Early Richmond Cherry, or perhaps a delicious Belle Of Georgia Peach. If you like nut trees, you might choose the beautiful Hall's Hardy Almond, American Hazelnut, Shellbark Hickory, or Black Walnut. The Sourwood is an excellent honey tree for beekeepers.

To brighten up future winter scenes around your home, select trees for their bright colorful fruit, unique branch structure, or peeling bark. Our online Tree Store offers many possibilities. Some of our favorites are the Prairifire Flowering Crab, River Birch, Lacebark Elm, Northern Catalpa, or the Kousa Dogwood.

Make a large photocopy of your property plat. Here you can create an inventory of all the trees on your property and position them on the map. Include the botanical names of the trees for your reference. As you select trees for later plantings, you can share this map with friends, nursery growers, or use it to consult with your local County Cooperative Extension Agent.

As you plant trees, work to shape your landscape with a diverse selection of strategically placed plantings to create a landscape of beautiful, useful, edible trees for all four seasons.

5. Forcing Spring To Arrive

Now that the coldest days of winter are behind us, you can slip outside on a mild day to take care of some dormant winter pruning. Remove any crossing limbs that might rub together, sucker shoots, and any broken or dead branches. From the cuttings you remove, save a few heavily budded branches for forcing indoors to brighten up your home with colorful blooms and leaves. Good candidates for successful forcing are hazelnuts, redbuds, willows, forsythias, apple and crabapples, magnolias, and red maples.

Bring your cuttings (up to 1/2 inch diameter or smaller) inside and place them in a bucket of tepid water (about 100 degrees) with a floral preservative. The preservative will increase hydration and control any bacterial growth. Fill up a vase with warm water and preservative as well. The water in your vase will need to be changed in your container about once a week too.

Now, fill up your sink with very warm water and place the ends of the branches into the sink. Cut the stems of the branches off under the warm water. Size the branches so they fit into your vase and then proceed to create an arrangement. When you are finished, set the vase away from bright sunlight in a cool location. It will take anywhere from 1 to 6 weeks for the blooms and/or leaves to burst from their buds.

We encourage you to forward these Winter Tree Care and Planting Tips on to your friends and family around the country.

Thank you for planting and caring for America's Trees!

*Phenology looks at the relationship between climate or seasons and periods of biological activity. Phenologists study and record the changes and movements of animals and plants in relation to weather and seasonal changes taking place in their surrounding environment.

Leave No Trace

By Stacey Weinberger
A Druid Missal-Any, Spring 2001

As Druids and lovers of Nature we tend to spend a lot of time outdoors, be it holding services, hiking, or overnight camping. With the coming of Spring and warmer weather and our thoughts turn towards those outings in the woods it is important that we keep in mind the philosophy of Leave no Trace.

Leave No Trace is a program of outdoor ethics managed by the non-profit organization LNT Inc. dedicated to building awareness, appreciation, and most of all, respect for our natural lands. Following these simple principles of Leave No Trace we are able to enjoy our activities outdoors while still preserving our environment:

Plan ahead and prepare

1. Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
2. Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
3. Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
4. Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into groups of 4-6.
5. Repackage food to minimize waste.
6. Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

Travel and camp on durable surfaces

1. Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
2. Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
3. Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary. In popular areas
4. Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
5. Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
6. Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent. In pristine areas
7. Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
8. Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

Dispose of Waste Properly

1. Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
2. Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
3. Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
4. To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

Leave What You Find

1. Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
2. Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
3. Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
4. Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

Minimize Campfire Impacts

1. Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
2. Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
3. Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
4. Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

Respect Wildlife

1. Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
2. Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
3. Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
4. Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
5. Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors

1. Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
2. Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
3. Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
4. Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
5. Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

The Creation of a Druid's Nemeton

This is an article by Rhiannon Hawk Fugatt,
of the Druid Heart Spirit Grove/Nemeton Awenyddion
O How She Set up Her Grove Site.
A Druid Missal-Any, Summer 2002

While Sister Rhiannon uses Welsh deities, the deities invoked can be adapted to the Celtic pantheon of your affinity and their attributes and roles.

Nemeton means "Sacred Space." The Druids of old and Druids of today prefer our sacred space outdoors in a place where we feel or sense Nature Spirit activity. Many Nemetons are located in a grove of trees. Natural places can add a lot to a ritual, especially if you can find a spot that exists along a ley-line or high energy center along the Earth's magnetic grid. Our Druid Grove's Nemeton is in the middle of a forest of silver-firs, oaks, pines, cedars, and dogwoods, twenty to thirty feet behind our home. Before we created the standing stones Nemeton I searched the property by spending time in different locations attuning to Earth's energy there and paid special care of natural vibrational frequencies.

The circle of our Grove is about twenty-five feet across, and around the edges stand twelve stones in the eight directions of the wheel of the year. We spent considerable time creating this sacred space, but it is nothing compared to the hard work that went into the ancient's creation of Stonehenge or other ancient sacred places. These stone monuments, or circles, express the way Druids perceive the universe and we connect with the universe in this circle that has no beginning and no end. These standing stones will stay here to remind future people of our existence and sacred connection with the land.

I found most of the stones in our stone circle by digging them out of the ground near the Nemeton's location. Some of them were very large, weighing up to two thousand pounds. For the larger and heaviest stones we used a come-along, a hand operated wench for pulling them. The largest stone that now stands in the East was the heaviest. I dug it out of the hard clay soil just fifteen feet away from the Nemeton in the ground. After three days of cranking the come-along we finally had him close enough to the East so we started to prepare his spot in the Grove, next we stood him up and lodged him into the dig out. Now I'm sure it would have taken a lot less time if we had a tractor to move it, but we decided to do it by hand. The rest of the stones in our Nemeton weighed less than a thousand pounds. I moved them by my self with a refrigerator dolly.

If you were to put as much effort into your sacred space, it might be good to get a work party together to help. While not all of us are blessed to have land, sometimes it is necessary to seek out Pagan friendly land owners. Druids who live in cities can create sacred space in your homes but, please be sure you have a fire source such as a candle, for that is where the spirits dance.

The Nemeton is circular, but Druids stand or sit in a horse shoe pattern during ritual. The opening in the horseshoe is where the spirits enter our Nemeton that is in the South. The South is also where we have our altar. The altar is used to create an open doorway for the kindred spirits to enter during ritual. The reason for the altar's location being in the South is that the South side of any clearing has the most sun through out the day.

The altar I created in our Nemeton is a trithilian--three standing stones in close proximity capped with a flat sandstone. The altar is a bridge between the worlds. The lay out of the ritual tools on our altar are symbol. How they are placed on top of the altar stone reflects how we relate those symbols with our own inner spirit, and our connection with the world tree cosmology. On our alter we place the symbols of Land, Sea, and Sky, and of the balance between the moon and sun. During ritual we do not step behind the altar out of our deep respect for the Shining Ones or good spirits who may be passing through the opening into the Grove.

A Grove is what Druids call their act of gathering for rituals, magic and meditation. We are the Druid's Grove. We join with others and do the tree meditation at the beginning of our ritual to feel that the peace within trees, also exists within us, and to experience the interconnectedness of our roots growing together. The rituals take place in the Nemeton.

These rituals are celebrated during the solstices, the equinoxes, the four fire festivals, and the healing rites we do every month. The Nemeton has a fire pit dug out of its center. Before all rituals we prepare for the spirit fire by placing oak twigs and logs in a cone shape. Oak represents durability and strength and is associated with the Welsh sun God Llew. We light the spirit fire in ritual during the moment the God and Goddess who preside over the ritual are arriving. When we are in the Nemeton all is quiet except for the sounds of nature, the four winds in the trees, and our voices raised in song. We keep a peace around us that allows our senses to awaken and our minds to be open for contact with the invisible world. The invisible world exists all through out this middle earthly plane.

When we had finished building our stone circle I did a ritual to welcome the new stones. This is done by consecrating the stones with offerings that have been blessed by the spirits. First we invite a patron God and matron Goddess from the Welsh pantheon into our Nemeton. We call on the Goddess Brúid. She brings with her the flame of inspiration and the creation of fiery spirit energy that dances in the center fire. We call on the God Manawyddan, he is the voyager who sails on the ocean, and over the land. He goes between our world and the other worlds and assists us to lift the veils between the worlds. I invoke Brúg and Manawyddan into two white candles. These represent the brightness of the God and Goddess and reminds us to keep alive our own inner spark of the divine. The invocation is done with songs and poetry. Then we take the candles and we light the center fire to connect the spirits and us with the Celtic world tree.

The center fire of our Nemeton represents the center of the world tree and the center of the world tree is the Middleworld or Earth. We invite the God and Goddess of the rite to dance there in the spirit fires. Then we call the Celtic triad spirits to bless us with their presence. The triad spirits are our Ancestors of the sea, the Nature Spirits of the earth, and the Shining Ones of the sky. The triad spirits we invite into the Grove each have an earthen bowl that contains an element that is attributed to the realm they come from. A bowl of water is placed to the left on the alter for the Underworld and the Ancestors. A bowl of earth for the Middleworld and the Nature Spirits is placed in the center. The Shining Ones have a feather and an incense bowl on the right side. We invoke these spirits with poetic verse to imbue their spirit into the water, the earth, and the incense.

The poetry we use is written by our Grove's Bard. Then we take the two candles around to each stone and pour a small amount of melted wax onto the ground in front of each stone. This is done to awaken each stone to the spirits of the God and Goddess we have invoked into the candles, that their energy may vibrate from the Earth that is within the newly created Nemeton. A Druid then takes each bowl starting with the water of the Ancestors, and pours a small amount on top of each stone while invoking the energy of the Ancestor's realm of the Underworld to pulsate through all of the stones in the circle. The Underworld is more distant from our world than the Otherworld, and is usually found through water. The world tree's roots are in the Underworld, so are the past, our ancestors, and our minds. This the Druid says during invocation to each stone while pouring the waters, "May the vibrations of the Underworld, through this stone, pulsate with the luminous light of the Anwyn." The name for the Underworld in the Welsh lore is Anwyn. Then the Druid goes to each new stone member repeating this same process then returns the bowl to the alter giving thanks by words of prayer.

The same process is done to awaken the stones to the energetic activity of Nature Spirits, who's world comes next on the way up the world tree. Nature spirits are part of the creative energy flow in nature, they exist in plants, streams, mountains, trees, animals, and in this Middleworld earthly plane. They can be any size. They work together in a synchronized harmonious flow to keep balance present in the Nemeton. The trunk of the world tree exists on Earth. It is the Middleworld, it is our nature and earthly relations, our physical body's connection to Earth. The spirit fire in the center of our Nemeton is the very center of the world tree and is also in the trunk. To synchronize the stones with nature's energy a Druid takes the bowl of Earth and walks towards the first stone to the right of the altar and says,

"May the rhythmic vibrations of our Earth Mother pulsate with you, and through you, as it does in us. Help us amplify the healing powers of Abred in our Nemeton. Make this a place that will awaken our ability to be more attentive to the forces of Abred."

Abred is the Welsh name for this Middleworld. The Druid then pours a small amount of earth from the bowl over the stone, and repeats the same process with the other stones. The bowl then gets returned to the alter.

Next, we bring to the circle of stones the presence of the Otherworld. We do this by asking assistance from the Shining Ones who have come to us from the Otherworld. In The world tree cosmology, the Otherworld and the Underworld are not the same. The Otherworld is above and more celestial. It is the canopy of branches and leaves on the world tree. Access to the Otherworld is usually through portals on Middleworld (Earth) in areas where there is energy concentrated, such as ley-lines and power spots, sacred hills, stone circles and the like. The Shining Ones that live in the Otherworld are the Gods and Goddesses from old Celtic lore and legends. We honor them in our rituals with offerings of herbs, songs, and prayers. To merge the light energy of the Shining Ones with the stones, an active Druid takes the bowl of incense and feather and approaches the stone starting with the one to the right of the alter. Sain is the Gaelic term we use for wafting the smoke. The Druid starts to Sain the stone while saying,

"Oh Shining Ones, hear our prayers and accept our offerings. For today with your help, we consecrate our new stone members to make them wholly in the realms of Anwyn, Abred, and Gwynvyd at the edges of our Nemeton!

"May the higher frequencies of Gwynvyd illuminate through you, within and without, let the messages of the Gods and Goddesses speak through you to us clearly, that we may hear the truth and feel their hearts nobility brought to this Nemeton."

The Welsh name for the Otherworld is Gwynvyd. When the Druid returns the bowl of Gwynvyd to the altar all raise their hands to the South, above the altar and say,

"Let the powers of Land, Sea, and Sky live within and on the edge of this Nemeton. Let the spirit fire and world tree connect the stones to the center of our Nemeton."

To end this rite a Druid approaches the fire and takes some ashes from the spirit fire and first enters the South saying,

"Voices from the ocean of the four winds! Come! Rush through the stones and spiral into the center of the world tree."

The Druid then sprinkles some ash on the ground in front of the stone, and on the stone, and does this for each of the stones in every direction. The Druid does this while chanting,

"Let the spirit fire and world tree connect the stone people to the center of our Nemeton. By the blessing of all spirits, dance together our ancestors, our nature spirits, and the Shining Ones, we welcome these new stone members into our Nemeton."

All say, "Gadael hi bhod!" Rituals are always followed by a song of peace, and a fellowship feast.

Tree Meditation

A Meditation from the Druid Heart Spirited Grove:

By Rhiannon Hawk

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 2001

Meditation is the key to trance when it is done correctly. Breathing techniques help induce these states of trance and also awaken the electric governing vessel and the magnetic conception vessel which helps our outward journey to succeed. Meditation and trance are a pathways between the conscious and subconscious for inner therapy, reprogramming, recreating our pasts, healing our core self, etc. We use trance and meditation for all of these plus journeying. Journeying is similar to astral projection except that you are safe and still in your mind, body, and spirit. When you journey into the underworld (Anwyn,) you journey into the sea, deep parts of your self where your Ancestral memories exist, genetic and spiritual, past lives also.

There are different levels of trance. We like to use medium trance because you are safe there. Deep trance should only be done by those with much experience or by a guide who leads you by voice.

The Tree Meditation

By Rhiannon Hawk

A Druid Missal-Any, Beltane 2001

The tree meditation does many things. It grounds your entire being. It runs Nyvwyres (Sacred Spirit) energy through the governing vessel which runs down through the crown of your head to a spot called the core-star, and the conception vessel which runs up (from the earth) from the bottom of your spine or feet to the core-star. The core-star looks just like it sounds like a small white sun located between your solar-plexus and your navel. Thus uniting the earth and the sky, and filling the channel with Nyvwyre. The tree meditation is also a medium trance state. So instead of ending your meditation when it is done you can slide right into a journey.

Start by finding a quiet place where you will be undisturbed. Unplug your phone. Put a sign on your door "DO NOT DISTURB." Do your meditation outside if you can find a place and the weather is willing. Have a pillow ready because you are going to sit cross legged. When you are comfortable you may begin. Take a few deep breaths slowly. First filling your stomach then your lungs. Fill completely. Do this a few times. Focus on letting go of any tension that may have built up during the day. Keep deep breathing as you take your mind and body off any distracting thoughts. THINK NOTHING!

At the bottom of your spine imagine pushing and growing a large tap root down into the earth and feel other roots pushing down. Feel your roots pushing down through rock breaking them apart. Feel your roots feeling water, minerals, and nutrients. Now just take some time to allow them to grow further down until you feel warmth. Feel them reach water.

After you have a strong root system well grounded, feel that earth energy moving up to your lower body (belly area) and developing a wide base trunk. Grow up quickly. Feel the trunk growing up your entire body, and when you get to just above your chest feel branches push their way out. Keep moving up and out. Take some time to do this. Make sure that branches grow out of the crown of your head. Reach those branches for the light of the sun. Feel the warming rays giving you energy. Grow new sprigs and lots of leaves and don't forget to take a deep breath and live. Be a tree for a moment. Notice if there are any animals living in your branches?

Pause...

Now I want you to focus on the earth energy coming up to your core-star, that is directly above your navel. Feel how strong Mother Earth's energy is flowing through you!

Take a moment...

Now feel Father Sky's energy coming down through your branches, down to your core-star at the same time you still feel the earth's energy coming up.

Take a moment...

Now send the Earth's energy up to the sky, out your branches, and send the skies energy down into the earth through your roots. As soon as both are united you see a bright light that is gold-white. It is coming from your core-star. Back in that light. Feel the love. Let that light burst throughout your entire being. You are meant to be here now. To continue with journey

Now stay within and visualize that gold-white light filling you up trying to burst out of your bark. All the way out to the ends of your branches, and all the way down to the tips of your roots, especially your tap root. Once you have done this imagine that you as your human self are smaller than normal and inside this tree that is filled with light. You are floating around as if there is no gravity. Now turn yourself upside down and look at the opening of the taproot that looks far into the underworld. It looks like it goes forever, all you see are its sides and the light. You decide to investigate. But first you find that there is a small white pouch tied around your waist, and you realize that it must have a purpose so you open it, and inside there are three golden seeds. You put them back in the pouch and continue on your journey. You grab a hold of the bark and pull yourself into the tunnel, as you are small inside this great tree and you are light energy you find it very easy to move along.

As you keep looking ahead it seems as though it will take forever but as you continue to move you see the bottom of the root and it looks like it is open at the end. As you get closer you see a beautiful luminous light that is tranquil to see. Upon reaching the opening you see a reflection, you grow more aware of the object that the reflection is coming from, and you see that it is a cauldron. A very large cauldron that could hold one to two hundred gallons. It appears to be water. Looking into that water it's dark at first just reflecting that luminous light, then you notice that an image appears, some kind of writing. Some ancient symbol that may have belonged to your ancestors. Look very closely. Memorize it, you may know it, it may even be unfamiliar to you, but remember it well...

The experience has made you feel somehow, special, like you were given a gift. Then you realize that you must also leave an offering so you reach for your pouch and open it, allowing the golden seeds to fall freely to the sacred waters. You will receive a sign that the offering was received. After you have received this you may return back up the root to your core self.

Once you are back in the trunk of the tree, expand your body to fill the tree and return to the earthly plane, remember to keep your core self intact.

It may be helpful to record this reading it aloud into a tape deck allowing for the amount of space you will need in different places during the meditation and journey.

Michelle's Meditation

By Michelle Hajder, Feb 3, 1997
On Carleton Vaxnotes Druid Conference

Part One

Yes, that's grounding...but I also have this meditation/personal ritual for on-the-spot energy focus, which I also call grounding.

This is not something I invented, but is a general purpose thing I have seen different forms of in many books...

One sits on the floor/ground with good posture and a nice straight spine, taking a couple deep breaths and calming the mind and body.

Concentrate on your spine, feel it, be aware of it, and be aware of its energy. Now slowly feel and visualize your "spine" slowly extending downwards past the tailbone and descending out of your body. (It's probably gross and distracting to visualize actual vertebrae poking out your butt...the common image/feeling is a column of energy that flows from your spine. And remember, it's extending, not leaving your body, just getting longer and still keeping you connected.)

So feel and visualize your "spine" descend straight down through the floor, then the floor below, or the foundations of the house, down into the Earth. Be sure to take it slow enough that you *really* do feel this happening. Do not try to send your spine deeper until you are secure at the level you are on.

Send it down through topsoil, past water mains, layers of clay, etc, until you hit bedrock. Feel it continue for miles and miles downward, yet connected to your body.

Send it to the point at the center of the earth. secure it there. feel the link between you and the center. feel you spine securely rooted to the spot. You are so strongly connected that not even a tornado could move you.

Now, practice feeling and drawing energy up from out of the depths of the earth up your spine and into your body. Draw energy, draw peace. Send energy back to the earth. Feel the flow.

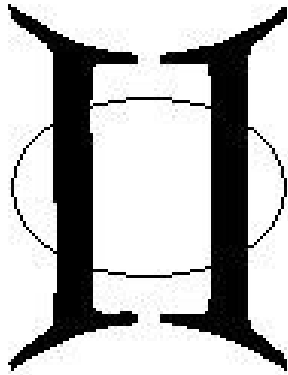
Part Two

Now, If you want to continue the exercise, feel how your spine is connected to the center of the earth. follow it up back through the dirt and rock, back up your body, and now extend your spine-energy-column out the top of your head, extending slowly as before so you really feel it move out the top of your head, up above you, through the ceiling, through the roof, through the levels of atmosphere, up into the heavens as far as you can imagine.

You are now connected to both earth and sky, a powerful column joining two powerful forces. Pull energy down from sky. Send some back. Pull sky energy and send it into the earth. Raise earth energy to the sky. Do both at once. As you inhale, pull energy from above and below, and as you exhale, breathe the energies out. Pull positive energies in, send negative out.

Play with exercise of this sort and see what works for you.

So Ends Volume Nine
Of the Green Books.



Feel Free to add your own articles on
trees and recipes to this section.