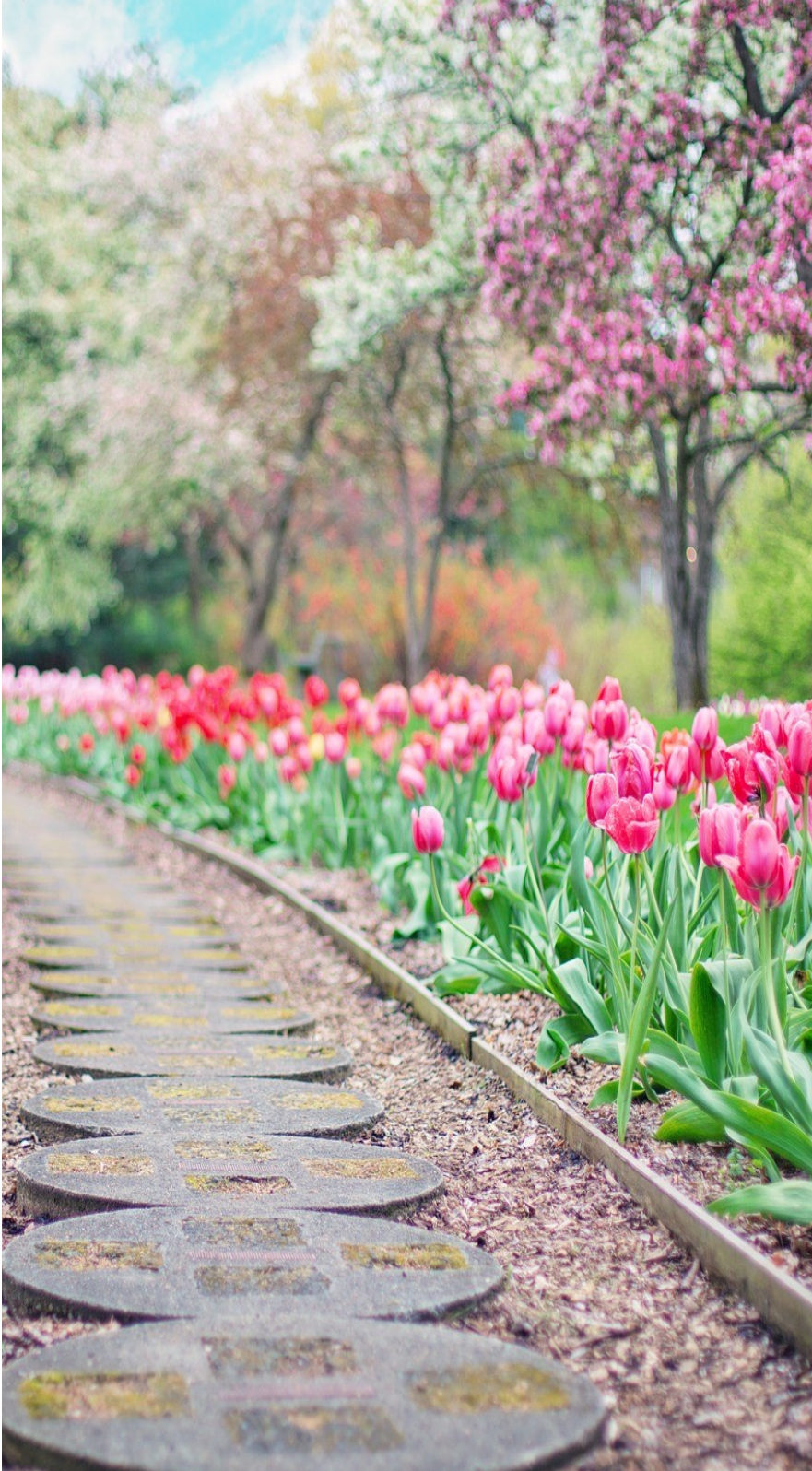


# *Southern Light Newsletter*

*Spring 2021*



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# *Merry Meet*

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## *We are the family team of Southern Light Newsletter*

We are a pagan family, living in the beautiful island state of Tasmania, Australia. We've always enjoyed reading pagan and family resources, but noticed most resources for pagans are northern hemisphere-focused. And while there are a few great resources around for those like us in the southern hemisphere, we realised there was still a space for more.

Our aim is to create content aimed at pagans and pagan families of all ages. From time to time there may be some articles that are not appropriate for the younger kids, these will have a disclaimer before the body of the article. We will do our best to convert dates to line up with the southern hemisphere (where appropriate) so that you don't have to. We welcome contributions from the community, and if we do our job right we'll be creating a newsletter that we would appreciate reading ourselves.

Please note that some of the articles in the newsletters will occasionally be making their way to our blog section ([southernlightnewsletter.com/blog](http://southernlightnewsletter.com/blog)). We'll also be posting other content in our blog that won't exist in the newsletter, so make sure to keep up with both!

If you want to give us some feedback, contribute to the newsletter or just get in contact generally we would love to hear from you. Either contact us through the website at [southernlightnewsletter.com/contact](http://southernlightnewsletter.com/contact) or send us an email at [team@southernlightnewsletter.com](mailto:team@southernlightnewsletter.com)

Happy reading,  
The Holly and The Ivy



# *Up & Coming*

## *Pagan holidays for the season*

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Here is a brief list of holidays for the season with dates for the southern hemisphere. Please let us know if there is a pagan festival you celebrate in the southern hemisphere that is not on here.

\*

### *September 21-22*

The spring equinox. Known as Ostara on the wheel of the year and by other names as well it is a time of day and night in balance. Associated with new life, beginnings, fertility and love.

\*

### *October 14*

Sigrblot, the first day of the Summer in the old Icelandic calendar (date adjusted for the southern hemisphere). In many of the Nordic countries this was a time for sacrifice to Odin but in Iceland it was important agriculturally.

\*

### *October 31/November 1*

Beltane, also known as May Day in the northern hemisphere. This time of year is celebrated around the world under different names. Associated with the fey or faeries, love, fertility, reproduction and acknowledgement of the coming summer.





# *The Altar*

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## *Symbols of Spring*

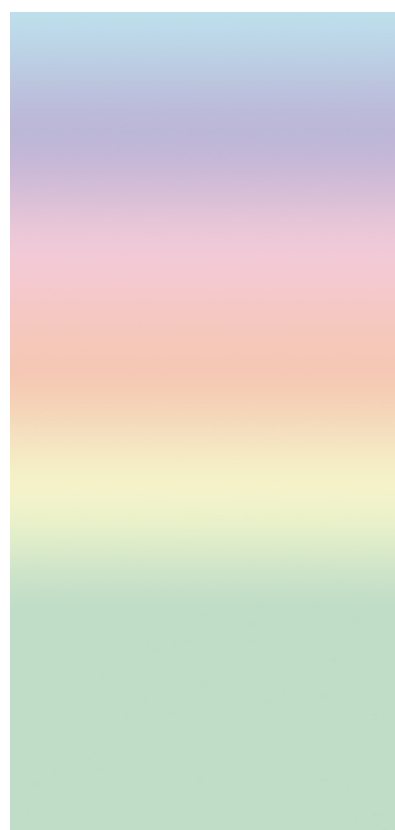
### Colours, Hares, and Eggs

One of the many reasons I love Spring as a season, particularly early Spring, is the wide variety of imagery it conjures in the mind's eye. Rolling fields, budding forests, flowers getting ready to bloom, bees becoming more active. There's an *energy* around. The time for rest is up, the time to get started is upon us again!

### *Pastel Colours*

Early Spring evokes a sense of What Has Been becoming What Will Be. This may be a personal choice, but I love the match of this feeling with pastel colours – all of them. Pastels are colours that are “washed out”, pale, or essentially just aren't as saturated as other colours. Yet they have a pull to them, evocative, inviting us to think of Spring and all that it beginning. After all, many Spring flowers are shades of pastels, as are some new green shoots, pale and strengthening as they start the new year's cycle of growth.

Try out pastel versions of colours for everything over Spring – from works of art (with or without help from kids), to any candles you're burning. You may find that their sense of growth, wonder, and zest for new life inspires something deeper within yourself or your magic!



### *Ostara and the Hare*

The “Easter Rabbit” is a curious creature, a mammal that lays eggs (and brightly coloured eggs, at that). It's origins are from a story involving the goddess Ostara (potentially derived from the earlier Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre).

Around the end of Winter, Ostara is walking around surveying the landscape, and happens across a bird with a broken wing, slowly dying in the freezing snow. The goddess Ostara wants to save the poor animal, and does so by turning it into a hare that keeps its ability to lay eggs. The hare, now love-struck with the goddess, pays thanks to Ostara by laying colourful eggs each year around the Spring Equinox.

That's the short version of the story, and I've kept it at the short version because, in truth, we seem to only be able to trace this story back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. And in the decades and century following the general public talking about this story, it's then been altered and lost



details until eventually it's ended up with being as simple as The Easter Rabbit being a mystical creature that pops up around the Spring Equinox giving out colourful chocolate eggs.

What I found most interesting about this story though, is the controversy surrounding it. Some say the origins of the Ostara Hare/Easter Bunny are actually only a few decades old, while others say it's a truly ancient story indeed. Some say Ostara was a goddess in her own right, others say she's just a modern form of a different goddess.

We have written proof that the story is at least 150 years old, so, clearly it's not purely a modern/recent story... But how much older it is than that (in written form not yet found, or purely a story told verbally from generation to generation) is at this point hard to tell.

The goddess Ostara seems to be becoming more active. Anecdotally, we've heard many stories of pagans around the world connecting (or re-connecting) with her in meditations and spells. Around this time of year we'd encourage people to see what they can learn from her in your own ways, after looking into her for yourself!



*If you'd like to read more on Ostara and the hare, there are many great resources to be found online, but this was the one I found most helpful for this article:*

<https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2016/04/ostara-and-the-hare/>

# *The Playroom*

*Something for the young ones*

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## *The Fey*

Who are they?



Ahh the Fey. Also known as Fae, Fair Folk, Faerie, or Fairy. These mystical, wonderous beings are some of my favourites to commune with - though if you're going to, you have to take great care not to be caught off guard!

The word Fairy can be used to mean all sorts of creatures. Not just the small, human-looking creatures with butterfly wings, but can include gnomes, goblins, elves, and sometimes even dwarves! Though now, most people would just think of the small creatures fluttering around the woods and gardens, helping the plants to grow.

### *Where do the fey live?*

This is a difficult question, as there are so many different kinds of fey out there. There are specific areas in the wilderness where the fey can be found (not that you should disturb them in their homes, mind!), including fairy rings, rings of stone, and especially areas in old growth, undisturbed forest.

Many other fairies come to and fro, from here to The Other World, a world just for the Fair Folk to inhabit, mirroring our own yet inaccessible to us. In the colder months, these Fair Folk retire to their Other World as they may not enjoy the rainy, cold months in and around winter. Come the middle of Spring, however, and many of them return to inhabit our world again, to play in the warmer weather!



## *How to work with them*

Start by cultivating your connection with, and respect for, nature. Along with this, start researching fairies. As mentioned before, there are so many different types of fairies to learn about, that the sooner you start the better!

Learn to observe. Stop ignoring little flickers of movement at the edges of your vision, stop trying to reason away little things happening (I'm talking simple, everyday stuff, like "I thought I put this thing over there instead"). The more you stop fighting and trying to reason away those little odd moments, the more you may connect with the fey around you, gently trying to get your attention.

If you find a place where you think the fey may be nearby (this may be a special place in your backyard or garden), learn how to calm yourself and stop moving. Sit somewhere comfortable, start listening, and be alert. This can be a hard skill to master, but if you can become good at not getting distracted by your thoughts, and simply observing the sights, sounds, and feelings of what's around you, you're more likely to be able to spot a fairy for real.



## *What to watch out for*

As much as we may like to think of fairies as perfect little creatures with only our best interests at heart... this is not always the case. There are in fact some fey which may do all they can to figure out how to trick or even confuse and control you. So it's best to keep two things in mind if you're ever in a position of talking with a fairy.

Always be polite. Offending one of the Fair Folk is a very, very bad idea. Even if they seem small to you, they are strong, as is their magic, and many can be quick to take offense. Note that being polite includes making sure not to disturb areas where they live or play.

Watch your words. If you're ever lucky enough to be in a conversation with one of the fair folk, don't say you will or won't do anything that you can't truly commit to. Break your promise with a fairy, and it could turn out quite badly. On the flipside however, prove yourself as someone who only ever says what they mean, and you may just gain a fairy's trust - a true gift!



### *Chickweed*



*The last of winter's chill is in  
the air*

*all around the ground is bare  
but take a look wherever you  
go*

*You'll see chickweed peeking  
beneath the snow*

This is a happy plant found in gardens and in the wild the world over. Often considered a common weed and garden nuisance, this plant has great value in both food and medicine. It is a wonderful plant to have in the garden when you have a family of young kids as it is not only safe to eat but a fantastic first aid plant.

### *Gathering*

Remember as with all foraging. Never gather (to consume) any plant that has been sprayed with pesticide or herbicide. If in doubt don't pick it. It is also best to gather plants for consumption away from areas of pollution, such as roadsides and water run-offs. Make sure you have identified it correctly as well, if you're not sure don't pick it or ask an adult.

You can find chickweed most of the year but it's most active during the period from late winter to early summer and through autumn. It likes shaded or partly shaded positions but doesn't like the heat. The plants like to spread in a whimsical rambling fashion but they are fairly small overall.

You can often find it growing in garden beds or in shaded areas of public places. Look for its distinctive tiny star shaped flowers and its fleshy oval leaves. Chickweed seems to like growing near strawberries so there may be a good place to start.

When harvesting it, take care not to pull hard, taking scissors and snipping it off is preferable as it has a very shallow root system and can easily be pulled up.

### *Food*

For its tiny size chickweed is nourishing. It's rich in minerals and vitamins and has a delicious refreshing taste when eaten fresh. It can be used in salads or sandwiches, added as topping to meals where you can admire its flowers and chopped up and added to dips. When cooked chickweed tastes a lot like spinach, earning it the nickname "poor man's spinach" and can be used in place of it. Its flavour and dainty leaves work well in pasta or added to a creamy dish.

Note: only the aerial parts (the parts above ground) are edible.

## *Medicine*

Chickweed is your friend when it comes to first aid. It is very soothing and a poultice of it will help itchy skin, eczema, psoriasis and insect bites. A poultice (made using either hot water and placed on the affected area or chewed up and placed on the affected area) will also help to heal cuts and bruises, rashes, boils, cold sores, and blisters.

An infusion of chickweed can help to soothe and heal pinkeye and conjunctivitis when used as an eye wash and compress several times a day. If doing this, make sure the infusion/compress is lukewarm to help loosen the build up around the eye but also be cool enough to feel soothing.

Aside from being yummy chickweed works as medicine inside of you as well. Drinking a strong infusion is soothing and cools your insides as well. It can help a sore throat, ulcers, fever, urinary tract infections, coughs and basically is useful anywhere there is heat involved in the body. It is particularly useful in chesty coughs.

A bath with a strong infusion of chickweed will also help to ease sore muscles and aching joints.

## *Chickweed and Cheese Toasties*

This makes a yummy lunch after you've searched the garden for chickweed all morning. Best to use a mild cheese so that it doesn't overpower the chickweed flavour

Makes 4 toasties

Ingredients:

- 8 slices of bread
- 2 cups of fresh chickweed
- ½ cup grated cheese or 4 cheese slices

Method:

1. Chop up the chickweed into small pieces using either a knife or scissors.
2. Put the chickweed and cheese between the bread slices like a sandwich and toast it until the cheese has melted. Serve warm.



*Enjoy!*

# *The Deck*

*For teens, and others who are just getting started on their pagan journey*

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## *Paganism Overview - Druidry*



Druidry today is like clear cold mountain stream water splashing on my face; it is fresh, invigorating and cleansing, and it wakes me up. It is an ancient belief; yet new. You can move at your own pace, not what some one else thinks should be the path or time to take it. Druidry is alive and growing, relevant to today's people, culture, and modern times.

Druidry wakes you up to possibilities and; impossibilities, it opens your eyes to non judgementalism and responsibility and holds to a tradition, but is not dogmatic, for it is flexible and personal to the needs and moors of the person and environment in which they live.

Druidry is a spirituality; open to the past, present and future. Ritual is central to our core, and it binds us together with a common thread. Eight times a year to celebrate the seasons and mid seasons, bringing us closer together and closer to the flow of nature and time, with other celebrations as each see fit. These celebrations of life cement in us core values and beliefs in the way of things, and also respect for the land

For me, Druidry is Pantheistic, meaning that I believe in the duality of God and Goddess, within and without. Carl Jung talks about the Anima and the Animus within, the balance or unbalance of Male and Female in each of us. We respect nature, each other and the environment (without being fundamentalist, but we do hug trees) and this is one of the great tenets of Druidry, leading ultimately to a respect of ourselves and our gifts, those being creativity, art in all its forms, music etc, living by example and listening.

As well as a spirituality, Druidry is a way of life, a thought pattern, and the air we breathe. It is in the past, present and future all at once, surrounded by the elemental and spirit, and part of the very fabric of the cosmos; and yet with all this intellectual philosophising, one word can sum it up, in its truest and purest form, and that word is 'Love'. Love of the planet,, love of others, love of nature, and ultimately love of self, for without this how can one love another.



As always with Druidry, it is a question of finding what works for you. We follow a path that honours each individual, their uniqueness and their needs. And as such we live in the world, and are of the world. Here is where we live, but we cross over in meditation, dance and song, finding answers and meaning to bring back with us, making this world hopefully a better place, and us better people.

So come in and explore, ask questions. The old adage 'Seek and you will find' is true. I did and my journey continues, being present, learning from the past and looking forward to the future.

The above is taken from the "Druidry Today" page from The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids in Australia, here: <https://www.druidryaustralia.org/druidry-today/>

OBOD is an international community (including having members here in the southern hemisphere), and we highly recommend checking out their website if you're interested in Druidry and what it entails.

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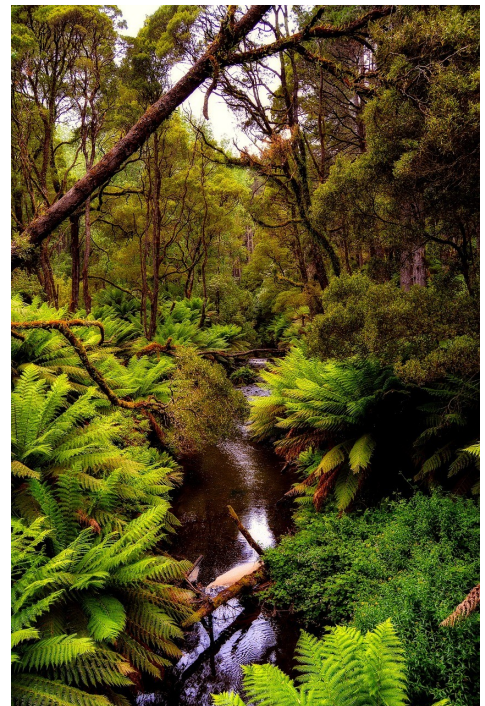
For a personal view into Druidry we got in contact with Mandy Gibson, an Australian Ovate in the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids (OBOD), and current editor of the online publication for OBOD in the southern hemisphere ([serpentstar.druidryaustralia.org](http://serpentstar.druidryaustralia.org)). Our interview with them was as follows.

**How would you describe your beliefs and/or tradition?**

I am an Ovate in the Order of Bards Ovates and Druids (OBOD), which is an international order that has been running over 50 years and has roughly 25000 members.

**And what does your belief and/or tradition entail?**

That's a huge question! I guess for me it would be a combination of reverence for (and time in) nature, the sacredness of creative arts, social responsibility (service to the community) and personal devotional and contemplative practice. Druidry is a fairly fluid spirituality that draws on a lot of sources, so to be constantly learning is also very much part of what we believe.



**Does this fit within a wider, or more formal, Druidry framework/tradition? Or are your beliefs more eclectic in nature?**

My beliefs have always been eclectic, as I was solitary for many years before joining OBOD. The fact that Druidry as a whole shies away from dogma means that we can include other traditions or be inspired by other beliefs and practice. Personally I have practices that acknowledge a relationship with both Buddhism and some of the older more mystical aspects of Christianity. That said, I'm very heavily focussed on Druidry as taught and practices by OBOD as my primary path, as I find having multiple 'formal' paths to be distracting!

**Do you practice magic work? If so, do you consider your magic work an integral part of your religious beliefs, or separate (if related), and why?**

Yes and no. I don't consider myself a practitioner of magic on a regular basis, it's just not part of my usual practice at the moment, but I do believe in the concept of 'everyday magic' and see that manifesting itself often.

**Were your first spiritual beliefs in life similar, or has there been a bit of a journey to get to where you are today?**

Quite the journey, I guess. I was not raised in any specific tradition but I had access to information about them, and my own early spiritual journey was largely influenced by my friends at the time. I went to church with some, I tried clumsy attempts at witchcraft with others. The one thing I can say I've never been is atheist - my belief in the divine has existed from an early age, I've just seen different faces at different times.

**How did you come across this particular set of beliefs/tradition? For example, were you introduced to it by someone, or did one bit of research lead to another until you found yourself where you are now?**

Having had some form of pagan practice for about 30 years, I had known for a long time that Druidry existed. I probably first became aware of this type of spirituality from the work of John and Caitlin Matthews, whose books on Arthurian history and spirituality I've been devouring for years. I first became aware of OBOD while looking for podcasts on paganism generally - I listened to their podcast (Druidcast) and read through the tons of information on their website and knew it was something I wanted to commit to.

**Do you practice by yourself, or as part of a group? Do you find it's easier to be solitary or part of a group?**

I'm in South-East Queensland and OBOD has quite a well established group here - Macadamia Grove - who I practice with when we can get together. I also practice solitary on a daily basis. I think both have their advantages - when with a group you can talk about things that maybe only other druids will understand, but on your own you can invest time in following your instincts in what you focus on.

**Is there any part of the "mundane world" that you feel is improved, or easier to deal with, through your practice?**

Yes it's definitely helped me - I find I can ground in my practice if I'm feeling scattered or stressed, and that's certainly been important in the last couple of years especially.

**Is there a particular piece of your beliefs/tradition that you enjoy or appreciate most of all?**

The rabbit holes!! There is so much to learn and so many ideas to follow that every time you start to read or listen to something you truly never know where it's going to lead you.

**What holidays do you celebrate each year?**

I follow the Wheel of the Year - either with my Grove or solitary when we can't meet.

**Are these the holidays from a particular Druidic holiday calendar?**

We use a 'standard' Wheel (although the Equinoxes and Solstices have a Druidic naming convention eg Yule in Druidry is known as Alban Arthan), with a Southern Hemisphere orientation - OBOD encourages us to be in tune with our local land/seasons.

**Were you ever "In the Broom Closet"? What was your experience, and if you've "come out" since then, what was that like?**

I don't think I was ever fully "in" the broom closet, inasmuch as I never hid that I was pagan, but I guess I didn't talk openly about it or "fly the flag" until I joined OBOD. When that happened I just kinda ploughed through and said "this is what I'm doing now" - if people wanted to know more I told them, if they didn't then I didn't. I'm blessed to be able to say I didn't lose anyone over it (that I know of) - I do have some very strong Christian family/friends but they're the sort who were able to agree that if they get to talk about their faith on Facebook then so do I!

**What would you recommend to someone who's just beginning down this path?**

I would recommend patience, research and discernment. A true path may feel like it happens overnight and is like a flash of light, but it really isn't like that. Even people who get flashes of inspiration still find they need to examine them and sit with them to be sure that they're seeing something that is worth following long term. Never ever 'trashtalk' your old beliefs (if converting from another faith) - they are part of you and part of how you got to where you are now, and you can still learn from them. And above all, read read read!!

**What are some resources you've found that you'd recommend to others?**

Basically anything by Philip Carr-Gomm, Penny Billington, Ronald Hutton, Kristoffer Hughes, John and Caitlin Matthews are all great starts. Locally there's History of Druidry in Australia by Elkie White and Sandra Greenhalgh, and Australian Druidry by Julie Brett. Also the OBOD website - [druidry.org](http://druidry.org) - has a huge library of articles that are a great starting point for any journey in the druid tradition.





# *The Lounge*

*For the adults and parents in the room*

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## *Creating a Kitchen Witch Garden*

Growing your own ingredients for spellcraft



A very quick overview of 15 common herbs and flowers that are easy to grow. You can use these in your cooking and magic, at the end you'll find a sample planting plan for a kitchen witch garden.

### *Lavender*

#### Growing:

English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) is the one to use if you will be using it in the kitchen as well. It grows best in well drained, sandy/loam soil and prefers full sun. Frost and cold tolerant but will rot with too much water/poor drainage. A perennial evergreen growing 25-80cm wide and 25-120cm tall.

#### Magical properties:

Love, Protection, Sleep, Chastity, Longevity, Purification, Happiness, Peace.

#### Culinary use:

Lavender has a wonderfully distinct flavour when used in cooking and is at home in desserts, drinks and baked goods. I'm particularly fond of the lingering aftertaste it gives when baked in a summer bread.

## *Marigold*

### Growing:

*Calendula officinalis* grows in most soils and self seeds readily. Prefers full sun to part shade. An annual growing up to 60cm wide and 50cm tall, however often smaller than that.

### Magical properties:

Protection, prophetic dreams, legal matters.

### Culinary use:

The whole plant is edible, the leaves can be added to salad and used as a garnish. The flower heads are the most common part used in food and are a medicine. The petals can be used as a garnish, added to salad or rice, baked into a bread, etc.



## *Basil*

### Growing:

*Ocimum* species contain a huge range of basil varieties and hence flavours. They all grow best in well drained, compost rich soils that regularly have nutrition added, they will grow in full sun to part shade depending on climate. Basil can be either annuals or short lived perennials that can grow between 20-100cm wide and

20-100cm tall depending on variety.

### Magical properties:

Business, fortune, luck, love, prosperity, exorcism, courage.

### Culinary use:

A pizza and pesto favourite, there are so many different basil varieties that you can find one to suit your dish. They are particularly used in savoury dishes, meat dishes and in salads where, depending on the basil used, they can add a sweet flavour or pack a spicy punch.

## *Thyme*

### Growing:

*Thymus* species are robust, slow growing herbs that bees adore. They prefer well drained soil that isn't too rich and too much water will rot them. They like all day sun but will tolerate part shade or half day sun. Thyme is a perennial that, depending on species and cultivar, will grow 20-40cm wide and 5-40cm tall.

### Magical properties:

Health, Healing, Sleep, Psychic Powers, Love, Purification, Courage.

### Culinary use:

When using thyme in cooking make sure it has a scent, no scent means no flavour. Thyme is well suited to savoury foods and is particularly good with meat and eggs. It also goes well with roasted or grilled vegetables and baked into bread. Thyme is particularly good at adding depth of flavour to savoury foods.

## *Rosemary*

### Growing:

*Rosmarinus officinalis* is a woody shrub that loves well drained, slightly alkaline soils. It loves full sun and needs at least 5-6 hours a day to do well. There are both upright, prostrate and dwarf forms available and the flowers make good forage for over winter. Depending on the variety rosemary grows up to 100cm wide and 150cm tall.



### Magical properties:

Protection, Lust, Exorcism, Purification and Healing.

### Culinary use:

Make sure if you're purchasing rosemary to get one you like the taste of, try a leaf first. Rosemary is the quintessential Mediterranean plant and flavour and goes well in those dishes. It is also fantastic in most other savoury foods and is a robust pairing for meat. It is also at home in dressings and marinades.

## *Sage*

### Growing:

*Salvia officinalis* is a woody herb that will grow in most soils, it will thrive however in well drained soil that is slightly alkaline. Sage likes to grow in full sun, high humidity/very wet weather will kill it as will very hot and very cold weather. This is a short lived perennial that enjoys a trim but doesn't like being cut back hard, it grows up to 50cm wide and 70cm tall.

### Magical properties:

Immortality, Longevity, Wisdom, Protection, Wishes.

### Culinary use:

Sage has a strong aroma and robust flavour, it goes well with other robust flavours and is at home in savoury dishes and is frequently used alongside pork.



## *Chives*

### Growing:

*Allium schoenoprasum* likes rich well drained soil and doesn't like to be dry. It is frost tolerant but will die back over winter in cold climates regrowing from its bulbs when spring arrives. Chives like full sun to part shade and like to be cut back (used in the kitchen!) often to grow lush. They will form clumps and grow up to 20cm wide and 40cm tall.

### Magical properties:

Protection, warding, love.

### Culinary use:

The leaves/stems have a mild and sweet onion scent and flavour that fits with savoury dishes very well and are great in eggs. The purple flowers are also edible with a slight onion flavour and make a great garnish, they also look fantastic in a jug of water on a summer table. Garlic chives are also worth a look for an onion/garlic flavour.



## *Parsley*

### Growing:

*Petroselinum crispum* prefers a well drained, rich soil and will do well in the garden or in pots. There are flat and curly leaf parsley and both prefer full sun to part shade. They are a short lived perennial that readily self seeds, they usually develop root and stem rot quicker in warm climates. They usually grow up to 20cm wide but can grow well over a meter in height. For bushy growth, cut regularly.

### Magical properties:

Death, Fertility, Love, Lust, Protection, Purification, Spirit Communication.

### Culinary use:

Parsley has a distinct flavour that isn't too powerful so mixes well with other flavours. It is usually used in savoury foods and makes a lovely tea and garnish.

## *Marjoram/Oregano*

### Growing:

*Origanum majorana*/*Origanum vulgare* are both highly scented herbs that prefer well drained, rich, slightly alkaline soil and regular water. They both enjoy full sun to part shade and quickly form a lovely, scented ground cover. Oregano is much more hardy than marjoram and has larger leaves that are also hairy. They are both perennials that will grow up to 50cm wide and 40cm tall.

### Magical properties:

Health, joy, love, luck, protection, psychic dreams, happiness, money, purification.

### Culinary use:

Both herbs have a robust flavour that adds to savoury dishes, baked goods and are a wonderful addition to pizza. They go well with other herbs such as thyme, rosemary and sage.

## *Violets*

### Growing:

*Viola* species do well in almost any soil, especially where they get winter sun and summer shade. They will grow anywhere from full sun through to full shade however. This perennial plant grows up to 30cm wide and 20cm tall making it a good ground cover.

### Magical properties:

Peace, protection, healing, luck.

### Culinary use:

Violets have a lovely sweet scent and flavour that goes well with sweet foods but are also a lovely garnish. They can be sugared to help preserve them and then added as a sweet topper to cakes later. Violets are also good at holding onto their scent when dried, so they do well as a kitchen staple, not just a fresh addition.

## *Mint*

### Growing:

*Mentha* species are a family of well loved, hard to kill, aromatic plants that will grow almost anywhere but they prefer rich soil that is slightly acidic that is almost constantly wet. It will grow anywhere from full sun to full shade but the more sun it get the more vigorous it will be. Being a creeping perennial, mint doesn't usually grow taller than 30-40cm but can take over the whole garden if allowed to so it is best to restrict its growth to pots or a bed of its own that is edged by dug in bricks/rocks. Once it invades an area it is difficult to properly remove.

### Magical properties:

Exorcism, Healing, Lust, Money, Prosperity, Protection, Travel.

### Culinary use:

Given the vast amount of different mints and their flavours you can find a mint to suit your desires. They are often used in drinks and teas as well as desserts but the more robust ones play well in savoury dishes as well.



## *Lemon balm*

### Growing:

*Melissa officinalis* is a lively plant loved by bees that prefers well drained, rich soils that are not prone to drying out. It will grow in full sun through to part shade but need protection from hot summer sun so does well under deciduous trees. This perennial usually grows up to 60cm tall and 60cm wide but can become invasive. It enjoys being trimmed though.

### Magical properties:

Love, success, healing.

### Culinary use:

The leaves are very fragrant and are tasty in salads desserts, drinks and stuffings. The leaves are a bit furry but won't hurt you. A jug of water with a handful of the leaves is very refreshing in summer.



## *Nasturtium*

### Growing:

*Tropaeolum majus* are very vigorous trailing/climbing plants that tolerate most soil types. They prefer a full sun/ part shade position and the plants will die in very hot or very cold weather. Nasturtium is a happy annual that will readily self seed and germinate when it suits them. On average

they grow up to 30cm tall and 50-70cm wide however I have seen some grow to cover more than 3-4m depending on variety.

### Magical properties:

Happiness, love, purification, protection.

### Culinary use:

All of the plant is edible and has a spicy, peppery flavour. The flowers are less peppery and have a sweet flavour too, while the leaves are quite spicy and savoury. Both parts lend themselves well to salads and garnishes as well as savoury dishes that have robust flavour.

## *Rose*

### Growing:

*Rosa* species are a long cultivated plant for its fragrance and its edible/medicinal flowers and hips. They like well drained, slightly acidic soil and do well with added compost/manure. They need full sun for 6 hours a day to flower but will grow in full sun/part shade. There is such a huge variety to choose from, ranging from 30 to 300cm tall and the same wide but if you will be using the flowers for food/medicine you need to pick one known for its fragrance as that is what will give the flavour and medicinal qualities.



### Magical properties:

Love, happiness, peace.

### Culinary use:

Given the sweet scent of the flowers they are well suited to sweet dishes and preserves. They are also a lovely addition to a cheese board or salad. The rose hips (the fruit after flowering) are very high in vitamin C and can be used in preserves or the seeds removed and the fruit dried to add to sweet and savoury dishes or herbal teas for its flavour and medicinal properties.

## *Winter savoury*

### Growing:

*Satureja montana* is another herb well loved by bees and other beneficial insects and has the added benefit of repelling other insects. It prefers well drained sandy loam soil and will suffer if it is too wet, hot, cold or humid. It grows best in a full sun position and won't recover if pruned hard or fertilised too often. This is a small woody perennial that will grow up to 50cm wide and 30cm tall.

### Magical properties:

Sensuality, sexuality, passion, lust, love. This can apply to both winter but more so to summer savory. If you can only have one and want to also use it in the kitchen then winter savory covers more of your needs.

### Culinary use:

Winter savoury has tiny, dark green, spicy leaves. It is fantastic in casseroles, pies, and goes surprisingly well with beans and salads. Like thyme it is good at adding a depth of flavour to foods.

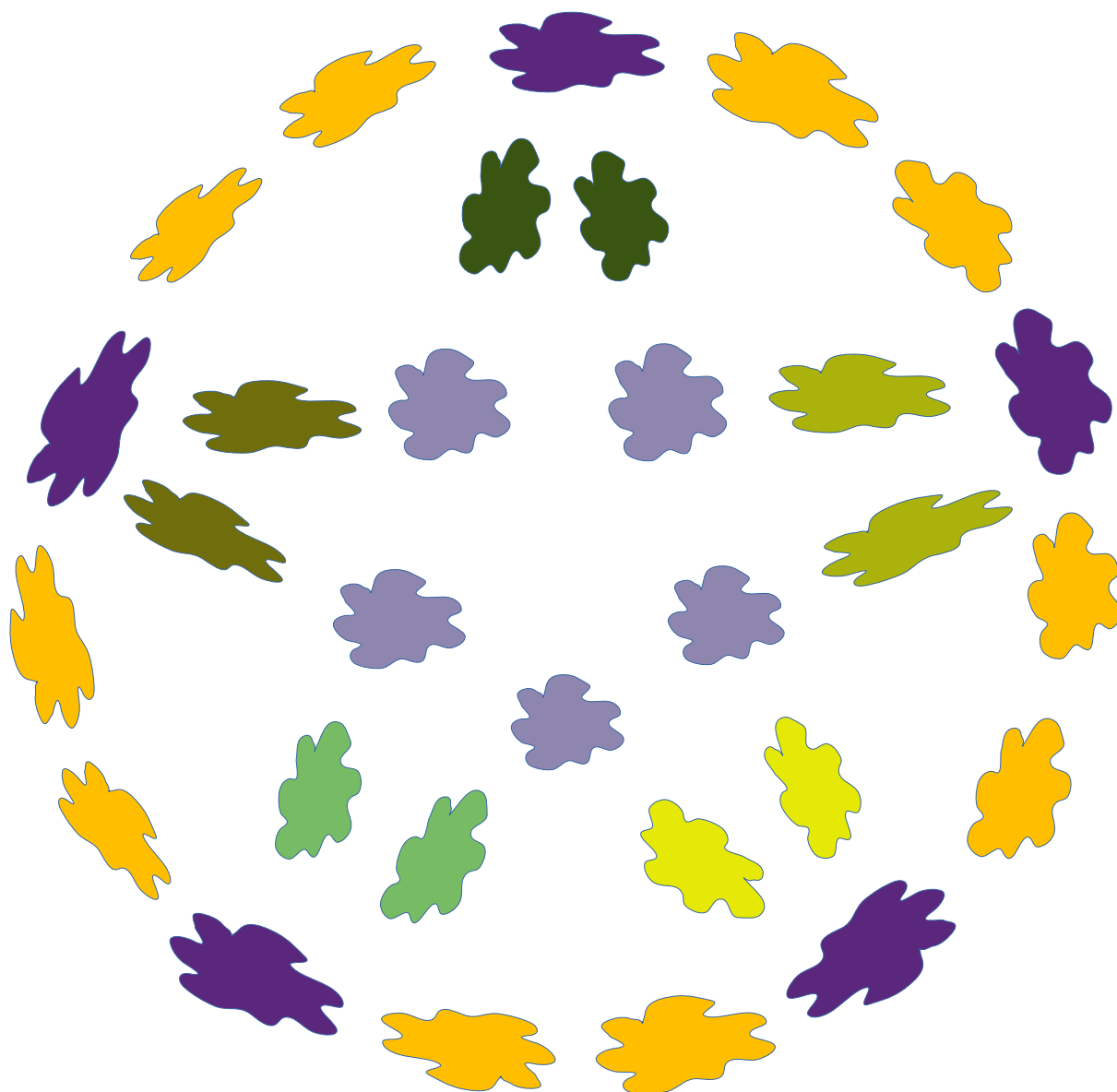


## *Planting plan*

An idea to get you started, mix and match what works for you or do something completely different.

Having a play with aesthetic this planting takes the form of a pentagram. The minimum space this would work in given recommend plant spacing is 2m by 2m (this is the size the below planting plan is based on) though you could make it as small or as large as you like. The smaller the planted area the more the plants size and shape will need to be controlled to stop the lines from blurring into each other.

Recommended plant spacing is 30cm.



# *The Kitchen*

*Recipes for the season*

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## *Mini Quiches*

Using eggs, cheese and herbs these make a wonderful addition to a spring feasting table or as snacks for bellies that never seem to fill.

Makes 10 quiches from a regular muffin tray

### *Ingredients*



\*3 sheets of puff pastry (or equivalent), rolled thin

\*12 large eggs

\* $\frac{1}{4}$  cup milk

\*100g feta cheese crumbled or cheese of preference

\*Mixed herbs, recommended are rosemary, oregano, alpine mint and thyme chopped fine

\*Salt and pepper to taste

### *Optional*

\*Vegetables or meat as desired cut small. A family favourite is onion and bacon browned with butter and herbs. Note that adding extra filling will make the egg mix go further.

\*Grated cheese or mozzarella to top

### *Method*

1. Pre-heat the oven to 160°C fan forced. Cut the 9-10cm circles out of the pastry, we use a pie cutter for this. Grease the muffin tray and press the pastry into the tray.
2. Whisk the eggs, milk, herbs, salt and pepper well and allow to stand.
3. Place the feta and additional filling in the pastry shells, not more than half full. Cover with the egg mix until almost full. Place in the oven.
4. Bake for 15mins or until cooked through (no raw egg on top). Allow to cool in the muffin tray as this will crisp the sides of the pastry.

*Enjoy!*



## *Ostara Bread*

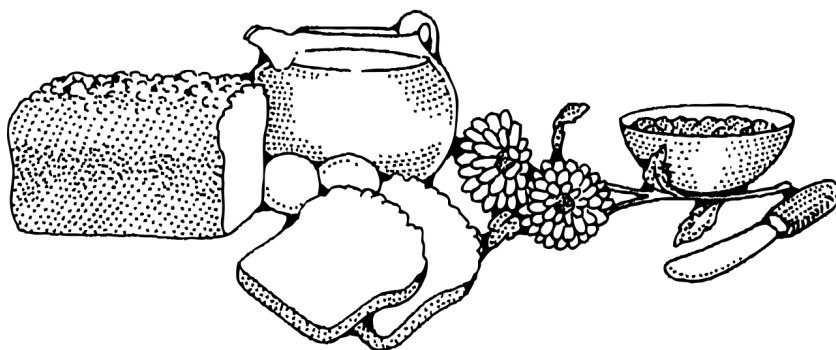
This bread is a little family tradition, it uses a brioche dough and dried fruits along with lavender, marigold, dandelion and citrus to brighten it and infuse it with early spring flavour. This uses the base dough recipe we use to make sweet fruit buns which was featured in our Spring 2020 newsletter.

### *Ingredients*

- \*60g raisins
- \*60g currents
- \*50g grated orange peel
- \*400g flour
- \*60g butter
- \*60g raw sugar/brown sugar taste dependant
- \*10g dried yeast
- \*2 pinches of salt
- \*200ml milk
- \*1 egg
- \*2 tbs lavender buds
- \*2 tbs marigold petals
- \*2 tbs dandelion petals

### *Optional Glaze*

- \*150g of sugar
- \*150ml water
- \*1 handful cherry blossoms
- \*Juice of 1 orange



### *Method*

1. Re-hydrate the dried fruit by covering it with boiling water and letting sit for 15mins. Drain and mix through the orange peel.
2. Place remainder of ingredients (excluding glaze) into a bowl and mix thoroughly to combine.
3. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead well for 10mins, mixing in the fruit mix, lavender, marigold and dandelion at the end and making sure it is spread evenly out.
4. Put in an oiled bowl covered with a damp tea towel or plastic wrap and leave in a warm spot.
5. When doubled in size turn out onto a floured surface, shape as desired and place on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Cover with a tea towel and leave in a warm place to double in size. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees C while you wait.
6. Once doubled in size place in the oven and cook for 15mins then reduce the heat to 170 degrees C and bake for a further 15mins until golden brown. Make the glaze while they bake.
7. Heat glaze ingredients in a saucepan until the sugar has dissolved and starting to boil, reduce to a simmer for a further 5mins or until thick and syrupy. Strain.
8. Take the bread out and while hot brush with glaze. Set aside to cool.

*Enjoy!*

## *Spring Cheese*

Celebrate all things springtime with this easy-to-make cheese. You can vary this to suit the season or local environment by changing up the herbs, flowers, and fruits, but make sure everything you use is edible. While this uses a goats cheese that goes well with robust flavours, you can use cow or sheep milk to make it, just adjust the flavours of the herbs and flowers to suit. The following is based on a recipe by The Wondersmith ([www.thewondersmith.com](http://www.thewondersmith.com)).

Makes about 1 ½ cups of cheese.



### *Ingredients*

- \*2 litres of goats milk
- \*2/3 cup of lemon juice
- \*1 tsp salt
- \*1 tsp lavender
- \*1 tbsp marigold petals
- \*1 tsp fresh herbs
- \*1 tbsp honey

### *Optional*

- \*½ cup finely chopped fresh seasonal berries such as blueberry or strawberry
- \*Edible herbs and flowers to decorate

### *Method*

1. In a saucepan, heat the milk to approximately 80°C. While it's heating, mix the lemon juice and salt together. When the milk is heated to temperature remove it from the heat and stir in the lemon juice and salt. Only stir 3-4 times. Let the mixture sit for five minutes.
2. Line a sieve with several layers of cheesecloth and pour mixture through it. Drain for 2 hours over a large bowl, make sure that the cheesecloth won't be covered by the whey below it.
3. Once the cheese has finished draining squeeze out any remaining moisture and put the cheese in a bowl. Mix in the rest of the ingredients but keep aside the herbs and flowers you will decorate the cheese with. Taste it and add more honey, salt or lemon juice as desired.
4. Form the cheese into a ball and cover with the flowers and herbs as desired. Wrap the whole thing in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, the longer the better. Serve with crackers or bread.

*Enjoy!*


# *The Session Room*

*Pull up a chair - Here you'll find songs, poems, and stories!*

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## *Beltane Prayer*

Anonymous




The Beltane Fire sends its flames to the sun,  
The promise of summers warmth to come,  
The Horned God dances through the green,  
Chasing after his Goddess and Queen.

The Earth Mother laughs with joy,  
That her young consort is no longer a boy,  
Their sacred marriage empowers the earth,  
And couples seek their blessings for future birth.

Hawthorn blossoms in radiant white,  
And clarity grows in the quickening light,  
Now is the time for action and life,  
To fertilise plans and banish strife.

Take the leap across the Beltane fire,  
And let the energies take you higher.





## *Spring Song*

From freshlyplanted.com



A little seed for me to sow,  
a little earth to make it grow.

A little hole, a little pat,  
a little wish, and that is that.

A little sun, a little shower,  
A little while, and then a flower.



A decorative border made of stylized black floral and leaf motifs, including tulips and broad leaves, framing the text on the page.

## *The Story of Blodeuwedd*

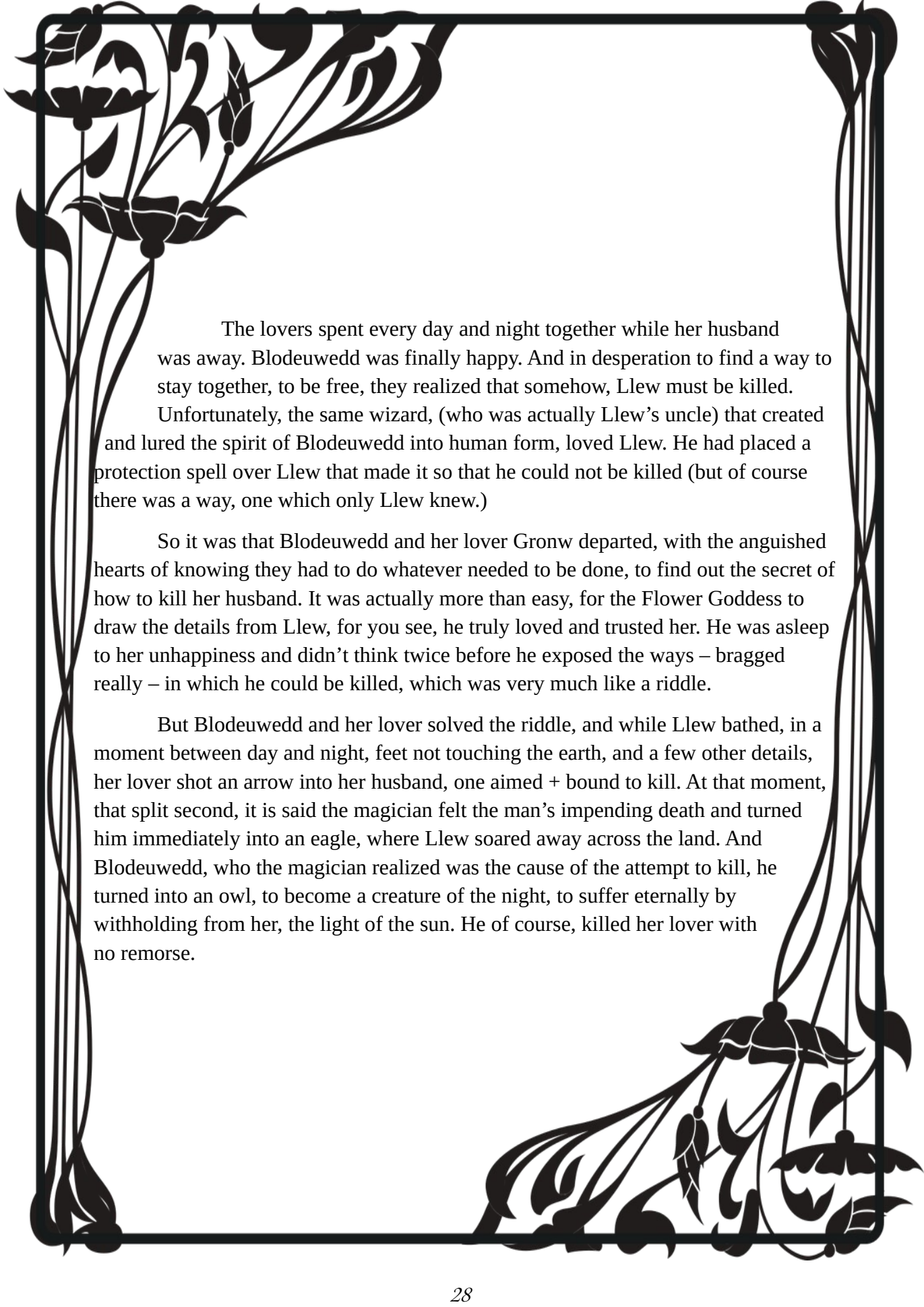
### *Maiden of Flowers*

This story, which has its origins in the Mabinogion, now has many different versions and is told from many angles. This version is by Brook Sullivan, found at [www.thewildtemple.com](http://www.thewildtemple.com)

Blodeuwedd was created by magic, to be given as a wife to a man cursed from ever knowing love or marriage from a mortal woman. In this story, the beautiful maiden was created out of three flowers. Oak, meadowsweet, and broom. In some scenarios, she was actually created from 9 flowers, many plants of which you may know. Some say her soul acquiesced to take the form of a woman, due to a promise the magicians made to her that, no matter what, she would always be able to gaze upon the sun. For a flower, this is essential.

So she became the most beautiful woman, a gift to the cursed Llew, who fell immediately in love with his bride. But as a result of many arranged marriages, once married, she just resigned to her fate, discontent but not truly knowing why. Llew was not the shining sun she so loved, but he was not a horrible person. He was fine and skilled and loved her, and she was able to feel happiness for a short while, but this faded in time. She still turned her gaze often, to the rays of the Sun, as poor Blodeuwedd in longing, was not satisfied with her life. She felt no aliveness, no desire, no inspiration. He, on the other hand, was enamored by his beautiful wife.

As the story goes, one day Llew went hunting. And there are many paths the story takes here, all leading to one event, a chance meeting, perhaps it was by a river, perhaps it was in the woods she lived, that she met an incredibly handsome hunter. His name was Gronw (try to pronounce that?!) They were both immediately attracted to one another, as the Flower Goddess fell in love with the light that shone from within him. This awakened in her, feelings she had not known before. Passion, aliveness, which as a woman, can make one feel complete, vibrant, and effulgent like the rays of the sun. And so from here the fates Blodeuwedd and her husband turns.

A decorative border made of stylized black floral and leaf motifs. It starts with a large, complex flower-like shape in the top-left corner, with long, thin, curving stems that run down the left side and across the bottom. Another large floral motif is in the bottom-right corner, with stems running up the right side. The entire page is enclosed in a simple black rectangular frame.

The lovers spent every day and night together while her husband was away. Blodeuwedd was finally happy. And in desperation to find a way to stay together, to be free, they realized that somehow, Llew must be killed.

Unfortunately, the same wizard, (who was actually Llew's uncle) that created and lured the spirit of Blodeuwedd into human form, loved Llew. He had placed a protection spell over Llew that made it so that he could not be killed (but of course there was a way, one which only Llew knew.)

So it was that Blodeuwedd and her lover Gronw departed, with the anguished hearts of knowing they had to do whatever needed to be done, to find out the secret of how to kill her husband. It was actually more than easy, for the Flower Goddess to draw the details from Llew, for you see, he truly loved and trusted her. He was asleep to her unhappiness and didn't think twice before he exposed the ways – bragged really – in which he could be killed, which was very much like a riddle.

But Blodeuwedd and her lover solved the riddle, and while Llew bathed, in a moment between day and night, feet not touching the earth, and a few other details, her lover shot an arrow into her husband, one aimed + bound to kill. At that moment, that split second, it is said the magician felt the man's impending death and turned him immediately into an eagle, where Llew soared away across the land. And Blodeuwedd, who the magician realized was the cause of the attempt to kill, he turned into an owl, to become a creature of the night, to suffer eternally by withholding from her, the light of the sun. He of course, killed her lover with no remorse.



# *The Table*

*Seasonal crafts for the family*

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## *Egg Candles*

These make a wonderful spring altar or ritual candle and they also look fantastic gracing the table in lieu of tea lights. Here we have dyed the beeswax green but they look wonderful as natural beeswax too.

What you'll need:

- \*Beeswax 100g
- \*Square cotton wick
- \*Double boiler or similar set up
- \*4 cleaned half egg shells
- \*Liquid candle wax dye (optional)



To make:

1. Sit the cleaned egg halves upright, we used a mini muffin tray to hold them but a bowl of sand would work.
2. In the double boiler melt the bees wax, add the dye if using. Don't allow the wax to smoke, you just want it to be liquid.
3. Cut the wicks 4-5cm long, you will trim it later. Dip the end of the wick into the wax then quickly place onto the bottom of the egg shells. Leave to harden for a minute.
4. Pour the wax into each shell filling to the desired level then straighten the wicks. Leave to cure for an hour or 3 depending on the weather. Trim the wicks to 1cm.



## *Egg Tempera Painting*

Egg tempera is basically paint made with egg and pigment and it is a very, very old practice. Infact it was a popular paint medium back in the classical era. Traditionally only the egg yolk was used to bind the pigment and it was mixed with a small amount of distilled water to make the paint. The result is a translucent, quick drying paint that works best if you build up the layers to get the desired effect rather than blending (it doesn't blend well). This gives the finished piece a complex depth of colour and a luminescence for which egg tempera is famous for. Below is a brief run down on how to make the traditional paint and an example at work. Once you've made your paint save your egg white to add to your lunch and keep the egg shell for the above candles to make the best use of one of spring's great gifts: Eggs!

Note: There are people who have been using the whole egg in egg tempera painting to good effect. It seems to create a more opaque paint that takes a bit longer to dry hence shows some capacity for blending. I would recommend using the traditional method first however so you get a sense for the medium.

What you'll need:

- \*1 egg
- \*Distilled water
- \*Small jar
- \*Pigment
- \*Watercolour brushes
- \*Wood or MFD board prepared with gesso



To make:

1. Separate the egg white from the yolk as completely as you can, dry the egg yolk by passing it between your hands or rolling on a paper towel until dry.
2. Puncture the yolk sack and empty it into the jar, discard the yolk sack. Add 1 teaspoon of distilled water and mix. It is now ready to mix with pigment.
3. To make your paint take a small amount of pigment and put on a mixing palate (we cheat and use baking paper). Then with a spoon add some yolk to the pigment. The more you add the more translucent it will be so there really isn't a good measure for this, its up to the artist and the project. Mix together well with a palate knife until smooth. You're ready to paint!



### An Example:

Traditionally egg tempera is applied in small, light, translucent strokes that cross hatch to build the desired colour over a white background, much like classical drawing. However the sky really is the limit, experiment and find what works for you. Below is a work in which the background is created using small- to mid-sized translucent strokes to build the colour depth and then the foreground is created by several layers of a dabbing motion with a fan brush. When finished there will be a final layer of mid-sized very translucent strokes used over the top to create the desired light effect.



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Much love and blessed be,  
The Holly and The Ivy