

Southern Light Newsletter

Summer 2021/2022



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Merry Meet

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). 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 or send us an email at team@southernlightnewsletter.com

Happy reading,
The Holly and The Ivy



Up & Coming

Pagan holidays for the season

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.

*

December 21-22

The summer solstice. Known as Litha on the wheel of the year and by other names as well it is the time of maximum solar power, longest day and shortest night. From here the sun's power decreases. Associated with fire, the fey and/or faeries, growing things, fertility and early harvest.

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February 1-2

Lughnasadh, also known as Lammas, marks the first of the harvest festivals on the wheel of the year and is an acknowledgment of the coming autumn. The Sun's power is fading and will soon be equal with night. Associated with the matchmaking, athletic competitions, trading and feasting.

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The Altar

An in-depth look at a correspondence

Fire

The classic summer correspondence

Fire is many things to different people, but at its core, fire is change incarnate. Old forms broken down to base components, to be reformed into something new.

As a correspondence for the summer solstice, it's a key element which can be used in all sorts of ways. Given its core purpose of bringing about change in the world, it's exceedingly useful in spells and altars, and probably anything else you're thinking of working around this time of year.



The Sun at it's (literal) height

At the summer solstice, the Sun stops getting higher in the sky, taking a few moments to bask at the greatest point it will reach before beginning its inevitable march towards the Winter Solstice, and its lowest point. Here, the Sun is not just "at its peak" literally. From a magic point of view, energy harnessed from the Sun can also feel at its peak – abundant and generous.

Being in the Sun's rays is a simple way to celebrate the Summer Solstice. During meditation or a good long walk in the light of the sun, let the warmth penetrate your body and soul, and soak it in. Feel your inner fire blaze with this gift from the Sun at its strongest!

Around this date is an exceedingly good time of year to perform any magic needing a strong force for change, or to push things ahead. An easy way to harness this is the simple Candle Ritual:

1. Hold an intention in your mind – for example, something you want to happen, or something you're committing yourself to.
2. Use a pencil to write your intention on a small piece of paper.
3. Light a candle, continuing to focus on your intention the entire time.

4. Hold the paper over the candle until it ignites. Hold the paper for as long as possible (though careful not to burn yourself), and when you can no longer hold it, place it in a small dish or ramekin to finish burning.
5. Personal preference, and how strong the spell needs to be, comes into play here: You can blow the candle out once the paper has finished burning, you can wait until the candle burns all the way through completely, or somewhere in between, wherever you feel comfortable that the working is complete. But continue holding the intention focused in your mind all the way through this ritual until the candle is out.



Fire festivals

Litha, being the Summer Solstice, may be the sabbat that comes to mind first and foremost when we think of “fire”. But in terms of “fire festivals”, it’s far from alone.

All four cross-quarter days in the wheel of the year (Imbolc, Lammas/Lughnasadh, Samhain, and Beltane) are considered Fire Festivals as well. This is largely due to them each being seen as occurring at the height of their respective seasons they occur in – that is, their respective seasons most powerful energy is happening at these points. For example, while Litha, the Summer Solstice, occurs when the Sun is highest in the sky, Lammas/Lughnasadh happens six weeks later, close to the middle of Summer. Even though the Sun is technically no longer as high in the sky as it was at Litha, Lughnasadh tends to be surrounded by the hotter, drier Summer weather.

With fire often being tied to the height of energy, candle rituals, bonfire festivals, and other workings and celebrations involving fire all work very well at all of these sabbats – not just Litha.

Bonfire through the night

One aspect of summer (particularly early summer) beckons to be taken advantage of – the year’s shortest nights.

If you can’t say you’ve partied all night until dawn, these are the nights to do it on. Not just because the nights are warmer, but more practically, because there’s less night to get through before the sun pokes his head over the horizon.

Taking examples from the other fire festivals, have a (safe and supervised) bonfire to join you through the night! Let its smoke clear away any ills in the surrounding energy, and make way for something new to take its place!

Fire is alive

Personally, when considering the use of fire as a correspondence for the season, I like to keep one key idea in mind:

Fire is alive.

It grows and shrinks, it consumes, it moves, it dances. It seems to have a soul of its own.

During summer, plants are putting plans into motion by growing fruit, some animals and waterways are shifting behaviour from abundance to scarcity of water, the landscape is fundamentally changing. To me, fire is not just reminiscent of a single life, but of how the land changes as the season does.

Fire in your altar or workings must therefore be treated appropriately. Fire has it's own life, and also reflects a changing summer landscape and the multitudinous life contained therein. Treat it with respect, as you would like to be treated, and it will become a great friend and accomplice.

- *The Ivy*



The Playroom

Something for the young ones

The Elements

And their magic



Many witches today, and pagans for that matter, recognise the 5 elements of the world/universe and honour them in some way. The elements are the basis of all existence. Our worlds would not exist if even one of these were missing and so that are incredibly important to life but their gifts extend into the world of magic and spirituality. Below are some some physical correspondences and symbolic functions of the 5 elements as understood from a Wiccan perspective.

Earth

Correspondences: colour green, living plants, wood, rock, forest creatures, earthy herbs/gums and pentacles. **Symbolic functions:** manifestation, fertility, practicality, embodiment, solidity. **Physical functions:** food, shelter, protection.

Air

Correspondences: colour yellow, wind chimes, feathers, carved birds, seeds carried on the wind, scented herbs, wands, staffs. **Symbolic functions:** reason, learning, knowledge, communication, law, language, memory. **Physical functions:** breath, wind, sound, scent.

Fire

Correspondences: colour red, lamps, candles, carved dragons/salamanders, flowers and spicy herbs/spices/gums, athames, swords. **Symbolic functions:** inspiration, willpower, courage, energy, passion, empowerment. **Physical functions:** flame, combustion, warmth, light, heat.

Water

Correspondences: colour blue, glass pebbles, sea creatures, watery herbs and flowers, chalice/goblet/cup. **Symbolic functions:** healing, love, intuition, dreams, emotions, mystery, woman's cycles. **Physical functions:** cleansing, life-giving moisture, cooling, blood and fluid.

Spirit

Correspondences: colour purple or white, spider webs, spiders, totems of divine patrons, quartz, threads, distaffs. **Spiritual functions:** connections, formation, interdependence, transformation, truth. **Physical functions:** magic, path-finding.

Kids Herbal

Rose

"Some people grumble that roses have thorns; I am grateful that thorns have roses."

- Alphonse Karr



Often found growing along road sides, running wild through paddocks, and in well-manicured gardens, rose has been a favourite plant across the world for thousands of years.

Gathering

True wild roses only have 5 petals and bloom once a year in early summer. The petals (and young leaves if you want) are best collected in the morning once the dew has dried but while they are still at their most fragrant. It is best to just take some of the petals from each flower head so that pollinators such as bees can still land on the flowers, that way you will be able to return in autumn to collect the hips for more food and medicine. The hips are best collected when ripe, usually a red colour but they can be orange, in the late summer and autumn in the mornings.

I cannot stress enough: 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, so, away from roadsides and water run offs.

Food

Rose is a food medicine. This means you can consume a large amount of rose without it causing any issues. You can eat the young leaves, flower buds, petals during the summer and rose hips in autumn. The seeds of the hips have small hairs on them that can be irritating so it's recommended that you scrape them out of the fruit before you consume or use the hips.

Some ideas:

Rose can be made into jelly, jam and preserves, infused in honey, vinegar and wine, sprinkled on salads and other foods, and consumed as a tea.

Medicine

Rose is a powerful medicine visually, physically and emotionally

Rose has long been used to support the emotional heart in cases of grief and heartache/break. It is used in anxiety and depression, reduces breathing rate and improves oxygen saturation in the blood. It can also improve blood pressure.

Both topically and internally rose improves the body's ability to heal wounds and to tighten loose tissues. Used topically it can help to cleanse wounds, speed their healing, and reduce the risk of the injury becoming infected.

Rose can help reduce pain of injuries and mild chronic pain, and is a wonder at decreasing inflammation. It is particularly useful as a topical remedy for sunburn and can be applied as a cream, spray, compress or gel.

Recipe

Wild Rose Honey

Very simple to make, this is a delicious addition to toast, tea, pancakes, or drizzled on savoury or sweet foods. The taste of rose is there from start to finish and leaves a yummy aftertaste.



Ingredients

- *1 cup rose petals
- *Roughly 1 cup honey

Method

- *Fill a jar with loosely packed rose petals
- *Warm honey until its runny and liquid-like then pour over the rose petals
- *Leave for at least 3 days before consuming, a week is better. You can strain the honey by warming it slightly again or you can leave the rose petals in the honey to add a splash of colour to the dishes you serve it with.

The Deck

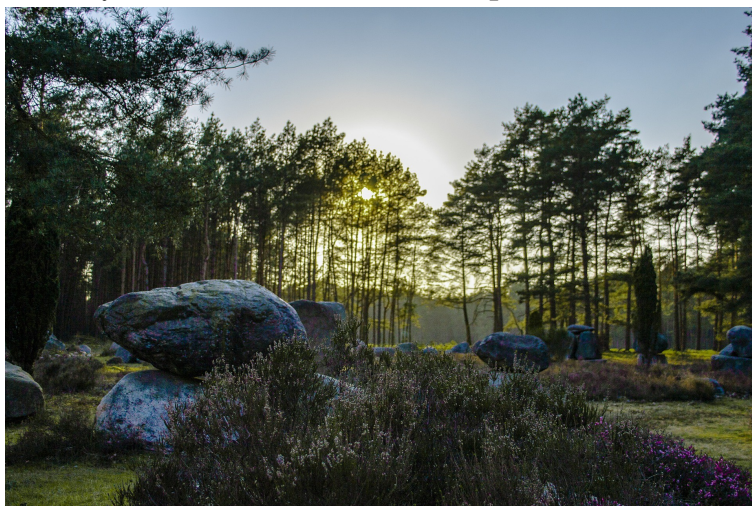
For teens, and others who are just getting started on their pagan journey

Paganism Overview – Eclectic, Interview with The Holly

When you want to combine what you see as the best of multiple choices

We've covered Eclectic Paganism in Southern Light Newsletter before. The great thing about it however, is in its eclectic nature – there are as many ways to be an eclectic pagan as there are ways to be a human.

For a quick recap though: Eclectic Paganism is what happens when you find that there's not a "one true path" for you to follow, and/or you find yourself, your beliefs, your practices, drawing on the practices, traditions, mythology of multiple different theologies. Put another way, it's what happens when you find that mixing and matching works best for you!



There are all sorts of reasons that someone may find themselves with beliefs and practices that are eclectic in nature. The important thing is that as long as it works for you (and, like all things, it doesn't involve harm coming to any others), then it's fine!

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In this issue, I (The Ivy) had an interview with my co-author and co-founder of this newsletter, The Holly! We thought some of our readers may be interested in getting a deeper look into how one of us believes, and looks at the world around us. Let's jump in.

How would you describe your beliefs and/or tradition?

I think the best description would be Eclectic. I draw heavily on several different spiritual, pagan paths and pantheons. But I also follow the Wiccan wheel of the year to observe the changing seasons and for family celebrations.

And what does your belief and/or tradition entail?

Given I draw from more than one source, there isn't any "structured" belief or tradition specific to me.

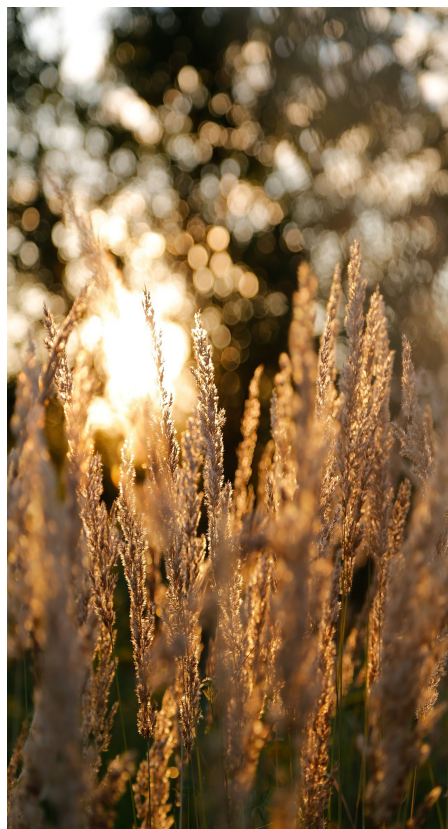
But as far as what it entails for me, seasonal observations, magic practice/spellwork. By trade I work with natural and herbal medicines, but for spiritual practice I also rely heavily on plants and

combine that medicinal knowledge with spiritual and folklore-based knowledge of those plants, to come up with a holistic use of them within my day to day life.

I'm highly driven by the seasons, and that's just become stronger and more important to me over the years. The changing seasons are a huge part of my yearly practice – it helps that where I live ties in nicely with the traditional dates (flipped for the southern hemisphere) of the wheel of the year. This is probably most evident with the plants that are foremost in my mind, with my desire to work with them, as the seasons pass.

If you'd asked me six weeks ago what plants I wanted to work with most I would've said hawthorn and dandelion. Right now I'm feeling the urge to work with rose, lavender, and calendula. And in six weeks time I won't be surprised if hawthorn or raspberry are at the top of the list.

Honouring my ancestors I consider a vital part of my practice. I wouldn't call it worship per se, but acknowledging the impact on my life (whether or not I'm aware of it) and acknowledging their own lives for their own sake is important to me. This is done mostly through ritual.



Does your practice fit within any wider, or more formal, framework/traditions? Or are your beliefs purely eclectic in nature?

More eclectic. For the most part I draw from Scandinavian mythology and pantheons, and the pantheons, mythology, and customs of the British Isles. But in my magic workings, this tends to be drawn from a mix of what I've discovered about Wiccan practices as a teenager, waincraft, chaos magic, plant magic, and my own thing.

You mentioned you practice magic work. Do you consider your magic work an integral part of your religious beliefs, or separate (if related), and why?

Related, yes, but separate. I don't think of my magic workings through the lens of religion. I do sometimes, during my magic work, communicate with or ask for help from deities who are themselves seen through the lens of religion, but I still see this magic working and communication as separate to religion so to speak.

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

It's been a bit of a journey. I was raised in a Christian household, but the way in which Christianity was practiced informed my later beliefs in life. There was a strong emphasis on nature and the cycle of the seasons when I was young, and while things like prayer and gratitude were encouraged we were not taught to drop to our knees to pray to a god, or to fear them. So while my beliefs are quite different to the religion that I was raised in, much of the framework through which I practice my religion was informed by my upbringing.

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?

I always was kind of aware of nature religions, they weren't hidden from us. I did have a friend who introduced me to witchcraft as a young teen, which I gravitated towards because of my love of fiction novels such as Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings, and my love of fairy tales, folklore, mythology. But she only introduced me – and from there, while we even today still discuss our beliefs and magic practice, I got to where I am today through my own research after that introduction.

Do you practice by yourself, or as part of a group?

I practice by myself. Occasionally I've done a ritual with my family. I would love to experience group magic work, however I'm not at a time or space in my life where I can truly dedicate the time and mental space to a group, I just have too much going on right now.

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

Yeah. Most things. The world is just more fun, more enjoyable if you throw mythology and gods into the mix!

But on a more serious note, yes, there's times where having essentially an alternate parent, or big brothers and sisters, or even just guardians to turn to, who are completely removed from the situation is helpful. Almost like therapy.

I also think it's really important to stop seeing the world just as it is, and to start seeing the magic in everyday life. I think it's important for the soul.

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

At this stage in my life, I would say the festivities, rituals, and magic surrounding the changing seasons and the wheel of the year. At the moment, I'm very busy with family life, so this gives me a good reason/excuse for us to just stop for a bit, and for me to focus on that aspect of my life in a more embodied way.

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

I suppose I was? But honestly I'm a pretty open person.

My immediate family knew pretty much straight away. There were some family members I kept it from for a while due to their own religious beliefs, but they know now. It was neither here nor there, I just don't really discuss religion.



That's still kind of my tactic today. To anyone who asks I'll tell them, but I have a tendency to just avoid it in conversation until I know where they stand with their own thoughts about religion.

When those family members found out, there wasn't really much pushback with me – directly, at least. However I later found out that my mother copped it pretty hard from a bunch of them, which is highly unfortunate – you never want your own beliefs to impact others in such a negative way. My mum was supportive of me through it all however.

What would you recommend to someone who's just beginning down their own path?

Do the work. It's really important to research and read, but until you actually practice your religion, beliefs, and/or magic working, then you'll be missing out. You'll essentially just be a scholar until you actually get to work.

Even if it's something as simple as observing the wheel of the year, or lighting a candle on a full moon, actually practicing is what will make you want to continue down the path, and explore and find out who you truly are.

What are some resources you've found that you'd recommend to others? Books, articles...

Most of the books I own are focused on specific aspects of magic or paganism, so I'm hesitant to recommend many of them because they're so specific. However, I do have two more general books I'd recommend. These are the ones I've had on my book shelf since I was a teenager, and I've found them sufficient as a starting point.

Solitary Wicca for Life, by Arin Murphy-Hiscock

Green Witchcraft, by Ann Moura (Aoumiel)

The other resource I'd recommend is the website Patheos (www.patheos.com). The big reason I'd recommend that, is because it's a big group of people who contribute, so you're always likely to find something for you on that website.



The Lounge

For the adults and parents in the room

Herbal Gifts Special



Following on from last newsletters “Creating a Kitchen Witch Garden” we present a DIY herbal gifts special. Here we will go over 3 easy things to make with herbs that will help you incorporate them into your everyday life: Herbal sachets, herbal lip balm/infused oils and herbal teas. But first lets look at why we are presenting them in a pagan newsletter at all.

Many of you who are reading will already be aware of the vast magical and medicinal chest that is the plant world. Plants have a special place in Earth’s, and our own, history; for if it was not for the march of plants coming to land our very earliest ancestors may never have left the sea...

The plants of the world offer direct links with nature and its gifts, and each plant species is unique in its medicine, magic and ecological gifts. We can access the gifts that the plants have to offer by tending them in our gardens and nature, bringing them into our kitchens, food, homes and medicines, and by using them in our charms, spells and rituals.

Below are a few ways we can bring the plants into our lives, you’ll find both medicinal and magical properties listed with them.

Herbal Sachets

Making herbal sachets is easy, fun, makes a great gift and can be an effective way to carry a spell with you.

When making the sachets you first need to think about the purpose of the sachet. Will it be used for aromatherapy or the plants energetics or will it be inspired by nostalgia?

Research the history, folklore, and uses of the plants and pick ones that work for you and work in your blend.



When choosing herbs to give your blend scent you want to pick ones with a strong scent when dried and that retain scent well. Some of these are listed below along with a couple of their magical properties.

- *Lavender – for luck, peace, cleansing and purification, protection, love, dreams
- *Rose – for love, luck, happiness, protection, friendship, truth
- *Peppermint – for purification, psychic powers, healing, love, money, prosperity
- *Sage – for cleansing, wisdom, luck, grief, warding off evil
- *Thyme – for sleep, love, health, healing, purification, courage, transition
- *Cinnamon – for strength, love, lust, success, protection, spiritual power
- *Cloves – for shielding, protection, cleansing, peace, clarity, friendship
- *Dried citrus peel – for cleansing and purification, sun energy, happiness, renewal
- *Pine needles – health, prosperity, fertility, protection, cleansing

Adding essential oils to the dried herbs as your blending is also a great way to enhance the scents of the herbs you are using or adding scents, energetics and properties of plants you don't have dried. Mix 10-20 drops in a cup of the dried herb blend before putting into your sachets.

Making the Sachet

*Sachets can be as easy as pre-purchased bags filled with the herb mix or you can make up your own by sewing small drawstring bags, or stitching squares/hearts/other shapes and leaving a 1-2 inch gap in the stitching.

*Fill your sachets until they are plump but not firm before stitching or pulling closed.

Put them in drawers, hang around the house, carry them with you, or give as gifts. The scent will last 6-12 months and they will smell most strongly when rubbed.

Herbal Lip Balm Basic Formula

Basic formula for small batches.

- *40ml of Carrier oil
- *6g of Beeswax
- *5g of Shea butter
- *5-10 drops of essential oils (optional)

Method:

1. Melt the Beeswax and Shea butter in a double boiler, once melted add the Carrier oil in and remelt the blend.
2. Add essential oils if using and mix well.
3. Pour into containers and allow to set then label.

Tips:

*If using essential oils make sure they are ones that are safe to ingest, as if it goes on your lips you will end up consuming some.

*Using castor oil in your lip balm as a small component of the carrier oil (1-2ml of 40ml) gives a glossy feel.

*Consider using infused oil in your lip balms for its medicinal benefits and for scent, along with/in lieu of essential oils. Infused oils can add a nice colour to the lip balm as well. See below for instructions on making infused oils.

Infused oil

Infused oils are a fantastic way to extract the active constituents of a plant in a way that will last a long time and can be used easily in topical applications. They are fairly simple to make and can be used by themselves or added to creams, lotions, salves, body butters, and balms for further topical use. You can use any oil to make them; which one you choose will depend on accessibility, affordability and desired use.

For oils that soak in to the skin fully and don't leave a greasy residue, jojoba and grape seed oil are fantastic. For something super moisturizing choose an oil like macadamia, a good all rounder that is also cheap is olive oil. As a general rule of thumb if using dried herbs then ½-1 cup of plant material to 1 cup of oil is sufficient, when using fresh herbs then 1 cup of plant material (preferably wilted) to 1 cup oil will do, preferably use dried plant material when you can to reduce risk of the oil spoiling. Place everything in a jar and either put the lid on and allow to sit for 4-6 weeks shaking occasionally before straining, or place in a pot of warm water and put it on the heat. Once the oil is nice and warm turn off the heat. Keep the oil warm but not hot for 2-3 hours before straining.

Advantages of infused oils:

- *Easy to make
- *Versatile
- *Added benefit of skin conditioning

Disadvantages:

- *Liquid form, more prone to spilling.
- *Can be messy
- *Takes prep work





Herbal Tea for Pleasure and Health

Tea is a wonderful way to take medicine, if it is made right. When creating herbal blends it's important not only to use herbs that you desire medicinally, but also ones that work together to produce an experience you enjoy – that is half the medicine.

Basics of Tea and Brewing Strong Formulas for Medicine

Tea is made from dried or fresh plants. This is the most common way people in the western world are familiar with herbal medicine and globally the most common way herbal medicine is administered. Made as a strong infusion or a decoction of plant material, tea can be used in a wide range of situations from digestive issues and anxiety to management of chronic health problems. When making medicinal teas, aerial parts (flowers, leaves and berries) are treated differently to roots, bark and seeds.

For teas made using aerial parts a rule of thumb for very strong infusions intended for acute conditions is 30g per 600ml of boiling water poured over the plant material and allowed to steep covered for 10-30 minutes. This would make 3 cups of the infusion to be taken throughout the day. For longer term treatment or if such a strong infusion is not desired, then 5-15g per 600ml of water would usually suffice (depending on the herb being used).

For decoctions of the root, bark and seeds, the rule of thumb for a strong solution used in acute conditions is the same as an infusion, 30g, but you pour 900ml of cold water over the plant material in a saucepan and bring to a simmer, allow it to simmer until reduced to 600ml which is about 20-30 minutes. Same as the infusion, for a weaker decoction or longer term treatment 5-15g per 900ml is fine depending on the herb.

Note that this assumes dry herbs, for fresh herbal infusions and decoctions double the weight of the herb.

Lastly, you can also make cold infusions which works particularly well for most roots, barks, seeds and berries or if you are limited on time as they can be done over night. In a jar place the desired weight of herb, cover in cold water and allow to steep for 8 hours, strain and its ready to go.

Advantages:

- *Usually they don't taste awful
- *Can be made on the spot from fresh/dried herbs.
- *Can be administered to almost anyone
- *Tea is a familiar concept and rarely meets resistance

Disadvantages:

- *Sometimes compliance can be an issue.
- *Need several cups a day
- *Time it takes to make

Tea for Pleasure and Daily Health

Tea is a powerful preventative medicine when drunk daily and is also just a joy. When not being brewed for acute or chronic health conditions the herb to water ratio can be lower which most people find a bit more pleasing to drink. The important thing when making tea to be had daily for pleasure and preventative medicine is to make something that you find tasty and satisfying.

Choosing the plants you want for their medicinal properties and then plants that will round out/enhance/sweeten the brew is called the art of tea blending.

Popular tea plants

While the world of tea is as vast as the world of plants itself, here is a list of popular herbs and some of their properties.

*Black Tea – lowers blood pressure, lowers blood sugar, improves cardiovascular health, improves cognitive health, high in antioxidants.

*Rose – amazing for grief and in depression, beneficial for pain and inflammation, used in colds and flu and infection, topically useful for wounds and sunburn.

*Elder – popular remedy for colds and flu, anti-inflammatory, beneficial for fever and lung congestion, useful in sinusitis, regulates extremes of bowel function.

*Sage – improves cognitive health, is antiseptic, reduces breast milk, helps regulate the menstrual cycle and improves menopausal symptoms, calming for the digestive system, beneficial for mouth and throat infections.

*Oat straw – supports cardiovascular function, beneficial for depression, insomnia, neuralgia, shingles, topically useful for dry skin, eczema, wounds and burns.

*Chamomile – popular as a sleep remedy, soothing for the digestive system and its related problems, relaxing for the nervous system, beneficial for hayfever, asthma, bronchitis, topically useful for nappy rash, wounds, acne and sunburn.

*Dandelion – as a bitter herb it's useful for stimulating digestion and beneficial for the digestive system in general, leaves are a diuretic and used for fluid retention/detox.

*Cinnamon – anti-microbial, beneficial for cold and flu, useful for digestive system issues such as colic, bloating, nausea and vomiting, it also enhances the actions of the herbs in a tea blend making the whole blend more effective.

*Peppermint – used as a diaphoretic in fever/colds/flu, relaxing for the nervous system, beneficial for the digestive system in colic, ingestion, vomiting, bloating and IBS.

Plants for taste correction

While there are many plants used for this and it is down to individual taste, here are a few that are commonly used.

*Licorice – sweet and strong flavour, caution in low blood pressure and pregnancy.

*Peppermint – nice flavour with strong scent to accompany, good all rounder.

*Citrus peel – rounds out and brightens blends.

*Cinnamon – warming flavour that works to round out both sweet and savoury blends.

The Kitchen

Recipes for the season

Summer Honey Cookies

Adapted from gathervictoria.com

These delicious, fragrant cookies melt in your mouth and are a delightful treat on a warm summer evening. Best served with a cool and refreshing drink.

Ingredients:

- *1 cup of flour
- * $\frac{3}{4}$ cup oatmeal
- * $\frac{3}{4}$ cup softened butter
- * $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- * $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- *1 teaspoon dried thyme
- *1 teaspoon lavender buds
- *1 teaspoon calendula petals
- *1 teaspoon dried sage
- *1 tablespoon dried rose petals
- *pinch of salt

Icing:

- *3 teaspoons milk
- *1 cup icing sugar
- *pinch of turmeric powder for colour (and taste)



Method

1. Preheat oven to 150°C.
2. Beat flour, sugar and soft butter together until creamy. Then drizzle in honey while beating until mixture combines. Add minced herbs and petals, mix well through the dough.
3. Divide into four balls and chill for an hour then roll out and cut into round shapes. Add flour as needed.
4. Bake at 150°C for 10-15 minutes. Let cool while making icing.
5. Combine the milk and icing sugar, adding in your colouring mix until you find the desired colour and consistency. Ice the cookies and decorate using flowers and herbs.

Enjoy!

Lavender Syrup

This is a delicious syrup that can be added to an abundance of foods and drinks. Think coffee, ice cream, pancakes, cocktails, mocktails, cakes, scones, and even drizzled on meats if you're feeling adventurous. This recipe uses a lot of lavender buds as we had an over-supply, as a result it's very strong. You could however just use a few tablespoons of buds. Experiment and find what works for you.

Ingredients

*1 cup lavender buds (sliding scale)

*1 cup sugar

*1 cup water

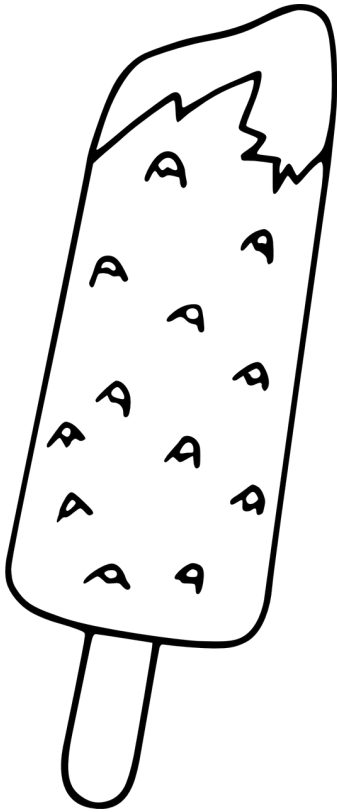
Method

1. Place the lavender buds in a heat proof jar/vessel
2. Heat the sugar and water together in a saucepan until the sugar is dissolved and the syrup is simmering.
3. Pour the hot syrup (careful) over the lavender buds and allow to steep for at least 5 minutes and up to 24 hours depending on the amount of lavender used and your own preference. The key to making this is to taste frequently. You want the flavour and sweet scent but you don't want it to be overpowering for you and your taste buds. We personally found at this strength that 15 minutes seemed to be the sweet spot but it was a bit strong for guests.
4. Strain and keep in the fridge for up to 1 month.

Enjoy!



Rose and Chamomile Popsicle



These are soooo yummy on a hot day! Not only does this frozen treat cool you down but the herbs in them are also cooling and calming. Perfect for kids, and the young at heart, in the heat of summer. You'll need some moulds for the popsicles, you could use paper cups with popsicle sticks in a pinch.

Ingredients

- *2 tablespoons dried chamomile
- *2 tablespoon dried rose
- *1 1/4 cups boiling water
- *1 cup Greek yoghurt
- *Honey to taste
- *Pinch of salt
- *1 tablespoon lemon juice

Method

1. Pour the boiling water over the chamomile and rose to make a strong tea, let steep for 5-10 mins. Strain and add honey to the desired taste (you may want to make it slightly sweeter as it will be added to Greek yoghurt).
2. Add a pinch of salt and the lemon juice, stir well then allow the mix to cool until lukewarm.
3. Now mix in the yoghurt until it's all combined and pour into the moulds. Freeze until solid, then serve.

Enjoy!

The Session Room

Here you'll find song, story and poem



Jupiter and the Bee



Adapted from <https://rome.mrdonn.org/romangods/jupiterandthebee.html>

As the story goes... Once upon a time, a long time ago, there lived a little bee who was getting very tired of having animals and people steal its honey. If she only had a weapon, a way to fight off the thieves. She wished and wished, and prayed and prayed, but the gods did not grant her request. One day, she decided to ask Jupiter, king of all the gods, for help. She would have asked a lesser god, but Jupiter was the only god she knew how to find.

The little bee flew up to the heavens and buzzed and buzzed until she caught Jupiter's attention. "My king," she buzzed. "I have brought you a gift of honey!"

One taste and Jupiter's face lit with delight. "What a wonderful gift!" Jupiter smiled. "What can I do for *you*, little bee?"

Quivering with fear, but determined to try, the bee explained its problem.

"Hum," mused Jupiter, which sounded very wise. Actually, he had no idea what he could do to help. Such a delicious taste was sure to be popular. In fact, he would very much like more of this honey himself.

"I was thinking," the little bee buzzed nervously, "I could guard my honey myself if I had a weapon. Something like a stinger!"

Jupiter's face grew angry. "You would sting the gods? You would sting ME?"

"Oh no," cried the little bee. She jerked back in alarm. She nearly squashed herself flat when she rammed into Juno, queen of all the gods, who was listening nearby. Jupiter offered his wife a taste of honey.

"Such a wonderful taste needs protection!" Juno agreed. "I suggest you give EVERY bee a stinger. Of course there must be a payment. I know! Any bee who uses your gift must pay for it with their life. That way, each bee has a choice - protect and die, or share."

"Oh no!" cried the little bee. But Jupiter was already nodding.

"As always my love, a brilliant idea. (Jupiter would do just about anything to keep Juno happy. This was such a small request, compared to most.) With a wave of his hand, it was done. "There you go, little bee. Your wish is granted."

"Thank you mighty Jupiter, thank you my queen," the little bee gasped, trying without much success to sound grateful for her gift. She flew quickly away, then sunk back to Earth. For nearly two days, she hid behind her beehive, hoping the other bees would ignore her forever. She knew they would not be happy with her when they heard the news. It was quite noisy at home. All the bees were buzzing about, showing off their new stingers. No one noticed her at first, hiding behind her beehive. But finally, a swarm encircled her. A loud buzzing erupted when she told them what she had done. But bees are loyal. They knew she had tried to help. As their queen pointed out, they did have a choice, which was something to be grateful for.

Besides, perhaps this gift would not last. Some gifts the gods gave disappeared after a while.

Sadly, this gift did not go away. Even today, any bee who uses its stinger has to pay with its life.

The Sun and The Moon

Not sure of original source but this came from <https://ofwhiskeyandwords.com/the-sun-and-the-moon/>

‘Tell me the story about how the Sun loved the Moon so much he died every night just to let her breath.’ She asked.

‘Once during a time when the earth was simple, the Sun shone brighter than anything. The people were grateful and rejoiced every time the Sun shone. He brought them joy and warmth, he was even the source of their warmth.

But he was lonely, all by himself in the vast skies. He would look down at the people dancing in his radiance and wonder if he was simply destined to a life of solitarily. That was the price he paid for being the brightest, he reasoned.

Then there was the Moon.

As the Sun grew weary and began to disappear she would rise into the sky, flanked by millions of stars. Her radiance was a sad kind of beauty, one that went unnoticed as the people slept.

The Stars watched her with woefulness, hoping that one day they could get close enough so she wouldn’t feel so empty. But they couldn’t. The Moon was untouchable, surrounding herself with a blanket of darkness through the cold nights.

Until one day when the Sun was sliding out of the heavens, he caught a glimpse of her. She was peeking up, a rare side of her being exposed to the light. And while the Sun could shine, he knew the Moon could glow, and a faithful whisper trumped an arrogant shout any day.

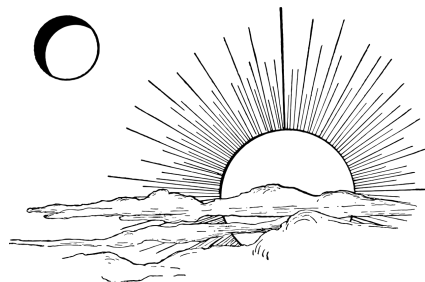
So just as the Stars were wandering into the night, the Sun fell in love like a snowball hurtling down a mountain. How he wished to see her more than the fleeting moments he shared with her at both dawn and dusk.

But the Moon was untouchable. Uncurable. Unfreeable.

“Go,” she whispered to him one of those nights, her voice as sweet and sorrowful as the last light of morning, “Go and let me breathe, for you and I have decided fates. You illuminate the day, and I cast a glow on the night. We will never be. Our connection would go against what all people believe, all they know.” During the summer he would stay a little longer just in case she would change her mind. It was no use.

“Don’t you dare abandon your blessing of light for my darkness.”

Those were the last words the Moon was strong enough to speak to the Sun,’ I responded.



Lughnasadh

https://www.angelfire.com/wa3/angelline/lughnasadh_poem.htm

Fields of listening, whispering corn
Ripen in the heavy air
Lugh the Golden dancing forth,
Leaves and sheaves in his wild hair.

In perfect circles bow the stalks,
Mark the path where great Lugh walks,
Mark days and seasons, round they go,
As above, so below.

Grainne and Diarmuid meet
Clasping in the heady air,
Loving in the dolmen's shadow,
Lost deep in her corn-sweet hair.

And his Moon follows her Sun,
Marks the way where she has gone,
Marks how love and life must be,
Each follows his own destiny.

Misty sun and steaming rain
Upon the pregnant, swelling earth.
Drying trees and tiring fields
Await the mystery of birth.

Now, in her ecstatic sleep
Mark she opens, dark and deep.
Mark, the Neolithic tomb
Pulses, like a throbbing womb.

Poppies scarlet on the gold,
Slashing, gory, gaudy red.
Colour brash and petals frail,
Bright life cut down, blown away, dead.

Now he lies down on the fields.
Mark, his life he freely yields
Mark the blood upon the corn
All that dies shall be reborn
All that dies shall be reborn



The Table

Seasonal craft activities for the family

Up-cycled Wheat Ears

These make lovely décor for summer months. Use them on walls or in a vase if you add stems.

What you'll need:

- *Cardboard rolls such as toilet paper rolls. Just a couple will make a few ears.
- *Hot glue gun and hot glue sticks
- *Scissors
- *Spray paint or paint in desired colours

To make:

1. Flatten the rolls and then cut into 1cm strips so you have thin ovals. Cut a couple of these in half across ways. Fold the remainder of the ovals in half so you have a bunch of V's
2. Hot glue the tips of the V's inside one another. Curve slightly as you go if desired. When it's long enough then hot glue one of the half pieces inside the last V to form the ear tip.
3. When all made, paint as desired and attach to walls or find a stick and hot glue to the bottom of the ear and place in a vase.



Wooden Berries for Seasonal Decoration

These diy fake berries make delightful décor for summer, autumn and winter depending on the colour you finish them. You can use any bead size but here we have used 10mm beads which look good in wreaths or bundled together and placed around the house.



What you'll need:

- * Wooden beads
- * Florist wire, 30 gauge (thin and flexible)
- * Acrylic paint of desired colour (optional)

To make:

1. Cut wire lengths ranging from 7-20cm. Feed the wire through the holes in the beads. Fold in half and pinch the wire around the bead. Twist the 2 halves of the wire together all the way to the end.
2. Join the berries together by twisting the stems of each berry together all the way down. Play with the arrangement of berries, some with 2, 3, or 4, some with the berries grouped up the top and some with additional berries added further down the stem.
3. Paint as desired, you can also paint the beads first but I like to shape them and then paint as I see fit.

