



The North East Ohio Witches' Network Magazine

Litha - 2008



The Magickal Month of June

by Toni Anne

1st In Celtic cultures, the Festival of the Oak Nymph was celebrated annually on this day to pay homage to the benevolent nature spirits who dwelt within all oak trees.

9th The Celtic tree month of Hawthorne (Huath) ends.

10th The Celtic tree month of Oak (Duir) begins.

15th The ancient Romans observed Vestalia, an annual women's festival celebrating the first fruits of the early harvest season.

21st The Summer Solstice, one of the four Lesser Sabbats observed by Witches and other Pagans, occurs approximately on the date each year. The traditional herbs associated with this sabbat include honeysuckle, cinquefoil, elder, fennel, hemp, larkspur, make fern, mugwort, pine, roses, Saint John's Wort, wild thyme, wisteria and verbena.

23rd Saint John's Eve (also known as Midsummer's Eve in many old calendars) is the traditional day to gather herbs for amatory spells and love philters. This is also said to be

the prime time to harvest Saint John's Wort for use in treating people suffering from depression and madness of the mind.

24th Saint John's Day, also known as Midsummer's Day, is said to be the best day of the years in which to gather vervain for use in love potions. In the old Pagan tradition, use a gold coin or a stag's horn to dig the plant up. Legend holds that the magickal energies of herbs are at their peak of potency on this day. In the Middle Ages, Saint John's Wort was traditionally burned on this day to dispel evil spirits and defeat evil sorceries.

29th In the English region of East Anglia, those who continue to follow the ancient ways believe that this is the prime day of the year to harvest herbs for healing. In the English village of Appleton, a centuries-old Pagan tree worship ritual known as "Bawning the Thorn" takes place each year on this day. Celebrants hang flowers and garlands from the boughs of the most ancient hawthorn tree in the village.

The *NEOWitches.Net Magazine* is currently accepting submissions for articles for future issues. If you would like to contribute to this publication, please send your submission to ...

Editor@neowitches.net

Litha- the Summer Solstice

by *Toni Anne*

The Summer Solstice, also known as Litha or Midsummer, is celebrated by Witches and Pagans throughout the world. Midsummer is the longest day of the year, when the Sun is at its zenith, and consequently the shortest night.

In many traditions Litha symbolizes the end of the reign of the waxing year's Oak-King, who has ruled since Winter Solstice, and who is now replaced by the Holly-King of the waning year. It is the ideal time for divination, love and healing rituals. It is also a very auspicious time for banishing negativity in ones life.

Bonfires representing the Sun, are lit to bring love, purification, health, and fertility. Many witches believe that this day is the best for working all magick. On this day the Little People, or Faeries, can be seen more easily than at other times. The boundaries between this world and the faerie realm are thin and tradition has it that if you accidentally step on a St. John's Wort flower on Midsummer night, you could be transported to the realm of the Fey.

Herbs common to this festival are St John's Wort, vervain, rose, lily, lavender, ivy, wisteria and male fern. Male fern, harvested on Midsummer's Eve is added to invisibility or cloaking potions and ointments. Fresh fruits, the first fruits of the harvest season, adorn the altar. Herbs harvested at this time are at the very height of their potency and power.

This is also a very important day for the blessing of animals, be they livestock or pets.

The ancient Druids used to drive their herds through the smoke of bonfires to protect them. Later, many Christian churches, including the Catholic Church, have their traditional "Pet Blessing" day in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals.

Common Names: Midsummer, Letha, Feill-Sheathain (Scotland), Alban Hefin (Druidic), Alban Heruin, Midsummer's Eve, St. John's Eve, Bonfire Night, Gathering Day (Wales), the Feast of Epona (ancient Gaul) and Vestalia (ancient Rome).

Tools & Symbols: The Sun, oak, birch & fir branches, sun flowers, lilies, seashells, red/maize/yellow or gold flower, love amulets, summer fruits & flowers, feather/flower door wreath, sun wheel, fire, circles of stone, sun dials and swords/blades, bird feathers, Witches' ladder.

Customs: Bonfires, processions, all night vigil, singing, feasting, celebrating with others, cutting divining rods, dowsing rods & wands, herb gathering, Handfastings, weddings, Druidic gathering of mistletoe in oak groves, leaping between two fires, mistletoe (without berries, use as a protection amulet), pregnant women walking naked through gardens and orchards (especially apple) to ensure continued fertility, enjoying the seasonal fruits & vegetables, honoring the Mother's fullness, richness and abundance, garlands of St. John's Wort are placed over doors and windows.

Incense: Heliotrope, saffron, orange, frankincense & myrrh, wisteria, cinnamon, mint, rose, lemon, lavender, sandalwood, pine.

Herbs: Anise, mugwort, chamomile, rose, wild rose, oak blossoms, lily, cinquefoil,

lavender, fennel, elder, mistletoe, hemp, thyme, larkspur, nettle, wisteria, vervain (verbena), St. John's wort, heartsease, rue, male fern, wormwood, pine, heather, yarrow, oak & holly trees. Herbs gathered on the Eve of Litha, or Saint John's Eve and Saint John's Day respectively, are at their highest potency for use in healing and spell casting.

Colors/Candles: Blue, green, gold, yellow and red.

Rituals: Nature spirits/fey communion, planet healing, divination, love & protection magicks, re-dedication of faith, rites of inspiration, love spells and spells for protection, health and the banishing of negativity. The battle between Oak King, God of the waxing year & Holly King, God of the waning year can be a ritual play. The same can be said for scenes from the Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream".

Cernunnos & The Green Man: Gods of the Old Religion

Cernunnos is the mysterious horned deity worshiped by Iron Age Celts across Europe until the end of the first century. Very little is known about Cernunnos except his name and his image, which appears on numerous stone carvings and other artifacts throughout Europe. He appears crowned with stag's antlers, is often seated in a meditative position, and is almost always depicted with images of wild animals. He is the guardian of all animals and wild creatures.

His Celtic name is unknown, although he

may be associated with Derg Corra, the early Celtic "Man in the Tree." Cernunnos is a Roman name meaning "horned one." He is often associated with Herne the hunter, a character of British folk myth, and the "Green man" of European architecture. Roman invaders associated Cernunnos with the god Mercury. He is later associated with "Herne the hunter," of European legend, and his appearance was eventually adapted and vilified as the Christian "Satan" or Devil.

The Green Man can often be found in the hidden corners of English, French, or German Gothic churches. It's a composite of face and foliage--an image that appears in dozens of forms. Often a face of the Green Man (or Green Woman) is a mask made entirely of leaves; other times the face may be surrounded or transformed by leaves and vines.

Typically Green Man figures are carved in stone or wood; they also may be crafted in stained glass or inked in the style of illuminated manuscripts. Over two thousand Green Man images have been identified in England alone. They can be found on any surface that's open to ornamentation: capitals, choir stalls, fonts, screens, or roof archways along with images of gargoyles.

Some of the earliest Green Men have been traced to ancient Rome. In pre-Christian religions, trees were held sacred, forest groves were perceived as the dwelling place of gods, goddesses, and a wide variety of nature spirits. Some scholars believe Bacchus or Dionysus to be the Green Man of the Greco-Roman period. Known widely as a god of ecstasy and divine rapture, he was also the god of vegetation.

The Green Man is often perceived as an ancient Celtic symbol. In Celtic mythology, he is a god of spring and summer. He disappears and returns year after year, century after century, enacting themes of death and resurrection, the ebb and flow of life and creativity. These rites are held at the Summer and Winter Solstices. The Arthurian legend of Sir Gawain and The Green Knight, is a notable image of the Green Man from the Middle Ages.

Given the church's condemnation of the old pagan gods, the last place you'd expect to find the Green Man is within the Christian places of worship. Nevertheless his face appears again and again. This may be the church's attempt to "make safe" those elements of paganism it failed to stamp out. The motif of rebirth clearly has Christian applications that provided the Green Man protective status within the cathedrals. Perhaps, also, the Green Man was a talisman to encourage new fertility and growth of the church and its constituents. In any case, it would not be the first time that the churches incorporated Pagan themes and our sacred sabbats into Christian worship.

The Green Man has been suppressed and reinvented throughout history. He was banned during the Reformation, but appeared on 17th century memorials and is found on 18th century Scottish gravestones. In the Victorian era, The Green Man was used as an architectural motif from Ireland in the west to Russia in the east. At this time he played a major role in church restorations and as a decorative motif on street architecture, in this country as well. The 20th Century Green Man stands as a modern ecological symbol as well as a model of godhood, virility, protection, regenerative power and the epitome of masculine strength.

Three Litha Rituals for Solitaires or Covens

by Toni Anne

For these three rituals, you are going to need the following items: A God and Goddess candle for the Litha Ritual for the Sun; a white or yellow candle and a black candle for the Banishing Ritual; a cauldron for burning the petition paper; incense (Frankincense, sandalwood, rose, wisteria or honeysuckle) and holder; a bowl of blessed, pure spring water; a wand; an athame for Calling the Quarters and casting your Circle; paper, dragon's blood ink or red ink with a piece of dragon's blood resin added, pen or quill.

For the Pet Blessing ritual, one warm brown candle for each pet, with a drawing or photograph of him or her. If possible, have your pet with you for this special blessing ritual. (Optional: a statue or picture of the Horned God, Cernunnos, the Green Man or Saint Francis of Assisi.)

Litha Ritual for Honoring the Sun

Using your athame, cast a circle and call the Four Quarters. Pick up your wand and, with arms upraised, face the South and say:

I celebrate the noon of Summer with this rite held in honor of the Blazing God of the Sun. All of nature vibrates with the fertile energies of the Goddess and the God.

The Earth is bathed with the warmth, and light and life of the Sun. The Wheel of the Year turns again.

Since Yule the light has been growing ever stronger.

At Ostara the light finally became greater than

the dark, and the light has kept on growing until today, the middle of the time of light, Litha, Midsummer.

From here, the light begins to fade again, until once more, the Wheel will turn to darkness and Yule will return.

Today the Sun is high, the Light is bright, the Earth is warm. As the Lord of the Sun blazes above, the Fires of my celebration shall flame below.

Place your wand back on altar. Light your incense and light the Goddess and God candles.

Father Sun and Mother Moon, day is longest now.

Energies of the brilliant Sun, aid all at work or having fun.

Longest day, a blessing is, from rise to set.

Supreme is the Sun, fueling growth and passions bright, strong and true is the solar light.

Bounty grows and river flows, as Earth is warmed and lighted.

Creative energy reaches zenith on this day of shortest night.

Crops grow high and enjoyment grows, with each new ray of Sun.

Every day, all creatures play and hail the

mighty Sun.

Ancient Solstice fires burning, honor the Sun and feed the light.

Druid, Indian, Norse, and Celt all danced on Summer Solstice, joyously felt.

Solar winds and solar flares burn away our hunger and our cares.

Mighty Sun, King of warmth, makes humans to frolic and bees to swarm.

Keep this day in memory bright, to warm us all on long winter nights.

May the rays of Solstice keep us warm, all through the year. So Mote It Be!

It is done.

Litha Ritual for Banishing Negativity, Evil, Trouble or Bad Habits

Light your incense. Light the white or yellow candle that represents the sun's powerful light first, for positive influences to enter into your life. On a piece of paper, using the Dragon's Blood ink, write all your troubles, problems, pains, sorrows and illnesses. Say:

O fiery Sun, burn away that which is no longer useful or baneful, the hurtful, the troublesome, the painful, the sickness, and ill luck. Purify me with your golden light.

Light a corner of the paper with the Sun candle. Drop the paper into your cauldron.

By the powers of the Great Goddess and the Great God, by the powers of the Great Spirit of All-That-Is, by the powers of Earth, Air, Fire and Water, and by the powers of the Sun, Moon and Stars...

I banish these banes from my life!



Jeffrey C. Shafer
Artist - Photographer

Now light the black candle of banishing with the flame of the white one. Visualize the negative energies burning away to nothing. When the paper has been consumed by the flames, say:

As the Phoenix rises from the ashes, so let this water be pure and new, for this is the sacred cauldron of the Triple Goddess.

O Great Mother Goddess, bless this water, so that its touch may bless and renew, even as the rays of the Midsummer Sun nourish and bless all life.

Pour the blessed water over the ashes. Pass your cupped hands over the cauldron, pausing briefly each time to "pour" in wishes for health, prosperity, and good fortune to be part of your life. Dip the forefinger of your right hand into the cauldron water, and trace a pentagram on your forehead, saying:

Let my mind be open to the truth.

Anoint your lips saying:

Let my lips always speak the truth.

Anoint your heart area, saying:

Let my heart seek the ways of the Goddess, now and always.

Anoint the centers of your palms, saying:

let my hands be gifted to work in magickal ways.

Anoint the soles of your feet, saying:

Let my feet ever walk upon the sacred paths!

Let the candles burn completely out.

It is done.

Pet Blessing on the Summer Solstice

If you are doing this ritual for a bird, fish or reptile, and they are present with you, omit the incense for this ritual. These animals are very sensitive to incense smoke. Have your "saint", Green Man or Horned God representation on your sacred space. Do each pet separately. Light a brown candle for each pet and then holding your pet (or its picture), kneel before your altar and recite the following prayer:

O Great Horned God, father of the woodlands, and loving lord of all creatures that walk, crawl, swim and fly.

A threefold blessing I humbly ask of thee on this special day:

May (pet's name) life be a long, happy and healthy one.

May he (or she), always receive your Divine protection.

And when our incarnations in this world cease to be, may we forever be reunited in the great Wiccan otherworld known as the Summerland. Blessed be!

Chant name of your pet and say "Blessed Be" three times. Thank the Deities. Close the Quarters and open the Circle. Enjoy a simple feast with your pet.

It is done.



Tarot Deck Review

by Toni Anne

The Spiral Tarot Deck

This deck is excellent for studying the Tarot from the perspective of the Journey of the Fool. It is called the Spiral Tarot because that journey is a spiral, not a straight road. The Fool "begins the journey, lives the experience, and comes to the end of that phase only to start afresh. He repeats the process, but like all cycles in nature, the new phase is different from the last."

The deck is based on myth, Kabbalah and astrology, and mostly uses Golden Dawn correspondences. The art is gorgeous and deeply dimensional, and the paintings, especially those of the Major Arcana, exude a sense of mystery. The colors are beautiful and intense; the art is very well-drawn, with meanings easily interpreted through the pictures. The minor arcana occasionally changes time periods in the pictures and this only adds to the uniqueness of this deck. I have a strong affinity for the Victorian era and the cards are romantically designed along this theme.

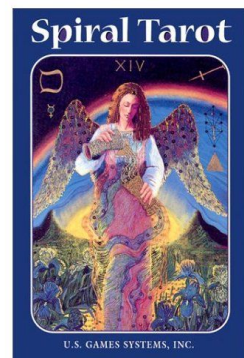
The deck's creator, Kay Steventon, combines deities of different pantheons. It helps to remember that Celts were once found, not only in the British Isles, but throughout the Mediterranean. For example, Celtic remains can still be found on Corsica.

The Major Arcana shows figures from Middle Eastern, Arthurian and Mediterranean myths, with a higher proportion of Goddesses than is traditional. My favorites are Hestia/Vesta as the Hermit, the Moirae on the Wheel of

Fortune, Iris as Temperance, the Triple Goddess Hebe/Hera/Hecate as the Moon, and Eos as the Sun. All of the cards are excellently executed and faithful to the myths. Other notable figures include Perceval as the Fool, Hermes as the Magician, Sophia as the High Priestess, Eve as the Empress, Arthur as the Emperor, and Chiron as the Hierophant. Notes in the book for each Major Arcana card describes the myths associated with each, and related myths.

The Minor Arcana are described briefly in the book and are variations on the Rider-Waite deck, depicted in the late 1800's. The court cards, King, Queen, Knights & Princess, dramatically express the element of their suit. One of the problems I came across in learning the Tarot was that many of the decks available have very repetitive minor arcana cards. You might as well use a regular deck of playing cards in many decks. This is definitely not so with the Spiral Tarot. Every single card of this deck, especially the minor arcana, tells a story. I absolutely love the Four and Six of Swords, usually cards not well liked in the tarot. But in the Spiral Tarot they are wonderfully comforting and full of hope.

If you are a reader or a lover of lovely and spiritual artwork, add the Spiral Tarot to your collection. You will not be disappointed. It is definitely one of my all time favorite decks. I guarantee these cards will speak volumes to you.



North East Ohio Community Events

6-6/8-08 Kheperian Gather 2008 5pm

A weekend of workshops on magick, energy and ritual. Join author Michelle Belanger and the energy workers of House Kheperu for discussion, and workshops.

House Kheperu - <http://www.kheperu.org/>
4900 Emerald CT SW Cleveland

6-13-08 Get Together 6pm

The Lorain County Pagans group and the Circle of Standing Stones Shrine get together on the 13th of each month. We meet at the Elyria Midway Mall in Elyria, at 6pm.

Elyria Midway Mall West River Rd Elyria

6-15/27-08 Pagan Spirit Gathering

Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG) is an opportunity for personal renewal, networking, education, and cultural enrichment. Attend one of the largest Pagan gatherings in the country and take advantage of the opportunity to sell your wares in a Pagan Town for a week. Together, we create a festival community.

<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/psg>
Wisteria campground in southern Ohio

6-29-08 Litha Gathering TBA

This is a gathering for family and friends Kids are welcome. Please bring a covered dish to help out with food, chairs or blankets to sit on.

Sanders Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Sippo Lake west entrance

RSVP to EgyptianShadows@hotmail.com

Find more info at community.neowitches.net/forum

SUNDAYS Belly Dancing 5:30pm

Hulla and bellydancing every Sunday at Aradia's Garden. Join Dahmia as she instructs Belly Dancing at 5:30 and Hula at 6:30. Registration Required

Aradia's Garden - (440) 975-1911
34510 Lakeshore blvd Eastlake

THURSDAYS 185th St. Drum Jam 9:30pm

We have a group of folks that have been getting together for years now. We bring in our drums and instruments and jam til we must leave.

712 E 185th St. Cleveland

1st Sundays Psychic Fair 12-5pm

Psychic Fair every month at Aradia's Garden Readings \$20 for 20 min Also Ionic Foot Spa, Massage, & Reiki

Aradia's Garden - (440) 975-1911
34510 Lakeshore blvd Eastlake

1st Sundays Coffee Social 4pm

Canton Pagan Network Roundtable Coffee Social. Informal networking, social and discussion for pagans and pagan groups in the Stark and surrounding county areas. First Sunday every Month.

Denny's, 4646 W. Tuscarawas Canton

1st Mondays Paganism 101 7pm

Paganism 101 classes offered by the Kent CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) , on the first Monday of every month .

Kent CUUPS - (330) 673-4247
Unitarian Universalist Church - 228 Gougler Ave. Kent

3rd Wednesdays Drum Circle 8pm

Come to Aradia's Garden every month for Drum Circle. Bring your drums, and hand percussion instruments. Belly Dancers Welcome as well!

Aradia's Garden - (440) 975-1911
34510 Lakeshore blvd Eastlake

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please email the details to
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