

A Perennial Course in Living Druidry

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BLOOD BERRY MOON (September - October)

Moon : Blood Berry

This moon I call Blood Berry Moon. The hedgerows are full of blackberries that reveal the quality of the summer now gone in their taste, sweet and soft, or tight and tart.

The last of the maize is coming in, the apples and plums are with us in abundance, and there is now a clear sense of the worth of our harvest. And by this time it is usually obvious what we have paid for it.

What is the most relevant name for this moon in your environment?

Festival : Alban Elued

Autumn Equinox is the festival of this or the last moon. Druids often use the name Alban Elued. What do those words mean and why are they used? Alban Elued is literally the Light of the Water, the alternative Alban Elfed means the Light of Autumn. Consider the words with your whole body, not just your mind.

Through the course of this moon, once the equinox is past, spend time recognizing and accepting the journey we are taking through the cycle of the year, the days becoming shorter, growth slowing down. The cold is creeping in. We are riding the current that will take us into winter. How does that make you feel?

Most poignantly and effectively, how can you celebrate that current? Celebration is a powerful action and, to the Druid, is not something done without deep thought and consideration. What do we celebrate, how can we do so, what impact will that have on others, and what of those who are not able to celebrate? We are all connected. Let this be a strong part of your understanding of the festival.

Season : Harvest Waning

The last moon of the harvest, this is the time when we celebrate the apples, such a significant fruit of our land and our heritage. For some they are the sacred fruit of the dead, while others consider them the fruit of fertility. Explore that symbology and, as importantly, explore what the apple means to you.

That the sun rises and sets now past the point of balance, rapidly

moving towards the south, can be seen clearly in the speed of change within the landscape.

Which of the deciduous trees are already dropping their leaves?

Perception : Taste and Smell

Taste and smell are the media of perception to focus on through this moon. Can you smell the changes in the air as the darkness begins more effectively to seep into the cycle's growth? Can you smell the change in the land as it receives this darkness, welcoming it as the process of decay? In the soil, in the hedgerows, in the plants of the verges and gardens, in the bark of trees, in the wind and in the rain, the scents give out stories.

Allow the change in the air to wake your sense of smell and taste.

Use your altar to remind you.

And as you give thanks for the harvest, make sure that you are fully tasting all that you eat, honouring the gods of the land, the ancestors, and all that has poured energy into it for your nourishment.

Element : Flowing Water

Through this moon, let the focus be water in the form of rivers and streams, oceans and rain. This is about flow, about tides and cycles, about the currents of life. The water that falls as rain is the same water that has been here on earth for millions of years. Moving through the cycles of nature, it has been ocean, cloud, rain and mist, streams and rivers; it has been drunk and become a part of the bodies of humans and birds and beetles; it has been sweat and tears and piss, carried babies in the womb and bled on to the land.

Find a source of flowing water and, during these weeks of Blood Berry Moon, let yourself become aware of the continuity and power of water in motion.

Humanity : Stories

When we think about relationship, it is often personal connections with individuals that come to mind. However, in this moon look to the flow of history and mythology.

Do you have a sense of being a member of a community, a people, a tribe, sharing a history with others, stretching back along that current of history? What are the stories that flow with that current?

In Druidry, stepping aside from the polarities of right and wrong,

good and bad, we also don't work with the black-and-white notion of fact and fiction; instead we honour stories.

What are the stories of your tribe? What are the tribe's mythologies, the tales that help both to form and to guide the tribe as it moves through time?

How do you yourself relate to these stories and in what way do they influence or affect you?

Environment : Wild Food

The vine is the plant some associate with this moon, but other than through wine, it is not a part of my own environment or culture. The blackberries, sloes, elderberries, the woody nightshade are in the hedgerows and along the edges of the forest. What are the berries and other wild foods of your environment at this time?

Spend time, as you gather, taste or find stillness with the berries, to consider your ancestors and how important these foods would have been - and perhaps will be again.

What is the tree, plant or animal that seems to you now most prominent?

Who is calling to you as you walk through the landscape? How many of the deciduous trees are dropping their leaves now? What are the last flowers of the cycle still in blossom, reaching for the sun, and who is pollinating them? What of the insects, the last wasps and moths? Who is already retreating? Which birds have flown to warmer lands?

Self : Direction

As water flows through our landscape, and stories flow through the soul of our tribe, this moon gives us an opportunity to consider that force of nature that is flow, that offers direction.

At this time of year, with the harvest come in and a sense of what we have achieved through the cycle, it is poignant to look at what direction our life is taking.

On what currents are we moving? Are those currents in tune with our own soul-song? Are they supporting and born of what we honestly feel to be our own truth? Is the momentum our own?

How does it feel to be riding on someone else's current? Or your own?

Creativity : Our Own

As we explore the honesty and integrity of our direction, feeling the flow of life through time, considering our personal story is important.

If you were to take as a starting point your own life, or a key moment from your life, how would you tell the tale? The telling of a myth lays to one side the need to distinguish between fact and/or fiction, yet it does so without compromising the tale's honesty: can you do the same with your life story? What is your own mythology? Craft the tale in the third person (referring to yourself as he or she, not I), writing it down in prose or in poetry, and - as the moon comes to its end - tell it to your ancestors.

Your audience may be the long dead of your bloodline, your words offered into the wind or the sunlight, or it may be your own living family.

Ethics : Loyalty

Loyalty is a powerful word and one that is not often used nowadays, yet to our ancestors it was a crucial part of honour. Consider the word, and how it is used in society around you.

What is the value of loyalty in your life? Where do you express the most loyalty undiluted, and where is it given most powerfully to you? When have you suffered from loyalty being broken, and when have you broken it?

Consider loyalty when you think about the history of your tribe, your people, your nation. Patriotism and defence of one tribe (or person) can create violence that is detrimental, dangerous and unnecessary. Where is the line most honourably drawn?

Review :

In the last few days of the moontide, when the moon is dark, consider what you have achieved through the cycle. What have you learned, changed, understood, and given in exchange?