

A Perennial Course in Living Druidry

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CLAIM SONG MOON (July - August)

Moon : Claim Song

In the traditions of many peoples, this is the moon during which the harvest is celebrated; it is for this reason that I call it Claim Song Moon. Having truthfully acknowledged our own investment in the crop, now is the time to claim what is ours, whether that be the abundance or the scarcity. Our song is the expression of that truth.

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

Festival : Lughnasadh

Lughnasadh, Lammas, Gwyl Awst are names for this festival celebrated in Druidry and most new Paganisms on or around August 1. What do these words mean and what is their history?

Although my grove gathers at the nearest Saturday to this date, I personally make my rituals when the first field of wheat or barley is harvested in the valley of my home. At that time, I spend time in the fields of golden corn, making offerings of song, and making sacrifice in thanks to the gods, the land, the plants, the wildlife, and the cereal itself, for feeding the people.

As you think about your ritual of Gwyl Awst, consider what you personally and what society generally can give in return for this gift of sustenance. How can we give adequate thanks? And what is the purpose of our thanksgiving?

Season : Harvest Waxing

Though in Britain we use the word autumn and in the US the word is fall, the older word for the season that follows summer is harvest. This is its beginning.

In the environment where I live, by Gwyl Awst we already have an abundance of strawberries, raspberries, redcurrants, loganberries, and other sweet red berries grown for our pleasure and nourishment. If you

can, find a farm (organic) where you can pick your own harvest, and celebrate this profusion of nature's generosity.

Be aware of when the harvest of wheat and barley is ready. Although most Druidry can just as well be practised in the city, we are all dependent on this harvest - find a way of knowing how the harvest is going.

Has there been enough rain or too much? What is the state of the land? Take a trip out into the country and sit yourself down in a field of wheat just before the harvest ... then again, just afterwards.

Perception : Dance

Through each moon we have focused on different ways in which we perceive the world; this moontide's focus is dance.

We may think of dance as an activity, but in Druidry dance is also a medium through which we experience our own life and the world around us.

That is not just about our own movement, but about the way in which all of nature moves. To what rhythms is nature dancing? How can you improve the way you hear or feel those rhythms? Listen to the earth, to gravity, to the heartbeat of humanity, to the wind, the rain, to your cravings and your ancestors. Find a deeper, a sacred and a more meaningful way of dancing.

Element : Water

With the shift in season from summer to harvest, we change focus on elements, from fire to water, and this moontide we look at water in everything. Just as it is possible to see earth and sunshine in all of nature, so it is possible to acknowledge the element of water.

Scientists now speak of the notion of water having memory, an idea that is integral to most Paganisms around the world, to homeopathy and other natural medicines. Find out what you can about this idea. What does that mean in terms of the power, the spirit or song of a river, of the ocean, of rain? Find out how much of a human body is water, how much our brain is made up of water, how much of the earth's surface is water. Be aware of the water in the food you eat, understanding where that water came from. What about the water you drink, water bottled and transported miles for your convenience, and water drawn from a kitchen tap? How does it feel to have a bath, or slip into a swimming pool or the sea?

What is the effect on your perception of life with this consciousness of water?

How does it change your behaviour?

Humanity : Connection

Through the fluidity of water, through its omnipresence, during this moontide the focus is on the way in which we connect with all life.

Druidry teaches us that we are all connected: through blood, stories, breath, love, grief and landscape, we are linked to our ancestors and our descendants.

Through food, tears, laughter and song, through all we excrete, through every thought and action, we are linked to the land and seas. Through energy and consciousness, through the molecules and subatomic particles of our being, we are connected.

It can be hard to imagine the threads that make up the complete web of life; seeing them as currents within water can be easier. Similarly, when we are used to feeling the threads existent in space, to shift that awareness to water can also be a useful and potent change of perception. How does your relationship with nature change, and your relationships with individuals, when you are conscious of these threads and currents of connection?

Environment : Verdancy

Holly is the tree noted by some at this time; who and why? Although holly is not so prominent in the forest or hedgerows at this time as it is in the middle of winter, when other trees are bare, it is associated with the harvest and sacrifice. Can you feel that link?

Growth is heavy and often wet in the valley of my home at this time. The tide is clearly turning, and hints of darkness and decay are creeping in. Can you feel them?

Leaves are rotting underneath the lush green growth, petals and fruit fallen, the stark shaven vulnerability of a field newly harvested.

In terms of trees, plants and the wild creatures, what seems to you most awake and vibrant, most poignant, in your environment through this moontide?

Self : Sacrifice

Sacrifice is the key focus of this moon, for as the harvest is brought in, we rise to celebrate the gifts of the land, of the ancestors and the gods.

What are these gifts?

Yet the word sacrifice has negative connotations in secular modern culture; why? Many in Druidry consider it to be a key part of their practice. As such, it is useful to find out why that may be. Talk to others in the tradition, read and ask questions of practitioners and students of Druidry.

How would you define sacrifice in a positive way, and how would you distinguish it from the offerings that you make in thanksgiving? Whom do we make sacrifices to in Druidry? If we recall what our ancestors sacrificed (livestock; what else?), each item was clearly of significant value. What can we sacrifice in our modern and relatively comfortable world that would be of similar value? And what would be the purpose of doing so?

Creativity : The Gift

Having spent a moontide writing poetry, through this moon you are encouraged to give it away! How? Keep writing, now exploring in your poems your perception of our complete connection within nature, allowing yourself to receive inspiration through the growing trust and openness of your interaction.

Some poems you may feel are strong enough to learn and recite to your muse(s), to those who have inspired you to write, offering the verses in thanksgiving.

Some you may offer to the gods, to the land, to the wind, or may burn, knowing that poetry, like water, continuously flows if we let it. Nothing is ever lost, but much decays in order to regenerate in a new form. Let your words float upon the currents.

Ethics : Payment

Through a moontide during which we acknowledge and give thanks for powerful gifts of abundance offered by the land, as we consider sacrifice, think about what you can give back.

You may feel this is a good time to clear excess from your house and give it to charity, or find the courage and generosity to give an amount to charity or a number of charities, or give a gift to a friend in need.

This may be a time to do some fundraising for an ethical cause, or perhaps to give time in voluntary work for a charitable organization you support.

Another form of sacrifice is to stop buying cheap food, determining here to buy organic and fair-trade produce.

It always takes an effort to make a sacrifice; if it doesn't, no sacrifice is made.

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?