

A PERENNIAL COURSE IN LIVING DRUIDRY

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FIELD POPPY MOON (June - July)

Moon : Field Poppy

Field Poppy is what I call this moon, celebrating the return of wild flowers to the fields of wheat and barley. The poppies, scarlet amidst the cereals as they turn from green to gold, are also like a scattering of blood, reminding me of all in nature that is being suppressed or killed for the sake of our corn. What is the most relevant name for this moon in your environment?

Festival : Midsummer

While in the last moon we prepared for Alban Hefin, during this moon we are celebrating midsummer, either over the course of the traditional dates that land in this moon tide (around 24 June), or simply by taking the path steadily and wakefully that leads down the other side of that peak of light. Thus we can celebrate on a particular day, but also do we add consciousness of a festival into the flow of many days.

In what way can you celebrate this turning of the solar tide?

Season : Waning Summer

Summer is vibrant around us now. There is life brimming, seething, humming everywhere we look, with new growth finding its strength, many wild flowers giving way to abundant green. The grasses are high in the meadow, wheat and barley in the fields, swaying in the breeze like the wind on water. It can be energizing but also sometimes suffocating.

How easy is it for you to be in tune with this season, and what does that mean? After the strange pause that suddenly slows life down at the peak of the year's light, the momentum starts to build again, this time heading 'downhill'; can you feel it?

Element : Energy

At this time, let the focus be fire as the energy of life. Nature is heavy with it all around us, fat with growth, petals falling and the fruit now beginning to swell that will be the harvest to come. Can you perceive that energy of life in all around you? Don't try to see some ethereal spirit; begin by simply acknowledging and accepting something to be alive.

In animism, many speak of everything in nature having its own spirit, but what do they or you mean by 'spirit'? Most theologies consider human beings to have a soul, but what does that mean? Does a cat have a spirit or soul? Does a beetle, a slug, a tree, a river, the earth, the wind, a bacterium? Where is the cut off point, if it exists at all?

To the Druid, it is not that all in the physical world contains spirit or a soul, for there is no such distinction between spirit and matter. Both are fundamentally crafted of the same stuff: energy and consciousness. And all nature is imbued with energy and consciousness (or purpose). Nothing is special, nothing set apart, chosen by a creator, deemed more important or worthy of consideration.

How does this affect the way we might live? Think of broiler chickens, puppies, rivers, forests.

Perception : Life

This moontide, as we slip down the other side of the peak, let your focus of sensory perception to be as broad as possible: explore the sensation of being alive amidst this Earth's profusion of life.

This doesn't necessarily mean actively getting busy and doing things; instead, allow yourself simply to feel how your life fits into the web of life. How do you fit into the ecosystem of your environment, and of the wider environment of nature? How does your life fit into the web of lives that make up your blood line, your community and humanity?

Feel what the Druid means by saying: we are all connected.

Self : Stillness

Explore the pleasure of stillness during this moon. There is nothing to do now but wait for harvest. Let this notion inform you as to just how quickly you are taking your life. How much do you chase your tail? How often do you take time to be calm? This is not about passivity or distractions, but about taking the time to relax and be ourselves. Consider what drives you and any root fears that fuel those drives.

Environment : Strength

At this time of high summer, it is the oak that is seen to embody the season: who uses this association and why?

Where I live, by early July the oaks have had their first flush of growth but are not yet pushing into their second. The honeysuckle, which gives the first soft leaves of the early spring, is now in flower, with dog roses, elder and poppy. What are the plants and animals most alive in your environment?

Creativity : Structure

After last moontide, nurturing the relationship with your muse, during this moon let the creativity flow through you in the form of poetry. This form of creative expression was key to the Bards of the old Druid tradition, and is viewed with equal importance today. For poetry allows us to create with a balance between our analytical and spatial capacities, between colour and sound, imagery and reason. It paints pictures in our mind's eye while describing their detail. It offers ideas, yet leaves gaps for the soul to fill in with emotion, mystery and imagination.

Begin by exploring structures in different forms of poetry. Read a range of different poets, and see which structures feel most comfortable for you. Have a go using a simple form of four lines, the first three with 7 syllables, the last with 3. Try a haiku: three lines of 5, 7 and 5 syllables in each. What is the rhythm or meter of a traditional or Shakespearean sonnet? Try writing one yourself. The subject? Your muse!

Humanity : Solitude

During this time, find the natural balance between being with others, celebrating the long days, the warmth, and the beginnings of harvest ... and being alone. Be conscious of the time you spend alone, using it well, walking in

places that inspire and calm you, allowing yourself time to think, to ponder, to daydream. How comfortable are you alone?

Be conscious, too, of the time you spend with others. When you are in company, be aware of how easy this is. Reflect on where and how you are most truthfully yourself, where you are calmest and happiest, and how that understanding can enrich and improve your time alone and time spent with others. This awareness will naturally deepen your understanding of yourself and your own truth.

To the Druid, this is an extremely important awareness, allowing him/her to interact with honour, and a growing confidence in his/her own honesty.

Ethics : Rights

How much do we demand of life? Consider the notion of rights. What do you feel to be your rights, as a human being, as a member of your family, as a citizen of a nation, as a being who lives upon this sacred earth? How do you justify your rights, and who do you think would disagree with those rights? How many in this world have those rights assured or defended? Bear in mind that fine balance between yourself and others (human and non-human) in terms of need. Look at the blurred lines between need and desire.

Having thought the issues through, how can you change your way of life in order to improve the reality of life for yourself and for others? Consider the word 'generosity', another potent word in the history of people, our heritage, our mythology and the Druid tradition.

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?