

A Perennial Course in Living Druidry

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FIRE FRIEND MOON (November - December)

Moon : Fire Friend

Fire Friend is this dark moontide of winter. You may have the pleasure of a real fire in your home and friends to share it with, but the deeper meaning of this moon's name to me is a reminder of the power of fire. Making a friend of the wild spirit that is fire allowed humankind to survive and evolve, and to live within these colder lands. Find your own name for this moon, one that reflects the cycle in your own home environment and your own nature.

Festival : Solstice

This moon takes us towards or through the Winter Solstice. In modern Druidry, the festival is called Alban Arthan. What other names does this festival have, in British and other Paganisms and in other spiritual traditions?

The longest nights of the year are wrapping themselves around our lives, and at this time we are given an opportunity to learn from the darkness. Our society, afraid of the dark, fills it with coloured lights, pushing away the dark, yet to do so is to lose the chance to engage with this rich and beautiful power of nature. While in many light-oriented religions and philosophies, darkness is considered negative, in Druidry it is a source of life, a womb, a cup or cauldron of potential. Let these ideas fill your celebration of the Alban.

Season : Winter

The heart of the winter moons, this tide offers long nights to explore the nature of the season. Feel the world as it gently and quietly slows down; humanity is rushing around trying to fight the current of nature, filling it with noise and lights, avoiding the fear, but beyond the human chaos, nature is slowing.

At the darkest point of the year, there is an exquisite stillness. After a long journey, as the Solstice looms, we come softly to a halt. See if you

can walk this path, stepping aside from the mayhem of Christmas or Yule and the human fears of cold and dark. Let the darkness embrace you, velvet stillness and serenity.

Perception : Seeing

Through this moon, the perception we work on is our ability to see. To focus on seeing at this darkest time of year may seem strange, but in the depth of winter our vision is crucial. How well do you see in the dark? Fear of the dark is instinctive; infants are not born with it, but immediately they start to comprehend their separateness from mother, the fear sneaks in. It is a good time of year to address the fear, breaking through this limiting instinct into strength and freedom. Reason can't break it easily, but practice can: with the safety of company or familiarity, spend time in the dark, gradually pushing back the boundaries into unfamiliar ground. Be aware of how you do 'see' in the dark, using visual imagination to translate energy and touch, crafting a map of the world around you. Relax and explore.

Element : Womb

The element of Earth is again in focus through this moon, this time as the womb of creation. Allow yourself to build a consciousness of that womb space within nature, the dark holding of the mother. It is in all female mammals. It is in the egg. We can find it in the mud of the earth in which seeds will germinate when light and warmth return.

Not only in woman, as any space that holds, there is a womb for ideas and dreams, for hope, for stories. Can you find these places in our culture and in your own life? How can you honour this womb of life? Use your altar.

Humanity : Family

Family is the focus of this moon in terms of our human relationships. In much of our life we are eager to be allowed the freedom to change and grow, and family can feel restrictive. Yet at this time, when the energy slows, allow yourself time to consider your family, those still alive and those who have died.

In the gentle dark and within the pause of the Solstice, acknowledge where there is strength and where the relationships can be improved.

Consider the notion of acceptance, acknowledging your family members without demands or defensiveness.

If the task seems too great, take one person from your immediate family and work on that relationship, directly or indirectly, allowing it to teach you of the value and power of the family unit, not only for yourself, but for your ancestors of millennia.

Environment : Evergreen

The Yew is the tree associated with this moon - by whom and why? In the forest, it is a haze of darkness amidst the bare grey of the deciduous trees, as if calling us forward to feel its embrace. What other evergreens are there in your environment?

How does their energy or 'song' differ from those who have lost their leaves?

What is the tree, plant or animal that speaks to you most at this time?

Why is mistletoe connected with this time of year? What is the tradition of the fir tree brought inside, and what is the older tradition of your landscape and people?

Self : Mystery

Consider the Druid's understanding of darkness as something richly positive, filled with potential.

In darkness are the parts of life that we cannot see or understand: do we need to? While there is freedom found in knowledge, it can equally be found in mystery. Let knowledge be sought at Midsummer: here and now, explore mystery. I am not talking about getting involved in paranormal drama! Simply consider, explore and experience the unknown and the unknowable in life.

Much of life we can't explain; what are key examples of this? Why do we crave understanding? What is the value of establishing something as 'fact'? Think about the power and dogma of science.

What benefit is there in not understanding? Find the freedom of accepting that we don't know. Don't try to explain.

Creativity : Imagination

Having chosen one of the old stories and spent a moon listening to it, becoming familiar with it, take this moontide to learn that tale inside out. Although some of us are able to learn by hearing, most of us need a visual

input. Build on the visual as you listen to the story, extending your imagination, creating pictures in your mind for each character and each scene. Smell it, move through it, look around you in the midst of it. Imagine what it is like to be every character and every part of this story. For as a myth of your people, it is already a part of you.

Ethics : Courage

It takes courage to face the hardest teachers in our lives, and very often those teachers are members of our own family. As we face our fear of the dark and the unexplained, as we prepare for the rebirth of a new cycle of light, consider the courage it takes for regeneration, for renewal, for starting again.

Courage is another of the those words that was crucial to our ancestors, living in times that required more immediate and ongoing courage than our own.

What is courage in this 21st century western culture? Where do we find it? How is it acknowledged? When does it become complicated by pride and what underlies it when it is pure? When do you need most courage, and when does yours fail? Whose courage inspires you?

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?