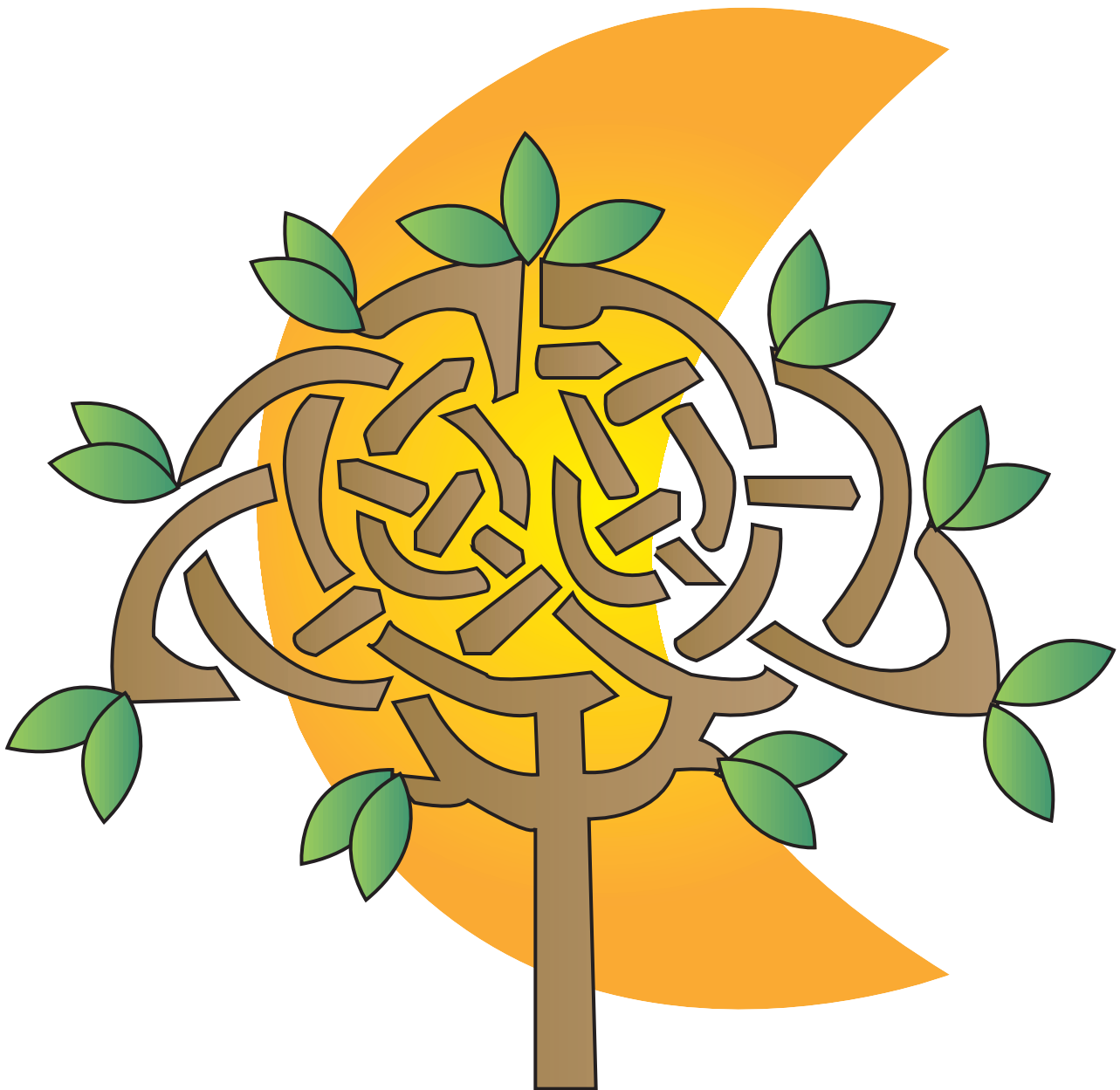


# Celtic Tree Calendar

A Guide to tree and their symbolism

**By Ravenfox**

[ravenfox@sacredspiral.com](mailto:ravenfox@sacredspiral.com)



# Trees and moon

There are two types of Celtic Tree Calendars in use today. One is the **Beth-Luis** which begins on Winter Solstice and goes from new moon to new moon. The other is the **Beth-Luis-Fearn** which begins on Samhain and goes from Full Moon to Full Moon.

The Celtic tree calendar is made up of thirteen months and day. Each month is named for a tree which signifies particular qualities of that moon during that lunar cycle.

Robert Graves in his book *The White Goddess* describes how he decoded the tree calendar from the recorded poetry of the Celtic peoples. He was researching the tree alphabet used by the druids in Ireland. Each letter in the alphabet stands for a tree or shrub:

## Constants

B = birch or beth

L = rowan or luis

N = Ash or nion

F = alder or fearn

S = willow or sallie

H = hawthorn or uath

D = oak or duir

T = holly or tinne

C = hazel or coll

M = vine or muin

G = ivy or gort

P = dwarf elder or pethboc

R = elder or ruis

## Vowels

A = silver fir or ailm

O = furze or onn

U = heather or ur

E = white poplar or eadha

I = yew or idho

Graves noticed that the constants (of which there are 13) formed a calendar of seasonal tree magic. Also the Celts used a lunar cycle which consists of the thirteen months which correlates to the thirteen constants.

## The Song of Amergin

Robert Graves suggest that certain Welsh and Irish poetry contain calendrical themes, the Song of Amergin is One. It was said to have been chanted when the Milesian set foot upon Ireland. The Romance of Talesian is one of many other poems that are variations of this theme.

|                |   |          |
|----------------|---|----------|
| 12/24 to 1/21  | I am the stag of seven tines                        | Birch    |
| 1/22 to 2/18   | I am a wide flood on a plain                        | Rowan    |
| 2/19 to 3/18   | I am a wind on the deep waters                      | Ash      |
| 3/19 to 4/15   | I am a shining tear of the sun                      | Alder    |
| 4/16 to 5/13   | I am a hawk on a cliff                              | Willow   |
| 5/14 to 6/10   | I am a fair amongst flowers                         | Hawthorn |
| 6/11 to 7/8    | I am a god who sets<br>the head afire with smoke    | Oak      |
| 7/9 to 8/5     | I am the battle-waging spear                        | Holly    |
| 8/6 to 9/2     | I am a salmon in a pool                             | Hazel    |
| 9/3 to 9/30    | I am a hill of poetry                               | Vine     |
| 10/1 to 10/28  | I am a ruthless boar                                | Ivy      |
| 10/29 to 11/25 | I am a threatening noise from the sea               | Reed     |
| 11/26 to 12/22 | I am a wave on the sea                              | Elder    |
| 12/23          | Who but I knows the secret<br>of the unhewn dolmen? |          |

## Why Base a Calendar on Trees

Trees are one the most potent magic symbols, especial for the celts. Tree formed a bridge that carries water from the earth up to the sky. They provide food, shelter, water, tools, warmth and medicine. They also change with the seasons providing a symbolic reminders of the cyclic rhythms of nature. Also the cycle of life, death and rebirth. Trees live far longer then humans and their memory can span hundreds of years.

The Celtic Tree Calendar may not be an actual historic calendar used by ancient pagans, but I think it helps modern pagans put the year into a pagan perspective. It puts one in tune with the cycle of the natural seasons, unlike the modern calendar in where the season starts on the solstice, which is the mid-point of the given season. There is the rhythm of the moon, the White goddess is present in regular even intervals unlike the haphazard months of the Geogorian Calendar. The year ends after the bounty of the harvest, a time to commune with ancestral spirits. Most importantly it adds the poetic magic back to life. The modern world for all it technological wonder has lost the poetic magic that makes life truly wonderful. Look for the moon in the trees, both are older and wiser then we. Look to them to life the poetry in life.

Blessed be. Ravenfox

The Celtic tree calendar is made up of thirteen months and day. Each month is named for a tree which signifies particular qualities of that moon during that lunar cycle.

**Birch: Beth (B)** the first letter of the druidic alphabet and sacred to Cerridwen. The birch represents beginnings and birth. The whiteness of the tree suggests a connect to the white moon goddess. She is the birth giver and death bringer and in crone form the carrion eating sow. Birch is the Moon of Inception, the Birch symbolizes protection of children purification and creativity. Month of inception.

**Rowan: Luis (L)** the second letter of the druidic tree alphabet and sacred to the goddess Brigit. Rowan is useful for breaking evil enchantments. An irish folk tale tells of the Rowan of the north that bore the berries of immortality. Moon of Vision, spirit moon and astral travel moon, the Rowan symbolizes healing, personal empowerment and divination. Tree of life.

**Ash: Nion(N)** The latin name is fraxinus meaning firelight and is thought to have meant the light of knowledge and is traditional for the yule log. Moon of the Waters, The Ash symbolizes prosperity, protection and healing. Tree of sea power.

**Alder: Fearn (F)** a letter sacred to Bran brother of branwen Keeper of the Cauldron of Regeneration. The Alder stood for resurrection. Moon of Unity, Efficacy and Self Guidance, the Alder symbolizes spiritual teaching weather magic and mental prowess. Tree of fire.

### Cut and Burn

Oak-logs will warm you well,  
That are old and dry;  
Logs of pine will sweetly smell,  
But sparks will fly.

Birch-logs will burn too fast,  
Chestnuts scarce at all;  
Hawthorn-logs are to to last –  
Cut them in the fall.

Holly-logs will burn like wax,  
|You may burn them green;  
Elm-logs like to smouldering flax,  
No flame to be seen.

Beech-logs for winter time,  
Yew-logs as well;  
Green elder-logs it is crime,  
For any man to sell.

Pear-logs and apple-logs,  
They will scent your room;  
Cherry-logs across the dogs,  
Smell like flowers of broom.

Ash-logs, smooth and grey,  
Burn them green or old;  
Buy up all that come your -  
Worth their weight in gold.

**Willow: Sallie (S)** and that letter was sacred to the goddess Arianhod. Willow bark is one the oldest pain relievers in the world and is still use today in the form of aspirin. Witches Moon, Moon of Balance, trees symbolizes romantic love, healing protection, fertility magic for women. Tree of strife, tree of self-imposed chastity.

**Hawthorn: Uath (H)** sacred to the goddess Maia the goddess of love and death. She is both the ever young virgin giving birth to the god and the grandmother bringing him to the end of the season. The Hawthorn represents the Moon of Restraint, hindrance, The Hawthorn symbolizes fertility peace prosperity and binding. This tree is associated with sexuality and destruction. It was though that sleeping in a house with hawthorn blossoms would cause great misfortune. Although on May Day the blossom are placed at the based of the May Pole. The gathering of hawthorn blossoms was known has "goin a maying". In the legends of Cu Chulain a goddess pronounces a curse on him in crow form and flys to a thicket of hawthorns known has "hawthorn of the crow".

**Oak: Duir (D)** represents power. The classic Dianic grove was composed of oaks. It was the residence of the heaven god who controlled thunder and lighting. The oak also stood for Diana and her lovers the kings of the wood. The oak has strong associations with weather magic. Moon of Strength security Bear moon, the Oak symbolizes positive purposes, magic for men, fidelity. Tree of endurance and triumph.

**Holly: Tinne (T)** is a form of the tau cross which represents heroism and is dedicated to Cu Chulain. The Holly represents the Moon of Encirclement and polarity, the Holly symbolizes protection prophecy, magic for animals, sex magic. Tree of the waning year.

**Hazel/apple: Coll (C)** Moon of the wise, Crone Moon, trees symbolizes manifestation, spirit contact, protection and fertility. Tree of wisdom, tree of immortality. The hazel is an important food producing tree. The prized hazel nut (filbert) was sacred to witches and the sea god, Manannan. It is symbolic of female wisdom. Bards claimed the knowledge of rhymes, epic tales, the secrets of magic, and poetic inspiration came from eating the cared hazel nut. The hazel later became known has witch hazel.

**Vine: Muin (M)** Moon of Celebration, symbolizes the grape fertility, inspiration, prosperity and binding. Tree of joy, exhilaration and wraith.

**Ivy: Gort (G)** Moon of Buoyancy and resilience, the Ivy symbolizes healing, protection cooperation and exorcism. Tree of resurrection.

**Reed Negtal (NG):** Moon of the Home, hearth and the Winter moon, the Reed symbolizes fertility, protection, love and family concerns. Tree of established power.

**Eldar: Ruis (R)** in druidic alphabet and sacred to the goddess or crone Caillech. Who was Hel the Queen of the underworld. The eldar tree represents the Moon of Completeness, the Eldar symbolizes exorcism, prosperity, banishing and healing. It was also known has the witch's tree. Spirits of the dead, called Helleder were said to be imprisoned in the wood of the eldar tree. The would be transformed into the avenging spirits and persecute anyone who cut down an eldar tree to make furniture. A man who fell asleep under and eldar would have visions of Hel's underworld.

# Customs and Lore

## Customs of the Holly Tree

To the druids the evergreen leaves of the holly represented immortality. When winter came druids advised the people to take holly into their homes for it would shelter elves and fairies. There was a warning however to remove the holly entirely from the house before imbolc eve because just one leaf in house would spell misfortune.

Holly has always been associated with mid winter festivals. Holly was given as gifts during the Roman Saturnalia and later mixed with the Celtic traditions celebrating the sun god's birth at a winter solstice. The strongest associations are with the Holly King. During the middle ages and the Renaissance the Holly King became the Greenman, Jack-in-the-Green and the May King. The Holly King is twinned by the Oak King. The Holly King rules from midwinter to midsummer and the Oak King rules from midsummer to midwinter. Twin Gods of light and dark. Scottish Traditions says that no branch should be cut from a holly tree, but rather pulled free in a method considered fit from a sacred tree. It has always been unlucky to fell a holly tree or burn the green skinned holly. Yet luck was increased if a small branch kept from a Yule decoration was hung on the outside of the house where it would protect against lightning.

## Hazel Lore

The Celts regarded the hazel as the tree of knowledge and its nuts were believed to be the ultimate receptacles of wisdom. This is woven into the fabric of Celtic society and culture. The most prolific legends come from Ireland. Mac Coll one of the three earliest rulers' name means son of Hazel. In the Irish triads it is recorded that the punishment from felling either a hazel or apple tree was death. The Salmon of Wisdom received the gift of wisdom at the Connla Well where the nine sacred hazel trees each dropped a hazel nut into the water. On swallowing these nuts the salmon received became the recipient of all knowledge.

## Oak Lore

The oak hosts many forms of life it is called a garden and a country and because of its warmth and friendliness to man it is regarded as an emblem of hospitality and strength. Acorns are said to be man's first food.

The oak is possibly the most widely regarded of all trees. The Greeks, the Romans, the Celts, Germanic cultures, Anglo-Saxons and some Northern European cultures all revered the oak. Often associated with the thunder gods.

In Celtic times certain oaks were carved with a protective circle divided into four equal parts (earth symbol) to prevent the tree from falling.

Herne the Hunter is said to inhabit an oak tree. There are many legends about

Herne the hunter who an antlered horned spirit of southern England who still inhabits Windsor Forest. In the Welsh tradition there is Gwynn ap Nudd (the White one) whose hounds the dogs of Annwn hunt souls across the sky. For these two legends get Herne leading the Wild Hunt.

### The Legend of Herne

There is an old tale goes that Herne the Hunter,  
Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,  
Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight,  
Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;  
And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,  
And makes milch-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain  
In a most hideous and dreadful manner.  
You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know  
The superstitious idle-headed eld  
Receiv'd, and did deliver to our age,  
This tale of Herne the Hunter for a truth.

The Merry Wives of Windsor  
Act 4 Scene 4  
William Shakespeare

### Elder Lore

Witches would often turn themselves into elder trees, one famous witch turned a king and his army to stone. The rollright stones in Oxfordshire are said to be a Danish king and his men on the way to battle the English. The king ask the witch his fate she replied

*Sevenlong strides thou shalst take,  
And if Long Compton thou canst see  
King of England thou shalst be.*

Because he was almost at the crest of a hill he was confident so he rode forth and on the seventh stride a long mound rose up before him blocking his view.

The old witch continued:

*As Long Compton thou canst not see,  
King of England thou shalst not be,  
Rise up stick, and stand still stone,  
For king of England thou shalst be none,  
Thou and thy men hoar stones shall be,  
And I myself an elder tree.*

In an instant the Danish king and his men were turned to stone. The warriors loyal to the king became the Kings Men stones set in a circle and those that questioned his authority became the Whispering Knights huddled together a

part from the others. The King became the Stone King still still in shock. The witch resume her guise as guardian elder tree.

Local customs and tradition around this legend say on midsummers eve if people sought out the elder tree and danced with elder garlands in there hair at midnight the Stone King would turn his head to watch the dancers.

From Tree Wisdom: By Jacqueline Memory Paterson

## Appendix of Tree Symbolism

**Almond:** Divination, clairvoyance, wisdom, money and business.

**Alder:** A water loving tree, but is highly combustible, often used as a symbol of appearance used in glamour spells and has protection against oracular powers.

**Apple:** One of my favorite trees associated with healing, prosperity, love and perpetual youth, innocence. The juice is used to infer strength and beauty. Also represents a choice.

**Apricot:** Love.

**Ash:** Toughest , most elastic wood. Represents the linking of the inner and outer worlds. Wood for purification, good for removing and cleansing internalized strife. Mental purification, protection and sea magic.

**Beech:** Stability and flow of energy. Beech is an incredible conductor of energy.

**Birch:** The first tree to grow on bare soil represents the rebirth of the forest. The inner bark of the tree provides a pain reliever that is used to treat arthritis. Represents protection, purification and new beginnings. Useful in speels involving structure support sheilding warding and cleansing.

**Blackthorn:** A winter tree representing unexpected change, realization that you and your life have changed radically, enter life reborn.

**Cedar:** Prosperity and longevity. Used to repulse energies. Best if used to drive of negative energies.

**Cypress:** A sad tree, A tree of mourning, often used to build funeral pyres.

**Dogwood:** Charm and finesse. Used to enhance one's social abilities and increase personality. The flower is good to cleanse wounds.

**Eldar:** Represents the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end.

**Elm:** Protection often planted in tainted areas to warn off others.

**Fig:** Symbol of fertility, strength, energy and health.

**Fir:** Symbolizes malleability, cleverness and ability to change.

**Hawthorn:** Hottest fires.A symbol of strife and harshness, tool for protection, Its energies will work for defense, use to disspell energies, excellent for banishing strife.

**Hazel:** Divination marriage and protection. Skills in poetry divination and meditation, inspires others.

**Hazelnut:** Symbolizes attraction, loss of inhibition or will power or drowsiness.

**Heather:** Listen to your bodies message.

**Hemlock:** Do not use.

**Holly:** Symbolizes a challenges of the will to be overcome with unity and concerted effort. Sometimes symbolizes combat and defense often used has symbol of life.

**Honey suckle:** Pursue your desire, allow yourself to experience pleasure.

**Ivy:** Represents your links with others, the search for ones inter self.

**Lemon:** Divination and healing.

**Lime:** Chastity and neutrality.

**Juniper:** Protection

**Maple:** Divination and love. happy tree, luring, drawing in bringing together.

**Mulberry:** Knowledge divination, wisdom and the will.

**Oak:** Healing strength and money. King of the forest grows slowly, the doorway to mysteries. Symbol of widow and strength and endurance, good for storing and conduction power. used in spells involving authority, majesty, power strength wisdom and endurance.

**Olive:** Peace, fruitfulness, security and money.

**Orange:** Love and marriage.

**Palm:** Strength.

**Peach:** Love, divination.

**Pine:** Purification health, fortune fertility and prosperity.

**Reed:** Symbolic of music.

**Rowan:** Protection and strength. An aid and protection against enchantment.

**Sequia:** Symbolize eternity longevity and vast wisdom.

**Silver Fir:** What you seek shall be found.

**Spruce:** Symbolize north and cold.

**Sycamore:** Symbolize growth and persistence. North American holy tree.

**Vine:** Release of prophetic powers.

**Walnut:** Healing and protection.

**White poplar:** The challenge you face will be endured and conquered with determination.

**Willow:** Healing protection from enchantment, wishing and easy delivery of babies. This tree is strongly linked to lunar rhythms and feminine aspects. Ability to banish depression and sadness. The bark contains salicin used to treat rheumatic fever and various damp diseases.

**Yew:** Symbolizes death and rebirth, transformation, great age and reincarnation, good shield.