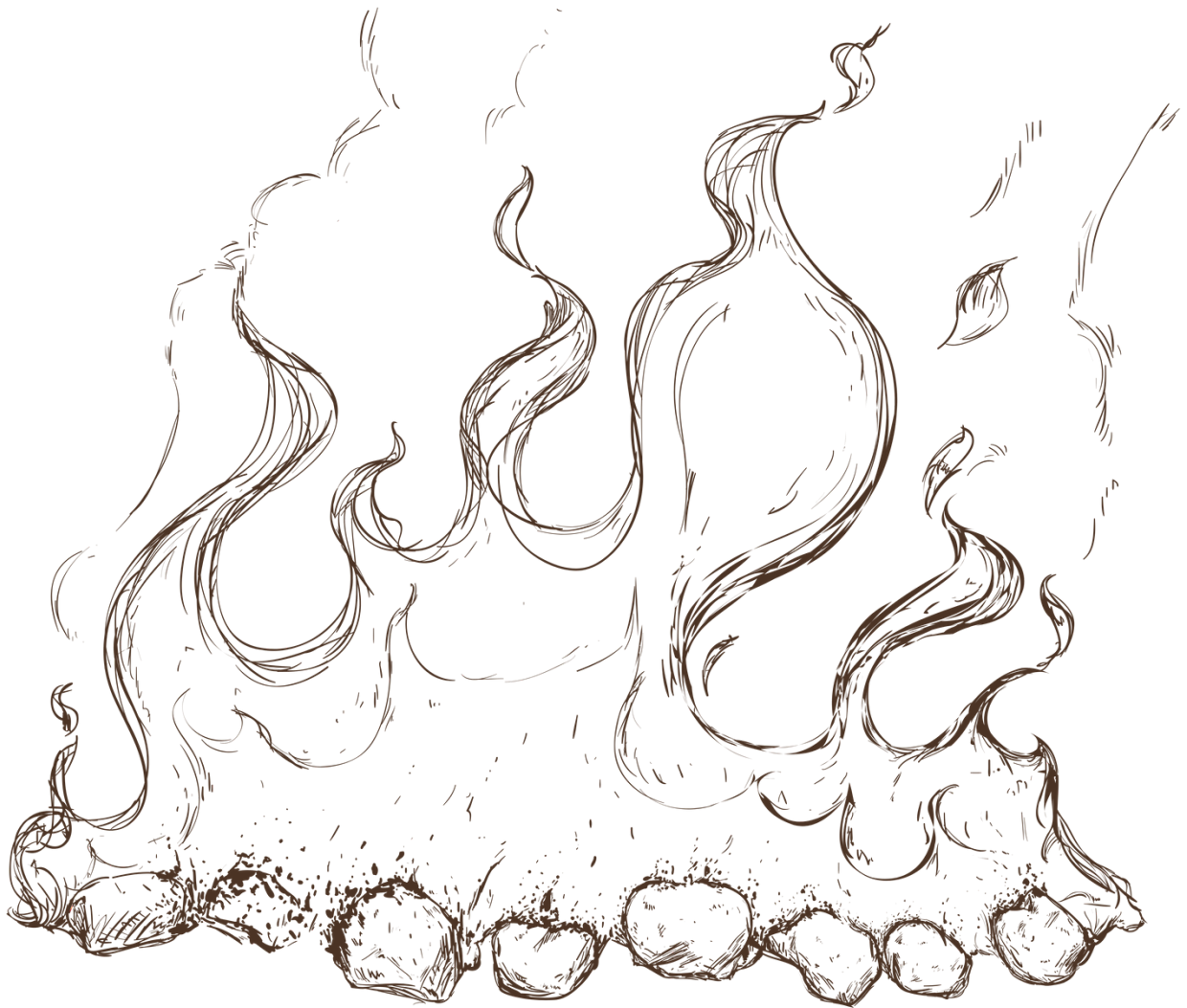


S u m m e r

Fire

Beltane



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The Season of Growing

Our modern ideas around Beltane come from the Pre-Christian Celtic fire festival Beltane which celebrated the midpoint of the Celtic year and the beginning of the growing season. There was an understanding of balance in the Celtic calendar: A dark half, beginning at Samhain, and a light half that began at Beltane. This is a time when we see Mother Earth start to blossom into her full life-giving glory. You may feel like Spring has just sprung but the Earth has been hard at work turning buds into full blooms. She is slowly transforming from a young Maiden and preparing for her journey through the gates into Motherhood. In some traditions, Beltane is when the Goddess conceives the Sun that she will give birth to at Yule. She is the May Queen or the May Bride. Her consort, the Young Oak King (as Jack-In-The-Green or the Green Man) falls in love with her and wins her hand. This day has become associated with lust, love, handfastings, weddings, flirty, and passionate energy. It is a great time for fertility and sex magic or igniting a passion for a new project.

It's said that Celtic cultures celebrated the beginning of the Growing Season when the Hawthorn trees were in bloom. In modern times this is from sundown on April 30th into May 1st. In ancient Rome, a celebration for Floralia, the Goddess of flowers was held. Many cultures in the Northern Hemisphere held festivals around this time. Some of the names are: Beltane, Beltain, Beltaine, May Day, Walburga, Galan Mai, Shenn de Boaldyn, Bealtinne, Beltine, Beal-tine, Rudemas, Roodmas, Cetsamhain, Walpurgisnacht, Hexennacht, May Eve, Tana's Day, La Giornata di Tana, Samhradh, La Baal Tinne, Whitsun, Aphrodisia, Maia's Feast.

This is the season that cultivates the blossom, which then becomes the magic of summer and the fruit of the harvest. When creating your personal tradition, observe the changes in nature closely and choose a day that makes sense to you. The idea is that it is celebrated between the Spring Equinox and the Summer Solstice. I call this the shift into Growing or the Season of Fire (Summer).

The Season of Growing

Cétshamhain means "first of Summer" and is mentioned in some of the earliest Irish literature. This marked that it was time to drive the cattle out to the Summer pastures to graze. It was a tradition for people and cattle to walk around or between bonfires and sometimes leap over them as the flames, smoke, and ashes were deemed sacred. These rituals were performed for protection, cleansing, and to encourage growth. All hearth fires were re-lit from the Beltane bonfire. Beltane fires were kindled solely with friction, called a needle fire, it was considered to be sacred. In Ireland, a wheel and spindle were used to create the fire. The wheel is a common symbol of the Sun and perfect to kindle the Beltane blaze. Beltane fires were believed to have magical properties. They were capable of granting health and protection. Rituals were created around gathering the wood used for the fire, some sources saying to collect 9 different types of wood sacred to the Celts: Birch, Rowan, Ash, Alder, Willow, Hawthorn, Oak, Holly, and Hazel. But be warned that you should never add Elder to the fire. Per the Wiccan Rede: "Nine woods in the Cauldron go, burn them quick a' burn them slow. Elder be ye Lady's tree; burn it not or cursed ye'll be."

In medieval Europe, the first day of May or Beltane was the day cows were moved to the rich summer pastures this provided them with nourishment to feed their newborn calves and for people as they began to culture dairy. While they were being moved, cattle would have been ceremoniously driven through the fire (between two fires) to be cleansed. Walpurgis Night is an abbreviation of Saint Walpurgis Night or Saint Walpurga's Eve is a modern-day European and Scandinavian festival derived from the merging of the ancient pagan celebration of Beltane with the commemoration of the canonization of the Christian Saint Walpurga. Saint Walpurgis was hailed by the Christians of Germany for protection. To this day the pagan influence remains as people continue to light bonfires on Saint Walpurga's Eve to ward off evil spirits.

Celebration Ideas

This cycle reminds us to shift for the Season of Growing.

- Make flower crowns and crown a May King and Queen. Or wear flowers in your hair.
- The May Bush and May Bough is a small tree or branch of hawthorn, rowan, holly, or sycamore that is decorated with flowers, ribbons. It's reminiscent of the Lone Bush of the Fae.
- Cleanse with fire or have a bonfire and use all parts as something sacred. Make a ritual out of gathering wood and building the fire.
- Leave offerings to the Fae or do faerie magic.
- Merry making and Maypole dancing. The maypole traditions go way back and are celebrated all over the world today. You can make your own maypole and learn a traditional dance or make up your own. Learn how to make an altar Maypole [here](#).
- Honor the Sacred Feminine with a Goddess Ritual
- Have a handfasting ceremony in place of a wedding or as a recommitment ceremony.
- Frolic. Dance and be as silly and free as possible in nature.
- Eat something decadent and/or experience sensual pleasure.
- Brings flowers and fresh herbs to a neighbor
- Plant a tree
- Rehabilitate the banks of a stream
- Clean up litter from an outdoor area
- Work on a community garden
- Decorate a Beltane altar
- Wash your face with the dew of the morning grass, it will bring blessings.
- Make ribbon sticks and dance with them outside in the sun.
- Jump over a candle, bonfire, or another representative.
- Along with the season, celebrating fertility also means celebrating your mother so honor Mother's Day.
- Cook with honey, milk, and flowers.

Sources

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Rosemary Gladstar's Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health

The Center of Excellence: Master Herbalist

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The Center of Excellence: Crystal Healing

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Maud Grieve's A Modern Herbal

Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs

The Lost Book of Herbal Remedies

Llewellyn's Sabbat Essentials: Beltane

...and various other sources collect over 20 years. Some are printed, some are handwritten, while others are scribbled on a napkin. I've had many teachers over the years and many of my biggest inspirations came from simple conversations and gatherings rather than formal lessons or rituals. Because of this, I may not always have every source of information but if you recognize something, I would be happy to include and/or link to the original source.