

S p r i n g

Air

Imbolc



All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in written form from Lacey Burbage. Reviewers may quote brief passages.

The Season of Planting

When the dark days of winter have seemed to go on forever, the first sign of spring is refreshing to the soul. It is the promise that winter will not last forever--although we know it is not quite over yet. It is at this time that we celebrate the subtle shift into The Season of Planting or The Season of Air on or around February 2nd. There may still be snow on the ground but there are new plants sprouting just beneath, waiting to be reborn into daffodils, paperwhites, and snow bells. As bears and other wild animals slowly begin to awaken from their winter slumber, so too does Mother Earth begin to stretch out her arms in preparation for her rebirth.

Also known as Imbolc or Imbolg in Wiccan traditions, other names include Oimelec (ewe's milk) and Feast of St. Brigid. It is midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox and in more recent years has been reinterpreted as Candlemas. During the depths of winter, it can feel as though the warm sun of spring may never return. Imbolc marks the time when life eagerly begins to look forward and prepare for longer, warmer days. This is a great time when new ideas are planted. It is a time to examine people and philosophies in our lives and take stock of where we want our energy to go when spring has truly sprung.

The modern Gregorian calendar marks the first day of spring the spring equinox but to the ancient Celts, Imbolc represented the beginning of spring. Animals could be brought out to pasture as they were no longer dependant on stored for food. There may be newly born animals in the barn suckling on their mother's milk, and the windows may be opened to invite fresh but cool air inside. it is a time for renewal and cleansing.

The Season of Planting

The Celtic Goddess Brigid is very closely tied to this seasonal shift. Also known as Brighid, Brigit, Bride, Brigantia, and St. Brigid, she is a Goddess in many forms but is mostly presented in the triple aspect of Maiden, Mother, and Crone of the Earth Goddess. Over the generations, she has become a beloved and powerful Goddess to many, although most closely associated with Ireland she is important to Scotland, Wales, and many parts of Eastern Europe. She is the Goddess of the fire and flame, change, poetry, inspirations, wisdom, healing, creativity, water, prophecy, learning, and childbirth. Called the Goddess of the Eternal Flame, she has a shrine in Kildare, Ireland which holds a flame that is guarded day and night by her priestesses. Often called the Goddess of the Sacred Well there is a well dedicated to her at Liscannor in County Clare, Ireland.

As St. Brigid, she is put forth as the midwife of Mary when Jesus was born. In other stories, she healed the sick, with water from her sacred well and blessed baby Jesus with three drops of water on his head. She is said to have been born on February 1st (Candlemas Eve), to bring the change in weather, and that she was born at dawn--solidifying her connection to this time of year.

Other celebrations this time of year are Februalia in ancient Rome which was a purification ritual celebrating the Goddess Juno. American Native tribes such as the Seneca and Kwakiutl honored winter's embrace by holding ceremonies of naming, alliances, marriages, and more. And in ancient Egypt, the Goddess of childbirth, Renenutet was celebrated during the seasonal transitions which revolved around the flooding of the Nile. Like Brigid, she governs over laboring mothers, milk, bread, and wine.

Celebration Ideas

This cycle reminds us to embrace nature's natural cycles and rhythms. As she sleeps under a blanket of soft snow, we know she will soon be awakened.

- Make a vision board.
- Set goals for the next 12 months.
- Do a Year Ahead Tarot Spread and pull 12 cards, one for each month.
- Awaken your inner Wild Woman/Person
- Connect with the energy of the snow or snow spirits.
- Collect snow and allow it to melt into snow water. Use in workings for new beginnings, fresh starts, purity, and cleansing.
- Feed the birds. Check with your local Audubon Society for guidelines.
- Work with Witch Hazel as it blossoms bright yellow flowers in winter.
- Go on a walk in the woods. Notice the beauty of a winter wonderland. See if you can find any early signs of spring.
- Take a scenic drive to a river or stream. Observe if it is frozen over or how the ice naturally develops.
- Write down a bad habit on paper and freeze it to rid yourself of something unwanted. Either outside or in the freezer.
- Dig a hole in the snow, add candle wick, and pour melted candle wax inside to make snow candles.
- Howle at the Full Moon.
- Make hand-dipped candles
- Craft a Brigid's Cross

Sources

Sophia Center for Goddess Study Priestess Training Class handouts by Dr. Candace Kant, Professor of History

Llewellyn's Complete Book of Correspondences by Sandra Kynes

Full Moon Feast: Food and the Hunger for Connection by Jessica Prentice

The Herbcrafter's Tarot by Latisha Guthrie and Joanna Powell Colbert

Stepping Into Ourselves: An anthology of Writings on Priestesses by Anne Key & Candace Kant

Rosemary Gladstar's Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health

The Center of Excellence: Master Herbalist

The Center of Excellence: Advanced Herbalist

The Center of Excellence: Crystal Healing

Hibiscus Moon Crystal Academy

Maud Grieve's A Modern Herbal

Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs

The Lost Book of Herbal Remedies

Llewellyn's Sabbat Essentials: Imbolc

...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.