

M i s s u m m e r  
F i r e

# Litha



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# The Season of Growing

We come to the last celebration in The Season of Fire which marks the height of the growing season and the pause of Midsummer.

At Midsummer or summer solstice, we have arrived at the longest day and the shortest night. It is the balance to Midwinter and is the height of the sun's life-giving energy. From now on, we will enter the waning part of the year. The Earth is overflowing with fertility and fruitfulness. This is a time of joy, celebration, and soaking up the sunshine. At Midsummer, we see Mother Earth full and pregnant with child --She holds within her the seed of life and she will give birth to the Sun at Midwinter. We honor this time knowing that this is the climax and soon we will surrender to the Dark Half of the year.

Nearly every agricultural society has marked the height of summer. It would have been hard not to notice that on this day, the sun reaches its zenith in the sky. The word solstice is derived from Latin solstitium, which translates to "sun stands still". On solar events like solstices and equinoxes, the sun seems to pause in the sky. Early European calendars (Germanic and Anglo-Saxon) only had two seasons, Summer and Winter. These seasons began on the equinoxes and the solstices were the midway points.

During Midsummer, we see the harmony between land and sky, fire and water. This is a celebration of warmth and light as the crops are fully growing from the heat of the sun, but require water to keep them alive. This is a time to frolic in the hot sun and dance in the summer rain

# The Season of Growing

In folklore, it is believed to be a time when faerie folk pass into the human world at twilight and offer blessings. It was this tale that inspired Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Nights Dream*.

Other names and celebrations are Feast of Saint John the Baptist, St. John's Feast Day, Jāņi, Enyovden, Liđa, Midsommar, Ivan Kupala Day, Juhannus, Mittumaari, Alban Hefin, Gŵyl Ganol yr Haf, Sankthans, Joninès, Jaanipäev, Keskikesä, and more. European traditions call the summer solstice Litha.

It's documented by English historian Bede in the early 700's that Litha isn't the name of a particular holiday; it's the name of an Anglo-Saxon month of double-length roughly matching up to the modern months of June and July combined. According to Bede, the word Litha means gentle or navigable. He explained that in both months the winds are gentle and more desirable for smooth sailing.

Because the old Anglo-Saxon calendar was lunar and not solar it was sometimes necessary to extend Litha into a third month, in such cases Litha became Trilithi.

By the sixth century, Christianity began celebrating the summer solstice by balancing Christ's conception and birth with that of his cousin, John the Baptist. These became the celebration of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. St. John's Feast Day is customarily celebrated on June 24, just a few days after the solstice, which usually falls around June 20th.

Midsummer has been celebrated since the Paleolithic and continues to be a major celebration in many cultures around the world.

# Celebration Ideas

This reminds us to pause and honor the season of Growing.

## *Herbal candle rings*

Make a wreath or ring with fresh herbs. Since your herb garden is in full swing, it's time to make some creative use of it. Snip a few long herbs and arrange them around a tall candle.

## *Bonfire*

Celebrate the fiery aspect of the sun with a blazing, roaring fire in your back yard or go camping for a full nature getaway. It's the longest day of the year, so stay up late by the fire.

## *Music and Dance*

Use a tambourine, drum, chimes, chant or sing. Incorporating music is a way to celebrate the season. And don't forget to dance like a dervish, even better if it's in the rain.

## *Use Beach Magic*

- Use the ocean's waves to get rid of someone or something in your life that is negative or brings you unhappiness.
- Take advantage of the four classical elements — earth, air, fire, and water — while you're visiting the beach.
- If you're going to take home found items, be sure you check with locals first to make sure it's permitted. Don't take spiral shells. They become homes for ocean life.
- Fill a small bag with sand and bring it home for magical workings that incorporate all four elements. Do the same with a bottle of ocean water.
- Seashells are associated with protection, particularly of the home.
- Write something in the sand that you want to banish and let the tide take it away.

## Sources

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Maud Grieve's A Modern Herbal

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...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.