

A Solar Wheel of the Year

By Priestess Maya White Sparks

As initiates in Nature Spirituality it is our path to attune to the Divine through Nature. As we move through the seasons that are marked by the Solstices, Equinoxes, and Cross-Quarter Days, we can tap into magical energies and use them for self-transformation and the good of All.

In the Spiral Grove we are aware that there are a variety of mythologies and festivals associated with the Wheel of the Year. It is good to study at least one in depth and others if you can. My purpose here is to present the bare bones of the solar year on which you can hang the various festivals. This is as I have experienced them. You may sense other aspects.

As we attune to these energies, we are propelled through the Spiral of Evolution -- birth, growth, death, rebirth,--changing and developing into our God/dess selves, exploring the potential of existence to its fullest. It is not always an easy path, but its challenges are worthwhile and the joys are boundless and magical.

Winter Solstice - the shortest day of the year. A few days later , the sun appears to be reborn because the hours of daylight begin to increase after holding steady for several days. In the Northern Hemisphere we are in the season of rest and renewal as the creatures hibernate and the Earth sleeps. A new self can be born at the Solstice, however, the demands of the holiday season in our culture tend to put the inner journey on the "back burner." Many do not fully engage in the inner transformation until January, when it is said that depression abounds. Depression can be an aspect of the journey inward as we touch our pain and "stuckness", but it is only temporary. The other side of this pain is rebirth.

Candlemas/Imbolc - The coming of Candlemas brings a welcome focus on inspiration and growth at Mid-Winter, the halfway (cross-quarter) point between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox. The increase in daylight is noticeable now and wildlife starts to be more active. There is a spiritual excitement in the air as the light quickens both our imaginations and the seeds in the earth. "Seed visions" come to us in our Winter Dreaming that can be manifest over the unfolding solar cycle. It is a good time

for writing, music, arts, and crafts. Cleansing practices prepare us for a fresh start in Spring.

Spring Equinox – Spring officially arrives and the energies support us in beginning new projects, just as they support the emergence of buds and early spring flowers. There is a balance of yin and yang on this day and then the days start to grow longer than nights.

May Eve – the halfway (cross-quarter) point between Spring Equinox and the Summer Solstice. The warm times arrive, the leaves and more spring flowers are bursting forth. The growth energies of the Earth are so tangible, we feel “in love” with the earth and turned-on by the rising energies and beauty of it all. It is a great time for celebration of the joy of life. As a matter of fact, it is hard to think of anything else! Many traditions celebrate the union of the May King and Queen. The symbolism of the “sacred marriage” can be utilized alchemically by working on the unification of our inner feminine and masculine, accepting both aspects of ourselves.

Summer Solstice – this is the longest day of the year, marking the onset of summer. There is the height of energy for growing our gardens and all our projects. The long days are good for traveling, meeting with friends, and community gatherings. The solar energies have reached their peak, however, and begin a gradual decline, with days beginning to shorten. Awareness of this fact reminds us not to forget the balance of the yin so that we don’t burn ourselves out! Take time for rest as well as work. Hot summer temperatures help us to go slow, but it can be harder to meditate because the energies are so outward and active.

First Harvest – the halfway point (cross-quarter day) between Summer Solstice and Fall Equinox. The declining of the year can be felt as days are noticeably shorter and a few leaves here and there turn gold, red, and brown. Our projects and gardens are bearing fruits and we begin the cycle of harvest celebrations. There is much to be grateful for and there is still more time for more manifestations. Feeling Autumn around the corner, the shorter days begin to pull our awareness inward. Perhaps this is why in many traditions this is a time for “auguries” (a word for divination or prophecy which is echoed in the name of the month, August).

Fall Equinox - A point of balance between yin and yang. This second harvest celebration comes at the onset of autumn after which the nights start to be longer than the days. The Goddess gives signs that the cold season is coming so that we can prepare for it. Our consciousness begins its descent into the underworld, the realm of the unconscious and the inner self. Meditation starts to be easier again.

Days of the Dead/Hallowmas - the cross-quarter day "between the years", the Witches' New Year. The declining solar energies are very noticeable and the veil between us and Spirit is very thin., helping us to be aware that Spirit is standing by to help us. Cold weather makes itself felt and the community withdraws indoors. There is a bit of fear and uneasiness in the air as we feel the tug of our unconscious goblins and become aware of the patterns we need to change in ourselves and in our lives. We enter the tunnel of transformation that begins here and empties out into the Winter Solstice and re-birth. The time has come to face the truth about ourselves, the beginning of healing. Like the trees that are letting go of their leaves, it is an excellent time for us to do the work of releasing the pain of the past from our bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits.