

Recipes and Rituals of the Herbcrafter's Tarot

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Springtime with Dandelion and The Fool



Welcoming springtime with dandelion is almost too perfect. The bright yellow flowers bring the first sign of color to lawns all over town after the monochrome days of winter and provides one of the first wild foods of spring for the pollinators and people alike. This delightful weed is an easily identifiable and fairly common plant for any budding herbcrafter. It is often the first herb beginners work with and this makes it a wonderful messenger for The Fool in The Herbcrafter's Tarot.



The recipes and rituals of spring are refreshing, renewing, and reviving. They are an invitation to awaken our hearts and bodies with the Earth. While Dandelion holds the brightest torch of spring, there are many cards in The Herbcrafter's Tarot that carry the energy of springtime. Try the recipes and rituals below with Horsetail in the 10 of Earth, Ocotillo in the Adelita of Water, Nettle in the Ace of Earth, Violet found in the Kitchen Garden on the Wheel of Fortune as well as any plants that make themselves known to you during this season.

ART OF NOTICING

The Art of Noticing is an intentional practice of increasing one's awareness. Each activity sharpens our sensory skills to experience the world around us more acutely. As our awareness grows so does our sense of purpose and connection. Noticing nature in this way is in itself is a truly rich exercise. However this practice can also guide us toward insights from our soul inspired by the natural world. As you play with each practice, consider the questions on a deeper level. What does The Noticing bring up in your own thoughts and feelings? Trust

the impulses and ideas that come to mind as messages from your deepest self. Consider it a pollination of the spirit.

Practice: Listening Walk

Set out like The Fool and take a listening walk. It can be in the city, or in a more wild natural landscape. Your task is simply to act as observer. We aren't looking for food or harvesting medicine. We are listening to nature. If you've ever felt bombarded or impatient by a season, this practice will help. When we exercise impeccable listening, our own wild nature returns and allows us to know intimately how best to nourish ourselves in these times.



Invitation:

- 1. Allow what you hear to guide your path. Go in the direction of leaves rustling, turn left toward the tweeting bird or the hollering cat.
- 2. Try not to oracalize what you hear at first. Allow the experience of listening, of tuning your awareness, to be medicine enough.

What does the music of spring sound like?
Where in your body does it resonate the loudest?
What does it feel like to listen to spring with deep attention?

Practice: Break the Shell

Notice flower buds as they emerge from their protective holdings. The spirit of this season asks us to release and receive almost simultaneously for months. These transitional seasons are a time where impermanence and possibility dwell. We are asked to trust in the audacity of life. Observing nature in season gives us clues on how we can hold ourselves, body and spirit through a similar change.

Invitation:

- 1. Pay attention to buds as they begin to form. Consider how they unfold from their casings. Look at the pieces of shell and sepal they cling to, if any, as they arrive.
- 2. If you don't have access to wild spaces or a garden, sow some seeds in a windowsill pot and observe sprouting plants for this practice; Sunflower and Calendula are especially interesting to watch.

What is the energy of their emergence?
What feelings stir within when you watch the sprout or flower emerge?

How might this noticing influence your own becoming?



GETTING TO KNOW DANDELION

Dandelion is a small, low-to-the-ground flowering plant. It grows to about a foot and spreads rapidly. Dandelion has many look alikes. All of which are generally* non-toxic (and edible), but some are not very tasty. Dandelion contains iron, calcium, and vitamins B, C, and D. It is known for strengthening the liver and kidneys, promoting good digestion, increasing energy and breaking down fats and sugars.



Dandelion is a beneficial plant to an ecosytem. As one of the first flowers of spring, insects rely on dandelion as they emerge from winter. Ladybugs are drawn to dandelion and help keep other pests at bay. Bees rely on the plant as an early source of nectar and pollen. The long taproots bring minerals up into the plant creating a nourishing biomass for the soil when the dandelion dies.

IDENTIFYING DANDELION

Stem: Dandelions have a round, smooth stem full of white sap, the have no branches.

Flowers & Seeds: The yellow flowers appear throughout spring. They are circular with squared petals. A distinguishing characteristic of dandelion flowers is that there is only one flower per stem.



Leaves: The leaves are deep green, and spin out in a flat circular rosette from the root center close to the ground. They are lance shaped with toothed edges.

They are not prickly nor hairy and they tend to lay flat rather than grow up with the flower.



*Always properly identify a plant and review personal contraindications before ingesting.

HERBCRAFT

The herbcraft of spring is about waking up the heart and body after the sluggish time of winter. Please remember the keys to a responsible harvest: Ask permission and leave an offering of gratitude. Only take what you need, never more than 10%. Clearly identify the plant.

Dandy Water

As we are revitalizing our bodies from winter foods and perhaps a bit of inactivity, it is important to stay in flow. Dandelion is a healthy spring green with a bitter taste. Adding a tiny bit of bitter action to your water, especially before a meal, will help wake up your digestive system and quench your thirst at the same time. Simply put a few dandelion leaves or root in your cold water bottle. Take some with you on your listening walk.



Dandelion Bud Capers

Gather dandelion buds when they are still compact and closed. Remove the calyx, the tiny unfolded leaves. Fill a jar 2/3 full with buds. Add a few slices of onion, garlic cloves and peppercorns. Cover with apple cider vinegar and brew on your counter for 2 weeks. Spoon out the buds as desired. Add to meals as a bright treat. You can enjoy the tasty liquid as a dressing over your favorite spring greens.





DANDELION, THE FOOL: TAROT SPREAD & JOURNAL PROMPTS

(Turn up a card for each of the questions, or just start writing in response to the prompt. Your choice!)

- What audacious adventure is calling you?
- What risks are you taking if you go on this adventure?
- What "foolish" wisdom might come your way if you follow your seed-dream?



SPELL, WISH, OR PRAYER

When the dandelions in your neighborhood have gone to seed, pluck one, make a "foolish" heartfelt wish, and blow. See the seeds scatter to the four winds, and know your wish is carried near and far, seeking the just-right soil where it will germinate and take root.

GRATITUDE / RECIPROCITY PRACTICE

Find a field, lawn, or empty lot full of dandelions. Dance or move, expressing your appreciation for their bright yellow cheeriness through moving your body. Roll around in the grass and the dandelions, and giggle with delight! Don't worry about appearing foolish to anyone who might see you ~ be innocent as a child, with a heart full of joy. True wisdom indeed.

BLESSING

May you seek wisdom in weeds.



Summer with Lavender and The Four of Air



Lavender brings the sweet celebration of summer. The intoxicating smell offers serenity and relaxation. The bright purple flowers invoke joy at first sight. Beloved by bees and humans it is known for its ability to calm and soothe. Lavender is also a reliable border plant keeping the garden boundaries strong. These are some of the reasons why we chose this plant as the messenger of the Four of Air in the Herbcrafter's Tarot.



The recipes and rituals of summer are relaxing, soothing and sweet. They are an invitation to pause with the Earth and appreciate our wholeness. While lavender is our representative here, there are many cards in The Herbcrafter's Tarot that hold the pace of summer. Try the recipes and rituals below with Mallow in the Two of Water, California poppy in the Hija of Fire, St. John's Wort in The Sun and Raspberry in the Three of Earth as well as any plants that make themselves known to you during this season.

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the impulses and ideas that come to mind as messages from your deepest self. Consider it a pollination of the spirit.

Practice: Break with the Bees

Take time out for a break like in The Four of Air and lie in the grass. Summer is a time to truly move slow like honey and savor life. Seek restorative medicine in the present moment.

After the busyness of spring, it's a chance to sit and savor, heal and recharge.

Invitation:

1. Find a quiet place to sit near budding flowers. Allow yourself to become still and your breathing to become slow and steady. As you relax, the bees will return to do their work.



2. Let go of words and questions. Simply tune in to your senses and experience your body fully.

Practice: Proximity Sense

Fortify your boundaries as in The Four of Air. Our proximity sense is sometimes called "personal space." Working with botanicals can be a safe way to understand our energetic borders. When we become aware of our own body we are able to create a conscious container that, like lavender at the edge of a garden, protects the tender places within.

Invitation:

- 1. Sit in the center of a busy garden. If you are able to put a blindfold over your eyes, do so for at least 5 minutes. If you are alone, gently lean in each direction slowly. If you have a partner, ask them to walk you around the space.
- 2. Visualize the outline of your body and focus on the pulsing heat that radiates from your skin. It will be subtle at first.

What do you first notice about your own sense of proximity?

How does your ability change the longer you are blindfolded?

Remove your blindfold. How does this experience altar your relationship to the space, if at all?

GETTING TO KNOW LAVENDER

Lavender is a popular evergreen shrub that offers much to the ecosystem. Besides being a favorite of the bees, it is often used as a border plant in the garden. Growing strong woody stems, its potent volatile oils help to keep unwanted animals such as rodents from crossing the boundary. It keeps other plants from growing too far past the border as well. There are many varieties of lavender, all of which are useful. Lavender gets its name from the latin root *lavare*, which means to wash and has been used since ancient times



as an antiseptic, antibacterial cleaning agent. As a tea or tincture, it provides relief from headaches, depression and tension. Our grandmothers used it to ease menopausal

symptoms by carrying lavender sachets in their pockets and inhaling the scent all day long. Lavender oil applied topically eases the pain of burns.

HERBCRAFT

The herbcraft of summer is about soothing the heart and body after the busy emerging of spring. Lavender essential oil that floats on the air helps calm and soothe our minds allowing us to relax and retreat when needed.

Calming Sachet

Give yourself the gift of rest and peace wherever you are. The fragrant oils in lavender calm the mind and relax the body. Simply fill a small square of fabric, a tissue, or even an empty tea sachet with a bit of lavender and carry in your pocket.

Lavender Oil

Place dried lavender buds in the top pan of a double boiler. Cover with a mild oil such as jojoba or sunflower oil to an inch above the flowers. Gently warm for 30 minutes to an hour, taking care not to boil the mixture.

Strain and bottle. Use this oil as a calming



remedy as well as to anoint yourself to activate your strong and healthy boundaries.

LAVENDER, THE FOUR OF AIR: TAROT SPREAD & JOURNAL PROMPTS

(Turn up a card for each of the questions, or just start writing in response to the prompt. Your choice!)

- How can you create strong boundaries and retreat behind them?
- What would need to happen for you to take some time out, to withdraw and rest?
- How would your life be different if you chose to take a sacred pause to calm the body and mind?



SPELL, WISH, OR PRAYER

Make a lavender wand, braiding your desire for firm boundaries into each twist and turn, as you weave bright ribbon over and under the lavender stalks. Inhale deeply, allowing the fragrance to relax and calm you. Envision yourself safely behind a hedge of lavender, where you can rest and contemplate before taking action. (Here's a video tutorial.)

GRATITUDE / RECIPROCITY PRACTICE

Sit with a lavender bush, open your heart, and sing a song of praise and gratitude to Lavender, <u>like this one by Beautiful Chorus</u>. "Thank you for your blessings, thank you for your blessings, your guidance is wise indeed." (If a lavender bush is not nearby, anoint yourself with lavender oil and breathe it in, singing to the spirit of the plant.)



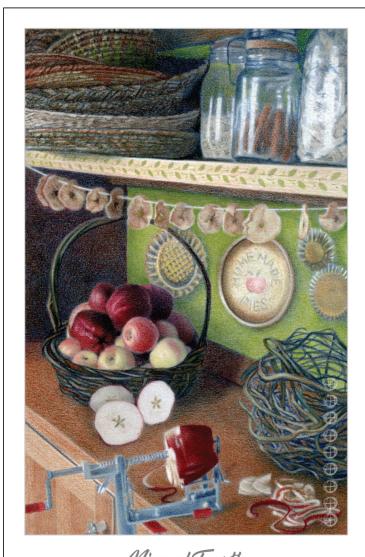
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BLESSING

May you withdraw behind borders, taking time for contemplation before taking action.



Fall with Apple and The Mine of Earth



Nine of Earth APPLE

There are few better plants that harken fall than the apple. It's easy, sometimes to forget that this delicious food is also a wonderful medicine plant. Apple promotes good health and longevity. The sweet crisp treat gives us energy and keeps us moving through the harvest time. Apple trees are prolific and offer much food to share. The young twigs are also useful in basketweaving and other container making. These are some of the reasons why we chose this plant as the messenger of the Nine of Earth in the Herbcrafter's Tarot.



The recipes and rituals of fall are invigorating and bright. They are an invitation to raise our energy with the Earth to capture and preserve the hard work of the growing season so that we may be fortified all winter. While apple is our representative here, there are many cards in The Herbcrafter's Tarot that carry the medicine of fall. Try the recipes and rituals below with Rose in The Empress, Wild Cherry in the Nine of Fire, Cinnamon in the Seven of Fire and Garlic in Strength as well as any plants that make themselves known to you during this season.

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Practice: Eat the Stars

The Nine of Earth shows us that the hidden stars of hope sustains us. What a pleasure and joy it is to sit and fully appreciate the magic of an apple. For this practice enjoy an apple like never before. Give yourself twenty minutes to take time and savor each delicious healing bite.

Invitation:

- 1. Lay an apple on its side, with the core going in a horizontal direction and slice the apple into rings. Place them on a decorative plate and find a quiet place to sit and eat undistracted.
- 2. Follow your senses as you take each bite. Let yourself first feel the grainy texture when you pick up the slice, then fully experience the smell. Notice any sensations in your body. As you chew note where the flavor hits your tongue and how it feels as it moves through when you swallow.



Photo by Donata Thomas

Practice: Lead with your Nose

Set out on a sensory walk like we did with Dandelion but this time let the smells of fall be your guide. In the Nine of Earth, we preserve the joy of the harvest by putting up apples from the garden that we can share and enjoy later. As we eat applesauce later we immediately feel the sense of accomplishment, community and joy we experienced in harvest time. Preserve the energy of good moments by elevating your sense of smell so you can stimulate the area of your brain that interprets and contains our emotional memory.



Photo by JPC

Invitation:

- 1. Fall is rich with intense aromas. Allow what you smell to guide your path. Do this practice blindfolded with a partner, if available.
- 2. Seek out a plant smell (specific), a space smell (marsh, forest, garden etc) and a manmade smell.

Let yourself experience this prompt fully embodied. Leave your journals behind and practice moving from language consciousness into sensory consciousness.

GETTING TO KNOW APPLE

Apple is a wonderful fruit tree for the garden. They grow to 25 feet tall and live well over 100 years. They are in the rose family and the lovely white flowers are a welcome food for many pollinating animals. Apples prefer cold winters and mild summers. The oldest known cultivated fruit, there are more than 10,000 varieties of apples. Apple trees bear hundreds of pounds of fruit. Suckers are used to make baskets and wattle fencing. Medicinally, dried apple leaves and blossoms make a great tea for warding off winter colds and flus. Apples reduce cavities, control blood sugar, and contribute to overall health.



HERBCRAFT

The herbcraft of fall is about energizing the heart and body after the relaxing summer so we are able to bring in the harvest and to enjoy in the darkness of winter. The bright and sweet medicine of apples keeps us light during heavy times and brings us together because there is always enough to share with friends.

Apple Star Garland

The Nine of Earth reminds us that we grow to give and share. Show your appreciation to

friends by gifting a garland of dried apple rings revealing the hidden star inside. Make several thin slices. Use string or embroidery floss to poke a small hole in the top of each slice and slide them down the string. Hang in a sunny window or above a fire place to dry for several days. Enjoy them as beautiful winter swag, or delicious sweet snacks.



Photo by Donata Thomas

Apple Peel Tea

As you enjoy apples this fall, save your peels. Dry them on very low heat in a dehydrator or oven. In sunny climates you can dry them right on your counter top. Simmer peels until water turns pink then turn off the heat and add chamomile or peppermint. Brew for three minutes and strain. Remember to give some to friends.





APPLE, THE NINE OF EARTH: TAROT SPREAD & JOURNAL PROMPTS

(Turn up a card for each of the questions, or just start writing in response to the prompt. Your choice!)

- How might you savor the sweetness of life?
- What would it look or feel like to measure your wealth by what you have to give?
- How can you invite peace and plenty into your life?



SPELL, WISH, OR PRAYER

Slice an apple sideways, to reveal the hidden star within. Remember that the apple bestowed immortality in Greek myth, the knowledge of good and evil in Christianity, and embodied the source of all spiritual sustenance in Celtic wisdom traditions. The apple symbolizes fertility, prosperity, love, the esoteric arts, and women's mysteries. It is a sacred offering to the ancestors. Keeping this in mind, remove five seeds from the hidden



star inside the apple and place them in a tiny bottle or small bag with other sacred herbs of your choice. Consecrate it with smoke, water, and oil as a *milagro* or amulet to draw love, prosperity, and wisdom your way. Hang it around your neck or carry it in your pocket.

GRATITUDE / RECIPROCITY PRACTICE

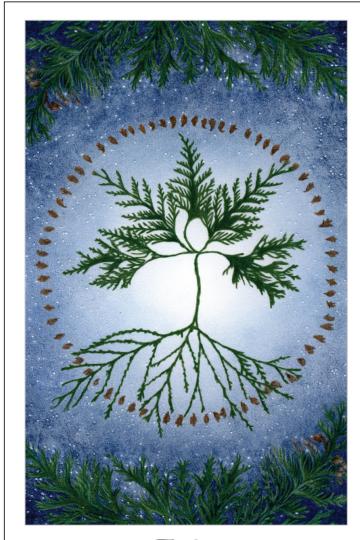
Pour out libations of apple juice or cider onto the roots of an apple tree, thanking the tree for its beautiful blossoms in the spring and delicious fruit in the fall. Thank the tree for nourishing hearts and bodies, and wish it a long and healthy life. Toast the Apple Tree with a shout of joy!

BLESSING

May you celebrate your wealth by sharing it with your community.



Winter with Cedar and The Chariot



7. The Chariot CEDAR

In winter our most beloved allies are the evergreens. Cedar is a clear favorite for us in the Pacific Northwest. The green leaves among a bleak landscape bring us light and keep us moving toward life in a dark time. The cedar brings the journeys of soil and sky together in its sturdy trunk. These are some of the reasons why we chose this plant as the messenger of the Chariot in the Herbcrafter's Tarot.



Photo by JPC

The recipes and rituals of winter are comforting and nourishing. They are an invitation to continue moving with our visions even as we sleep and dream with the Earth. While cedar is our representative here, there are many cards in The Herbcrafter's Tarot that offer the medicine of winter. Try the recipes and rituals below with Usnea in the Hermit, Thyme in the Madre of Fire, Pine in the Six of Earth and Cottonwood in the Star as well as any plants that make themselves known to you during this season.

ART OF NOTICING

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the impulses and ideas that come to mind as messages from your deepest self. Consider it a pollination of the spirit.

Practice: Expanding Capacity for Perspective

This practice helps us to move from language consciousness to sensory consciousness as we again set out as simple observers to become aware of possibility by witnessing our surroundings from many points of view. In careful observance of heaven and earth we can pull from soul and spirit to craft a contribution that forwards life, as the Cedar demonstrates in The Chariot.

Invitation:

- 1. Set out on a nature walk and find a place to land for a while. Get still and tune your eyes. First take a scan around the area to see what you can see from a standing position. Next, take a seated position and look again, tipping your head side to side. Then, lie down on your back to look again. Switch now to your side.
- 2. At each position search for something below eye level or the ground, something at eye level and something above eye level or the sky.



Photo by JPC

Notice how your perception of the three objects/spaces change as you change your body position.

How does this change in perspective affect your relationship to the space, if at all?

Practice: The Touch of Winter

As Cedar teaches us in The Chariot, it is the journey that leads to mastery. Take yourself on a wild wander near thick evergreens. See how many different varieties you can find. Touch the leaves of each one and notice the distinctions in texture and scale and location. Record notes in a nature journal and tape a small branch or leaflet on the page. Research your findings when you get home to increase your understanding of these mighty trees.



GETTING TO KNOW CEDAR

Western red cedar is an evergreen tree native to the Pacific Northwest. Falsely named for the scent it shares with the ancient trees of Lebanon, it is not in fact a true cedar. Western red cedar grows in wet shady groves of mixed plants and trees. It is an opportunist, poking its way into the forest here and there taking over from other conifers who don't want to get their feet wet. Cedar is known by the people of the Salish Sea for its ever giving ways;



providing medicine, clothing, shelter, and vessels. This tree is home and helper to many in the cold season. It is also known for its ability to combat conditions brought on by wet weather such as fungus and coughs. Cedar is a powerful antimicrobial fighting insects, viruses and fungi. The cedar trunk captures the stories of the ecology of the earth in its rings. We can see when there was drought and fire, feast and famine. Cedar is both a literal and a spiritual vessel, used for making canoes and in sacred ceremony.

HERBCRAFT

The herbcraft of winter is about warming the heart and body so we can survive the rigors of life's journey. Please remember the keys to a responsible harvest: Ask permission and leave an offering of gratitude. Only take what you need, never more than 10%. Clearly identify the plant.

Soothing Cedar Steam

Gather several boughs of fresh cedar. Lay them inside a heatproof glass bowl. Add boiling water to the bowl. Place your face over the bowl and cover your head and shoulders with a towel. Sit quietly, listening to music for fifteen minutes.

Cedar Nests and Swag

Gather fresh cedar boughs with sharp scissors. Tie them at the stem into tight bundles and hang from mantles, doorways and walls.

Decorate with ribbon and lights to bring energy and warmth to your home. Create a simple nested wreath for a table top by filling a



round basket with cedar. Collect nature treasures you find throughout the winter to remind you, even when it feels quiet and still, life is always moving forward.

Bonus: Warm Cedar Oil

Make a cedar oil using the method for Lavender from Spring.



CEDAR, THE CHARIOT: TAROT SPREAD & JOURNAL PROMPTS

(Turn up a card for each of the questions, or just start writing in response to the prompt. Your choice!)

- How can you be both disciplined and flexible on your sacred journey?
- How can you cultivate confidence and resiliency?
- What can you give back to the One who gives so much?

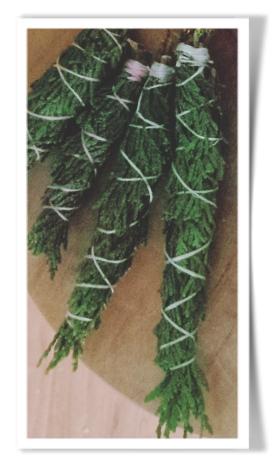


SPELL, WISH, OR PRAYER

Because Cedar is such a beloved, fragrant, and prolific tree here in the Pacific Northwest, it's a favorite for smoke cleansing. Using plants in your own bioregion invites you to build a relationship to the ecosystem where you are. This will greatly increase your appreciation and

reverence for the landbase where you live as well as bringing depth to your spiritual practices.

You can use a tied bundle or a single leaf in a personal ceremony for smoke cleansing. Mindfully, with ceremony, select 2-3 cedar branches. Tear the leaflets from the larger branch, arrange in a pile and roll like a tortilla. Wrap string around the base several times tying a knot if desired. Continue to wrap the bundle up, then back down again, tying off at the stems. As you come around each time, whisper a prayer or intention aloud, remembering that Cedar carries the gifts of strength, beauty, abundance, and resilience. Leave your bundle outside all night to gather up the moonlight and starlight. In the morning, bring it inside and hang it in



When it is dry, burn it to carry your prayers to the ears and hearts of your Holy Helpers.

GRATITUDE / RECIPROCITY PRACTICE

a dry place you will see each day. Leave it to dry for several weeks.

Go on a wild wander through woods, meadows, or city park, gathering up things that catch your eye ... windfall twigs, rose hips, moss, small pine cones, flowers, leaves. (If you take something still growing, be sure to ask permission and leave a little offering, perhaps a strand of your hair.) Take some natural twine and tie all you've gathered up into a bundle. Lay it down as an offering at the roots of a cedar tree, giving deep, sincere thanks to this great Tree of Life.

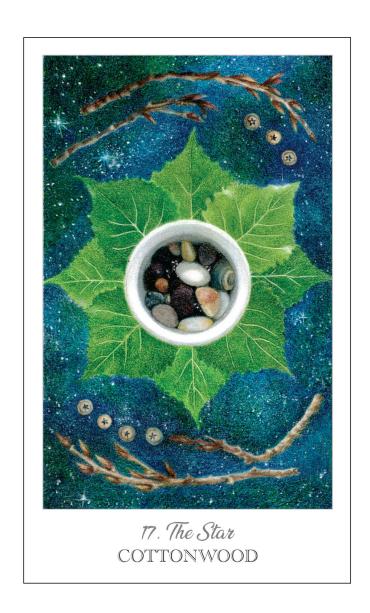
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BLESSING

May you journey between the worlds as you sit at the roots of an all-giving Tree of Life.



The Edge of Winter and Spring with Cottonwood and the Star





At some point during midwinter one of the most magical plant allies, the cottonwood tree, begins to create magic. While above ground we are still experiencing the frosty days of the season, warmth from deep within the belly of the earth begins to slowly wake the trees. The time of quickening arrives and the mother begins to feel the tickle of life within her. When you look closely, you can see tiny signs that spring indeed shall return.

Cottonwood buds begin to form and bulge with resin from mid December through February.

The pith within the twigs carrying nutrients that push life into being in the shape of a star. These are some reasons why Cottonwood was chosen as the messenger of the Star in the Herbcrafter's Tarot.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, buds are already forming on the trees and the rainforest season begins. We will soon



Photo by Latisha

trade snow for constant downpours and light frost. Still many weeks to go until Spring, it can become a time when we become antsy and cabin fever starts to set in. The last weeks of winter teach us patience and trust in the great cycle. Set aside some extra time for slowing down, reading by the fire, and sitting in silence. The busyness of spring will come soon enough.

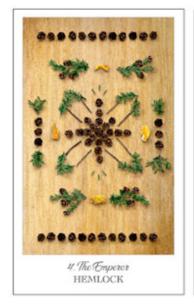
Working with the rich earthy buds of cottonwood will give us a chance to slowly dip our toes into thoughts of spring while staying grounded in winter.

Herbcrafting in midwinter is slow and quiet. We are still carefully nourishing our visions and dreams yet we begin to see them move from ideas into form, if even only still in our minds. While Cottonwood is our representative here, there are many cards in the Herbcrafter's Tarot that offer us medicine found in mid to late winter.

The crafts and rituals we will share in this ebook will lend themselves to many of the trees in the Herbcrafter's Tarot.

Try them with Hemlock the Emperor to welcome structure to your dreams, or with Witch Hazel the Two of Earth, to bring balance and play to your visions.

Or invoke the spirit of the Adelitas by not working with trees at all, but with any plants that make themselves known to you during this season. For example, bring warmth to your body and create a reminder of the cause you're fighting for, by trying the practices out with Cayenne, the Adelita of Fire.







– Latisha Guthrie

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Photo by Latisha

Trust the impulses and ideas that come to mind as messages from your deepest self. Consider it a pollination of the spirit.

Practice: Increasing Sensory Awareness with Cottonwood

Go on a scavenger hunt to find a cottonwood tree to work with. Start with a place that is near a watershed, wetland, riparian area, river, or marshy location where the soil would be very wet beneath the earth. The easiest way to find cottonwood in winter is to look for the wind-fallen knotty twigs on the forest floor.

Invitation:

- Expand your vision and tune your eyes to the sides of the trails and the ground.
- 2. Once you have found a few twigs with buds, trace the trail back to the mother tree. Start to look up and around you to see if you notice any trees with white bark and plump buds. Perhaps there will be a few heart-shaped leaves with saw-tooth edges still on the tree.

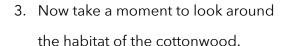




Photo by Latisha

4. Crush the sticky buds between your fingers and notice the color and smell as you are learning cottonwood habitat. This will help your sensory memory locate the trees in the future.

Consider the following questions:

- What does the forest floor look like?
- How are the micro-systems arranged around the trees?
- What plants do you notice nearby?
- What smells and colors are prevalent?

Take note of this location and return to visit it throughout to seasons. Where you find cottonwood stands, you will likely find wild oats, horsetail, bramble berry, mushrooms, nettles and more. If you don't locate cottonwood, what other botanicals were you able to notice for the first time by expanding your awareness of the forest floor?

– Latisha Guthrie

THE HOPE HIDDEN IN WINTER: GETTING TO KNOW COTTONWOOD

Practice: Noticing Winter

As Cottonwood teaches us in The Star card, have faith in possibility. Take yourself on a wild wander near a riparian or watershed area in search of cottonwood. Look for twigs on the ground. Try to find branches with buds. Crush the large buds in your fingers and inhale deeply. Notice the color and texture of the resin.



Next break a cottonwood twig near the wrinkly part of the branch and see if you can find the star in the center. Look for the growth wrinkles in the bark. There will

often be several on one twig. They look a little like the wrinkles in a flex soda straw. Hold the twig close to the growth wrinkles and snap it quickly or cut it cleanly with a sharp knife. Some twigs may be too green or too rotten, but many will produce a five point secret star. With a little practice, you will know which twigs have the stars hiding inside. You can see the star best if you shade it from the sun and look straight in at the broken end.



Photos by Latisha

You can also enhance some stars by rubbing them on fine sandpaper. A sanded star will usually show up better if you moisten it.

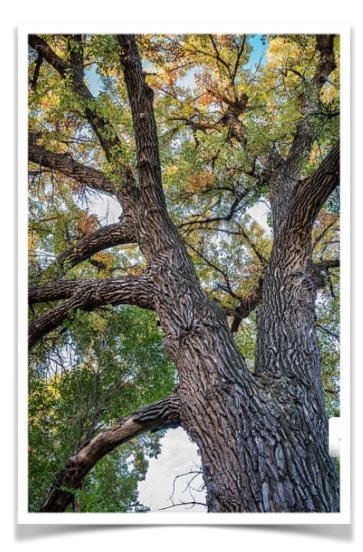
What you're looking at is actually what is known as the 'pith' of either a young branch or sapling of a cottonwood. The pith's function is to transport nutrients through the tree. As the rings of the tree grow out, they eventually become the heartwood that supports the tree. Cottonwood forwards life through hope, pushing growth in the form of a star.

Record notes in a nature journal. Perhaps smear a bit of resin onto the page. Tip: Bring along a small vial of olive oil or high proof alcohol to remove resin from your fingers.

Getting to Know Cottonwood

Cottonwood is a large tree that can grow to 100 feet tall. It is called cottonwood because the seeds open up and are carried on the wind by a white ball of fluff that resembles, but is not, cotton. They look similar to a dandelion seed, but much larger.

In fall, the leaves turn bright yellow, beautifully contrasting with clear blue sky as they shimmer in the wind. There are about 30 species of cottonwood trees. Cousins to aspen and poplar, they are part of the genus populus. They are found on almost every



continent. Cottonwoods usually live near water, on the banks of rivers and marshes or swamps. Even in the dry desert, the cottonwoods can be found in riverbeds, their roots reaching deep within the Earth for nourishment.

The cottonwood tree is considered a deeply sacred grandmother tree in many cultures.

Whether in dry or wet climates, cottonwood trees often indicate a thriving ecosystem for other plants and animals. They are considered nurse trees; providing shade for other plants and nesting areas for all birds, especially birds of prey.

Take note of this location and return to visit it throughout to seasons. Where you find cottonwood stands, you will likely find wild oats, horsetail, bramble berry, mushrooms, nettles and more. If you don't locate cottonwood, what other botanicals were you able to notice for the first time by expanding your awareness of the forest floor?

– Latisha Guthrie

HERBCRAFT: MAKING COTTONWOOD OIL & SALVE

The herbcraft of winter is about warming the heart and protecting the body so we can survive the rigors of life's journey.

Please remember the keys to a responsible harvest:

- Ask permission and leave an offering of gratitude.
- Only take what you need, never more than 10%.
- Clearly identify the plant.



Photo by Joanna

Salve with Cottonwood Buds

Salve with cottonwood buds is one of the most delightful herbcrafts you will ever make. Using sesame oil will make your medicine even more decadent.

Sesame oil complements the medicinal effects of cottonwood as it is used in Ayurvedic medicine for inflamed joints as well as to nourish dry, dehydrated and sun-damaged skin.



Photo by Latisha

As a sensory bonus, the scent of cottonwood buds in sesame oil is nothing short of amazing. Rich and earthy, it is the life of the forest floor.

A good all-purpose healing salve, cottonwood buds contain an anti-inflammatory pain reliever that is wonderful on sore achy joints. I have used it for years for carpal tunnel in my wrists. It is also an effective salve on first and minor second degree burns.

Method:

- Collect cottonwood buds: Gather fresh cottonwood buds from fallen twigs that are sticky and strong smelling but not yet open.
- 2. Prepare the oil: fill a mason jar 2/3 full with fresh buds and cover with sesame oil. Store in warm dry place out of the light and strain after 2 -6 weeks.
- 3. Prepare the salve: in a double boiler add 1 part beeswax to 4 parts cottonwood bud oil and heat on low until combined. Pour into heat safe container and let cool until solid. (Sm:



Photo by Latisha

container and let cool until solid. (Small tins for salves can be purchased from local suppliers or from Mountain Rose Herbs.)

– Latisha Guthrie

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COTTONWOOD, THE STAR: TAROT SPREAD & JOURNAL PROMPTS

Consider a situation of grief or loss in your life. (Remember, the Tower card immediately precedes the Star card in the tarot Major Arcana.) If all is well in your personal life at this time, think about a situation in your community, country, or the world that breaks your heart.

Turn up a card for each of the following questions – seven cards for the seven "star" discs on the Herbcrafter's Cottonwood card.



2

6

1

4

5

3

7

Allow the cards to spark answers to these questions, and write about them in your journal. If you like, share your reading with a friend and see what insights they might see in the cards that you may have missed.

- 1. What breaks my heart? What am I grieving? What has been shattered during a recent Tower time? (If a positive card appears in this position, read its reversed or shadow side.)
- 2. What insight emerges as I sit with my grief?
- 3. What inspiration and promise am I not seeing?
- 4. When all hope is lost, what remains?
- 5. What is the medicine the gift of my sacred wound?
- 6. What wants to be re-membered and restored?
- 7. How might I be generous with the blessing of grace and hope?
- Joanna Powell Colbert

COTTONWOOD COUNCIL BUNDLE

The energy of cottonwood is very ancient, calming and serene. It is a quiet medicine that asks that we slow down and patiently wait. Forming wings before roots, the seeds float through the air, those that survive plant themselves near riverbeds and trickling streams. Only once they have spread their wings, and satisfied their craving for water do they dig in roots to build a steady foundation that brings nourishment back to the buds from the deepest watering holes.



Photo by Latisha

Cottonwood has the ability to take you far into the innermost caverns of your spirit and send your wishes on the wind with seeds cased in soft white dream pillows. A nurse plant who is often among the first to inhabit an area after devastation, cottonwood draws other flora and fauna in, creating community always caring for hitchhikers of some kind: praying mantis, mistletoe, boring beetles, rebuilding plants, nests for birds. It is often said that her leaves carry the voices of the spirits as they can be heard rustling in even the most gentle wind.

Cottonwood's Affirmations

I create strong roots to bring nourishment to my dreams.

I let go of control and trust them to flower in perfect time.

Cottonwood Council Bundle

Bring a bundle of twigs inside. Write a petition to this ancient tree - some question that weighs on your heart heavily. Tuck the petition inside the twigs and wrap the bundle with twine. Hang them in a place in your home you will visit often



Photo by Latisha

or create a wisdom altar to display them. Allow the scent of the resin to swirl through your home. Consider how you feel when you smell the branches. Does the scent or the presence of the bundle affect your mood in any way? After you have observed for a few days, sit with the bundle and ask the spirit of The Star your question. What does she have to say to you?

- Latisha Guthrie

GRATITUDE / RECIPROCITY PRACTICE

Deeply inhale the wild scent of cottonwood resin (sometimes called "Balm of Gilead"), in the wild or in a resin-infused oil. Once you've savored the fragrance, you'll never forget it. Let it be the aroma of hope, reminding you of spring emerging after a dark, cold winter. Make a habit of stopping to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving each time the scent wafts your way.



SPELL, WISH, OR PRAYER

Gather cottonwood twigs. Break them open to discover the stars within. Slice them into tiny discs with the stars revealed. Save some intact twigs with resinous buds that resemble witches' claws. Tie or stitch the star discs and claws together to make amulets or altar pieces, to hold the energy of hope and strength for times when you most need it.

BLESSING

May you always remember your broken pieces contain the stars of hope.



About Us



Joanna Powell Colbert, creator of the Gaian Tarot and the Pentimento Tarot, has been an artist, teacher, and convener of circles for over thirty years. She was named by SageWoman magazine as one of the Wisdom Keepers of the Goddess Spirituality movement. Joanna teaches workshops and e-courses on earth-centered spirituality, seasonal contemplative practices, creativity as a devotional path, and using tarot as a tool for inner guidance and self-exploration. She lives on the edge of

village and woods in Bellingham, WA. Visit Joanna online at joannapowellcolbert.com, Instagram, and Facebook.

Latisha Guthrie, creator of HerbCamp and Sowing Circles, is an herbcrafter, writer, and homeschooling mama. She offers workshops and writings on folk herbalism and kitchen witchery as tools for creating community and connection. Her family is currently building Sunflower Herb Farm, an enchanted food forest and herb'n learning sanctuary in Bellingham, WA. Visit Latisha online at Herbmother.com and on Instagram.



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