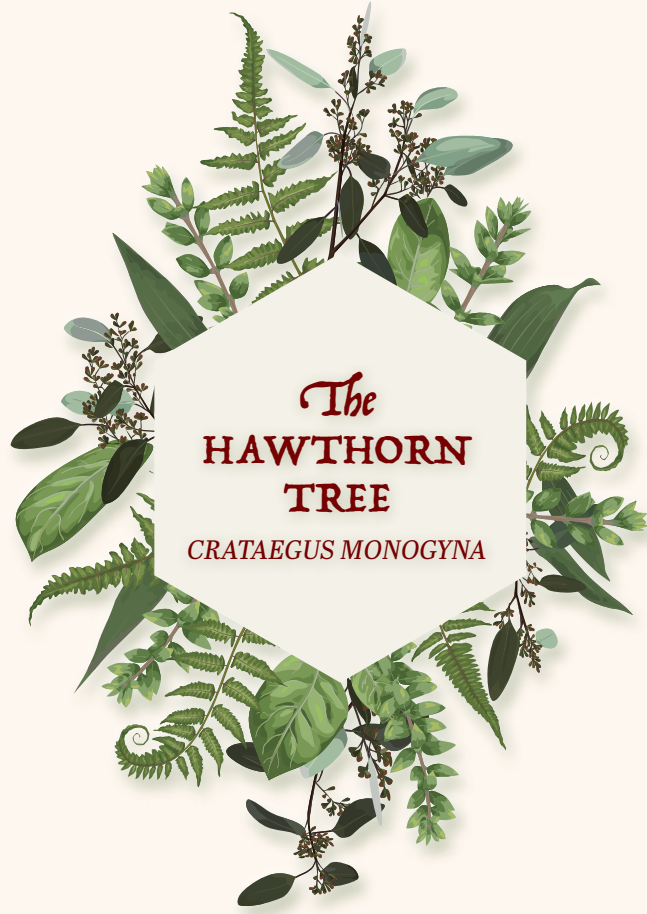


A sample lesson from
**THE MAGIC AND FOLKLORE
OF TREES**

by Nikiah Seeds





The
HAWTHORN
TREE
CRATAEGUS MONOGYNA

HAWTHORN IDENTIFICATION:



Hawthorn and Rowan
Autumn Heart Shrub

The Hawthorn has to be one of my most favorite trees on so many levels, for not only is it beautiful in all seasons, but it's heart opening medicine is one I have been using for years and years and being near her spirit never gets old. The Hawthorn tree itself is enchanting especially in the spring when it is laden with small white blossoms and one feels as through they will be transported away by otherworldly creatures, in fact I am so sure of this I would never fall asleep under one!

The hawthorn has many uses from deep protective magic, to heart healing medicine, and love which makes it yet another favorite medicine in our medicine cupboards.

Tree Identification and origin:

Hawthorns come from a very diverse genus in the Rosaceae family which is what we love about them as Roses are near and dear to our hearts.

The hawthorn was Introduced to North America from elsewhere, most likely Europe, but we have evidence that hawthorn fossils were discovered in the southern Black Hills of South Dakota, so we know it has been growing here for a long time, and although they are more commonly found in the UK, North Africa and West Asia. Hawthorns often grow in large, dense thickets and then generally prefer moist, deep, and textured soils. They are typically found in woods and are commonly used as hedges.



Flowers:

In the spring the hawthorn grows clusters of creamy white and sometimes pink flowers that are often said to smell like sex, or death, depending on the person smelling them. Flower petals can be used in salads in spring. Hawthorn berries typically taste better after a frost but can be used before a frost depending on your taste buds.

If you collect the flowers, they will need to be dried quickly and then sealed in an airtight container, as their potency tends to fade quickly and it is best to gather them fresh every year.

Leaves:

Leaves are stalked and oval with approx 7 points per leaf starting at the top with one and going down. The leaves can be gathered in spring for use in salads or at any time before they change color in the fall, and for teas.

Berries:

Berries can be used to make jams, jellies, cordials, and in baked goods such as in Africa where Hawthorn powder is added to flour in as it is high in the trace mineral selenium and chromium, which are important for the immune system and enhancing the function of insulin.

The berries are very high in a thickening agent called pectin, so you can use half the recommended pectin to get a nice consistency for jams and chutney's especially if apples are also used.

The affects of using the berries and leaves for medicine of the heart work by normalizing the action of the heart, as if it is too fast it will normalize it back, and the same if it is not moving fast enough.

Hawthorn berries are safe to use long term for heart weakness, palpitations associated with anxiety, high blood pressure and angina. I believe it is safe to drink during pregnancy although with most things, use sparingly at this time, and is safe for the elderly and children to use for long periods of time.

Drinking hawthorn tea during times of high pressure or stress will serve to improve any nervous condition as it improves the blood supply to all tissues and is good for improving circulation and is great to drink at night mixed with any other calming herbs such as chamomile and passion flower.

Collect the berries in the fall before the first frost and dry them either in a natural wide basket or in brown paper bags and their potency will last for up to two years. These berries can be used in magic, herbal medicine and even honey or dark sugar.

“The etheric signature of the Hawthorn is said to have a pulsation that is similar to that of the human heartbeat.” ~ Glennie Kindred



SPRING AND AUTUMN HAWTHORN:



Spring Hawthorn in blossom, and Fall Hawthorn in Berries

Please refer to the online version of this lesson to access videos of a Spring and Autumn hawthorn walk.



THE FOLKLORE AND MAGIC OF THE HAWTHORN

The Hawthorn is another favorite tree for us, as it carried with it such deep heart healing. There is small grove of Hawthorns that I visit yearly and we have had a wonderful relationship over the years, so much so that I actually miss it when away for periods of time!

This is why I visit regularly to make offerings and I have to say that over the years I have noticed that where there were only a minimal amount of blossoms and berries there now seem to be double!

I know that this is true for Rose bushes and other flowering plants, that cutting them in the fall makes them stronger in the spring, however I truly had no idea about the Hawthorn tree, other than to say that even in my own backyard I have seen plants that are receiving attention and honoring from me flourish, and in years where I am not able to get out to the garden as much they either die or wither regardless of how much water they receive...

This reminds me of a chapter in the book Braiding Sweetgrass, where Robin Wall Kimmerer speaks at length about experiments that her and her graduate student, Laurie, did around harvesting sweetgrass, with the intent to see if picking it slowed its growth, as well as how it was picked as locals could not settle which was the best way -- some liked to pick from the roots and others swore that it needed to be cut at the base leaving the roots, or if leaving it alone entirely was the best way to protect the species.

So a study was done, in part to settle the dispute, but mostly because science also said that declining species needed to have humans kept away to save it and that harvesting was killing off the species.

This is what they found:

“We are all the product of our worldview - even scientists who claim pure objectivity. Their predictions for sweetgrass were consistent with their Western science worldview, which sets human beings outside of “nature” and judges their interactions with other species as largely negative. They had been schooled that the best way to protect a dwindling species was to leave it alone and keep people away. But the grassy meadows tell us that for sweetgrass, human beings are a part of the system, a vital part. Laurie’s findings might have been surprising to academic ecologists but were consistent with the theory voiced by our ancestors.

“If we use a plant respectfully it will stay with us and flourish. If we ignore it, it will go away.”

There is a reason that humans have loved the hawthorn, from its beautiful creamy white clusters of blossoms in the spring that evoke a sense of otherworldliness to the deep folkloric connections with the fae the “fairy-thorn” is often found linked with the fairy folk, and it is said that if you are so stupid as to cut one down you may experience unbinding back luck!

Another old folk custom is to tie ribbons or strips of old clothing on the thorn tree for wishing and luck, especially when they grew near wells, the rags being said to be gifts for the Faeries. The Hawthorn is so deeply associated with the fae folk that there are many different ideas about how to respect a hawthorn tree and the folk.

One such story says that you must never cut down a hawthorn tree for making a barn or home, especially so if it is wild, and that if one of these thorns is taken down, it would bring bad luck to the family who reside there and it may even bring death.

It is considered to this day an act of vandalism in Britain to remove even so much as a branch from one of these trees, which is why when in 2010, the Holy thorn of Glastonbury was cut down, there was an online outpouring of grief. When, a year later, new growth started to sprout from the trunk, the joy among international pagans was similar:

“Blessed Be the Holy Thorn - May it have as many fruit as the tears that have been shed.”

The Holy Thorn of Glastonbury is one of the most famous Hawthorn trees and known for flowering at Yule as well as Beltane, and according to old lore, the holy thorn was said to have grown from the staff (magician’s tool) of Joseph of Arimathea when he thrust it into the ground of Wearyall Hill at Glastonbury. Since that time, thousands of people have claimed that just touching this tree has helped them in their quest for deeper spiritual understanding on their paths.

The old lore of Hawthorns being under the protection of the Faeries, can be most strongly felt in the spring time {in my opinion} and even more so when sitting directly under a flowering one -- however beware not to fall asleep for it is said that if this happens the chances of you being taken by the fae are good, and you may not come back for many years!



From the book *Tree Magick*
by Gillian Kemp

*By the craggy hillside, Through the mosses bare,
They have planted thorn trees, For pleasures here and there,
Is any man daring, As to dig them up in spite,
He shall find their sharpest thorns, In his bed at night.*

~ William Allingham, 1850

Another important folk custom that brings the hawthorn into its festivities is the yearly custom of dancing around the maypole.

“The ceremony of the maypole and maypole dancing is symbolic of renewed life and sexual union. The pole itself is a phallic symbol and the disc at the top, from which the ribbons are tied, represents the female opening. The maypole dance itself represents the union of the male and female and fertility. In some parts of the British Isles, it was the custom to plant a May tree outside every house, or for young men to plant a May tree outside the home of their sweetheart. It was said to be common practice to fetch a living Hawthorn tree into the village from the woods every year. This living tree would still have a resident tree spirit or Dryad within the tree, and it would have been the tree-spirit itself who was central to the ceremony. The villagers would welcome it into the village and ask for its help and blessing, to bring fertility to the land and good luck to the harvest. This later became symbolized by a person dressed as the Green Man, or tree spirit, who would dance around the outside of the maypole dancers.” ~ Glennie Kindred

The well known aspect of the hawthorn being heart healing medicine also seems to have seeped into the old folk traditions of young girls using branches for telling them their future husbands, and was often used in bridal garlands as a symbol of fertility and love.

There is an old Irish saying that *should a hawthorn grow over a grave busied treasure lay there*, and in Cornwall, best known by its small town of Penzance it is said that *pirates planted hawthorn trees over their buried treasure to find it later*. On the darker side of things, there is also an old Irish belief that Hawthorns like to grow over graves and would even grow over the scattering of a dead ones ashes. In some cases, small stones were laid at the base of any hawthorn tree they saw on the way to a funeral, which over time became cairns.



Hawthorn wreath

It is also said that it is unlucky to harvest the flowers before May and there is even an old saying that goes: *“Hawthorn tree, Elderflowers, fill your house with evil powers.”* Both of these trees being known as fairie trees...

Having said that it was also said that if you carried a dying person three times around a hawthorn tree and made a point to bump against it they would recover, this one I am a bit skeptical about though...

Not all of the folklore comes from the other side of the pond, but here too in North America. *“The Iroquois tribe used a decoction of the Quebec hawthorn *Ctatagus submillis* along with a doll in witchcraft medicine, to ‘make a person break out like cancer’. The Cherokee tribe used the fruits of the *C. spathulata* to stimulate appetite and an infusion of the bark was taken for good circulation and to prevent spasms.”* ~ The Witching Tree by Corrine Boyer.

It is also said that hanging a sprig of hawthorn up in the home, in the fall when the berries are on it will help with the prevention of fire and protection, and if you hang a hagstone on a hawthorn tree over night on a full moon it will there after be helpful for healing all to wear it.



The Hawthorn/Huathe Ogam

The hawthorn ogam is all about standing tall no matter what is thrown at you and about overcoming obstacles in our way. Working with Hawthorn can fortify our brave hearts and help to support us as we move past things that at first may seem unsurmountable. If you find yourself drawing this ogam from a divination set, than it may be a gentle warning of some upcoming obstacles that you may have to face. Knowing this is a good thing as it will allow you to fortify yourself and prepare. If you draw it reversed then it may be that some of these things arising may be a bit harder then expected and perhaps calling in on extra protection may be needed.



Hawthorn Ogam
carved by Sarah Lawless

If you are interested in learning more about the Ogam's or having a set of your own to use we recommend these book sets:

The Celtic Tree Oracle by Liz and Colin Murray, Card and book set in a wooden box.

The Voice of Trees by Mickie Mueller, Card and book set.

The Spirit of Old - Tree carved sets.

Celtic Tree oracle cards by Sharlyn Hidalgo (Author), Jimmy Manton.

HEDGECROSSING WITH HAWTHORN

The Hawthorn is a wondrous tree to have as a friend, and once one makes friends with one of these trees, they look forward to your every visit and I have found that they almost lean into you while speaking with them.

If you are fortunate enough to have a Hawthorn growing close to you that you can visit in all seasons, they truly are spectacular to watch change as the seasons wax and wane. The Hawthorn also loves gifts and trinkets hanging in their branches and it is really fun to make these kinds of offerings.

Hawthorn medicine is heart medicine, so taking matters of the heart to the Hawthorn for wisdom is really wonderful, and of course taking hawthorn medicine for these matters also really helps. Hawthorns are also friends of the fae and most especially in the spring when their flowers are white and full of beauty, so perhaps be mindful of sitting under a hawthorn in the spring under a warm patch of sun or you may yourself waking up having lost a day!



RECIPES AND MAGIC MAKING

Springtime Hawthorn Tincture:



There are many different things that can be done with both the hawthorn blossoms as well as the berries. In the springtime, my favorite thing to do is make hawthorn blossom and rose tincture, adding a few of the dried berries from the last season.

Doing this is easy, all you need is a large jar and some strong vodka 100 proof is the best, or if you want a more gentle tasting tincture then Brandy is a favorite and what I most often use.

- ~ Fill your jar halfway with plant matter, blossoms, and leaves of the hawthorn, adding some dried berries if you have them, along with fresh roses, the more fragrant the better.
- ~ Pour the alcohol over the flowers to cover and add 1-2 large tablespoons of hawthorn honey into the mix.
- ~ Shake and store for up to six months before straining.

HAWTHORN HONEY AND AUTUMN FIRECIDER ELIXIR



This is a delicious honey that is full of autumn foraged Hawthorn berries and for which can be used in a few different ways:

Begin by simply pouring some honey over fresh, or better yet dried Hawthorn berries and leave it for about a week. Once this is done the honey can be strained and the berries composted. Now you have a lovely subtle honey that can be used for further magic making!

In this case I made a beautiful version of an autumn “Firecider” elixir that, once you have all your ingredients, can be made in a day!

Here is how:

Start by foraging for fresh hawthorns, rowan berries, crab apples, sumac and rosemary -- adding any other autumn things you can find in your garden such as a few sprigs of lavender or other scraggly herbs. Place everything in a wide mouthed jar and add 3 tablespoons of your hawthorn honey. Finish by topping it all off with apple cider vinegar and leaving for 24 hours.

The next day, gather these ingredients:

- 1 litre Apple cider vinegar
- Half a cup of your hawthorn honey
- Your large jar of foraged goodness
- 1 large piece of fresh ginger
- 1/2 ounce of fresh turmeric
- 1/2 cup of pomegranate juice
- 1/4 cup of a fresh orange
- 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne
- 1 tablespoon of dried hibiscus



~Pour the cider vinegar, honey and your jar of foraged goodness along with the spices in a large pot and add several cinnamon sticks. Bring to a slow simmer, and once it is there turn down even a bit more... *{Watch out for the fumes!}*

~After a couple hours, taste the goodness to see if you like the flavor and if it is too mild or getting too hot. If it's too mild, add more ginger, perhaps grated in and cook for one more hour. ~After three hours, turn off the heat and add the hibiscus, pomegranate and orange juice. ~Let sit for one hour and check the color - if it's too light in color, add more hibiscus. ~When the cider is a beautiful red, strain the mixture through a cheesecloth and place in clean jars. *I did not refrigerate mine and it has lasted over a year, but if you prefer you can keep it in the refrigerator.*

HAWTHORN KETCHUP/BROWN SAUCE

This recipe is a morphed one originally from the blog Cauldrons and Crockpots {Which is now called: Thorn and Wonder} a favorite of mine, and refined deeply by another widely favorite local blogger, soon to be author of a cookbook, **Gather Victoria**. For this recipe, I tweaked a few things to my own liking and made it a bit more on the ketchup side, whilst still making something mostly different from the typical ketchup you get in the shops -- regardless, it is delicious!

Ingredients:

1/2 cup of water
1 ½ cups malt vinegar (or an herbal infused vinegar)
1 ½ cups apple cider vinegar
1 small can tomato paste
1 cup red sour apples or prune plums
3 small red onions, chopped
2 cups of apple cider
2 cloves garlic, minced {Optional -- I can't eat garlic so I omitted and it still tasted great}
2 cups red hawthorn berries
1/4 cup of honey
1/4 cup molasses
1/2 teaspoon whole cloves
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon mustard powder
3/4 teaspoon allspice
2 teaspoons of salt
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon powder



Instructions:

~In a large pot, add the water, vinegar, tomato paste, juice, honey, berries, crabapples, garlic and onions. Cover and place on medium heat, bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to a slow simmer for 25 - 30 minutes. Add more water or juice if necessary. Add spices. Stir to blend and simmer (covered) for another 30 - 45 minutes. ~Let cool slightly then push your sauce through a sieve to remove pits and plant material. Puree in a food processor. Taste, add more spice, vinegar or honey to your taste. ~ Return to pot and simmer until you've reached your desired consistency. Remember it will thicken once cooled - so don't turn it into jam! ~ Let cool.
~Ladle sauce mixture into clean, sterilized, sealable bottles. It should keep in the fridge for up to a month.

WITCH BOTTLES



There are many different folk traditions around the creation of witch bottles with most of them being used for angry or jealous reasons, however I am of the mind that much magic making is often best used on ourselves. So to this end here is a spell for making a witch bottle for ourselves, so that we can best transmute or change our own energy from something that is potentially negative and affecting ourselves, but that could also potentially affect others -- lets keep our energy to ourselves! This witch bottle can be used for envy, either envy that we feel or for protecting ourselves from others envying us.

As with most magic, intent and belief is really all that is needed to make it work, for it is magic, not the ability to change consciousness at will...

What you will need:

A bottle you do not mind parting with.

On the full moon, gather nine Hawthorn thorns if this spell is for yourself, or blackthorns if it is a protection aid from someone else.

First, offerings need to be made to the tree along with stating your plans and wishes...

Once you are ready to harvest the thorns, special care must be taken not to prick yourself or you will need to start over.

Back home, you will need to bind the thorns together and then taking a small scrap of paper write your wishes -- to either have your own envy transmuted or to avert the envy coming your way.

Wrap the paper around the thorns and tie the bundle with red thread.

These thorns need to be dropped or placed into the bottle facing upwards.

To this, add some honey for sweetening, and some ash to represent the change from one thing into another.

You may also wish to seal the bottle with leather or beeswax and attach further offerings to the outside of the bottle...

Lastly these words need to be spoken and breathed onto the bottle:

**One breath for change
One breath to start,
One breath for heart
One breath to protect
One breath to part,
To divide thee,
from my enemy,
From Envy...**

Lastly, the bottle needs to be buried so that the earth can transmute your wishes, and further offerings made to the earth within the hole as you dig and bury.




HAWTHORN TALISMANS



Talismans are a form of contagious magic, carried on the person. A talisman made from Hawthorn wood will enhance your ability to release Love, open the heart and align yourself to your spiritual development. The Ogham letter for the Hawthorn is H. Huath. Representing good fortune, spiritual growth and psychic protection. When you are making yourself a talisman, state a phrase that expresses the purpose for which the talisman is made, as this will help focus its use. Wear your talisman around your neck, or as a brooch, or simply carry it in your pocket to touch and gain strength from when needed (the origins of 'touchwoods').

If you wish to cut yourself a piece from a living tree, be sure to do it with reverence and thanks to the tree. I always manage to find plenty of cut Hawthorn in the lanes rounds about, but I do keep my eyes open for it, as I don't like cutting it. It is a warm golden colored wood that polishes up well and has such a lovely feel to it.



Carve off the bark while it is still fresh if you want to reveal the wood, as it comes off easily before it dries hard onto the wood. Keep the cut wood outside until you are ready to start working on it, as that will stop it from drying out too quickly. Hawthorn is an especially hard wood and carving is more easily done on green wood, although green wood is likely to split

Wands can be made in the same way, large wands for ceremonies and smaller ones for healing tools, which can be carried in a small pouch or pocket. Hawthorn is traditionally used for psychic shields, particularly for the innocent and vulnerable. It can be given to help protect a child from any harsh energies in the environment, and particularly at puberty when a child is particularly sensitive and vulnerable, and in need of psychic protection. This aspect is also reflected in its use as a hedging plant, not only as a thick impenetrable growth but also as a psychic shield.



ONE LAST HAWTHORN VIDEO:

This past summer, I was in the UK in Cornwall and to my great delight was taken to the most enchanted area with three natural and holy springs surrounded by Hawthorn trees. These trees are easily hundreds of years old, which I think I mention many times in the video as I was in complete awe of these old beings... Many others clearly felt the same way I did as there were many offerings of ribbons and crystals left for the tree and sacred waters...

Please refer to the online version of this lesson to access the video of the hawthorn trees in Cornwall.



Resources

The Sacred Tree by Glennie Kindred

Sacred Trees of Ireland by Christine Zucchelli

Gather Victoria - Blog by Danielle Prohom Olson