


INNER TEMPLE MYSTERY SCHOOL



# THE SACRED TREES MYSTERY

*with* REBECCA CAMPBELL



A high-angle, wide shot of a lush tropical rainforest. The forest is dense with various shades of green, showing a thick canopy of trees. In the background, rolling hills and mountains are visible, their details softened by a light mist or haze. The sky above is filled with heavy, grey clouds, creating a moody and atmospheric setting. The overall composition emphasizes the scale and beauty of the natural world.

*When we truly open our eyes to it, the magic and  
Mystery of Trees permeates our life deeply. Beyond  
their roots and upper branches, their gifts reach into our  
lives and bodies in many ways...*





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# INTRODUCTION

*Part One*



# THE SACRED TREES MYSTERY

## *Welcome*

Welcome to *The Sacred Trees Mystery*. We are now entering the remarkable ecosystem, landscape and powerful imagery of trees. The lungs of the planet, converting sunlight into food. The provider of shade, of wood, of fruit, of breath. Trees show and teach us how to live in flow: how to put down roots, stay grounded, grow, let go, transform and work with and support others.

When we talk about ‘Sacred Trees’, we are talking about all trees. We will focus on a few species in particular which have significant spiritual meaning, but largely we are exploring all trees in every iteration of their lifecycle. From sapling, to taproot, to elder.

We are getting curious about the vast ecosystems they hold within their branches, throughout their canopies and down in their root systems. We are talking about the powerful metaphors they provide for transformation and grounding. We are feeling into the profound life-giving role they play in our human existence. And the awe-inspiring way they feature throughout creation stories and mythology from right across the globe.



In this module we are using Trees as our guide to experience the Sacred in an embodied way. We will be experiencing different practices that serve as gateways for us to return to our own true nature, hear the voice of our soul, explore the unknown and, ultimately, reconnect with the Sacred Intelligent Pulse of Life that is woven through us all.

My journey with Sacred Trees began in early childhood. In exploring this theme with my team, it seems we all have strong memories or connections with trees from our childhood. I wonder if this is true for you?



Trees are one of the things in my life that bring me so much joy and deep peace. Whenever I am trying to work something out or find the answer to a question, I like to walk in nature, intuitively finding my way as I listen to the whispers of my soul. Often I find that I end up at the roots of an old tree, nestle in under its branches or rest my back on its trunk and its holding helps me to connect deep within myself for answers.

I'm looking forward to going deep with you as you explore your relationship with the trees and connect with their deep holding, connectedness, resilience and generosity.



Love,

Rebecca





# WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR THIS MODULE

## *Getting organized*

Here is a list of some of the objects that you may need for this module. Always try to source locally and sustainably where possible.

- △ **Candle for evocation**
- △ **Tree-themed altar items such as leaves, twigs, branches, wood, seeds, incense or fruit**
- △ **Tree-themed altar item for your *Inner Temple Mystery School* altar**
- △ **Device or speaker for playing music**
- △ **Pen or pencil for *Soul Inquiries***
- △ **Candle(s) for closing ceremony**
- △ **Water or essential oil**
- △ **Oracle Cards**



# THE CALL OF THE SACRED TREES

## *My journey with Sacred Trees*

Ancient altars in the hollow trunk of the Yew tree. Decorated Christmas trees with an angel on top. Grandmother trees. Birthing trees. Enchanted forests. Microbe ecosystems communicating deep underground. The turning colors of autumnal leaves. Rich soil resting atop the upper branches in high canopies. Sap rising. The Buddha meditating deeply by the Bodhi tree. Jesus adorned with the spiny crown of Hawthorn. The epic, towering Sequoias of California. The intricate power of the petite Bonsai. The bulging Baobabs of Madagascar. The rich oils of Australia's Eucalypts. The kindling crackling in your fireplace. The incense burning on your altar. The foundations holding up your ceiling. The handle of your paintbrush. That coloring pencil. The spoon to stir your pot of hearty soup. The deep melodies of the clarinet. The humming strums of the guitar. Your front door. The mighty whack of willow hitting the cricket ball. The kids favorite jigsaw puzzle. The paper pages in your most treasured book. The bed frame that holds you to rest.

When we truly open our eyes to it, the magic and Mystery of Trees permeates our life deeply. Beyond their roots and upper branches, their gifts reach into our lives in many ways. As always, I invite you to pay close attention to how and where the gifts of trees appear in your day-to-day life.



For me, trees have a very personal energy when I tune into them, recognisable like the energy of an old friend. The more I practice connecting to a tree in this way, the stronger the connection becomes. Over the years, there have been a number of special trees that I have felt particularly connected to. The memory of them feels close and familiar to me.

Growing up in Australia, I was blessed to go to a primary school where the playground was made up of nature. At lunch we sat directly on the earth. We would play hide and seek behind paperbark trees. I still remember the powdery smell of the bark, as thin as tissue paper, and how it would peel away from the trunk. The smell of eucalyptus takes me back to weekends spent climbing and swinging from branches.



And when I see deep red, I am transported to holidays swimming in tea tree lakes, the water stained from the tea tree oils making our skin and hair silky and soft.

One of my earliest memories is with my Grandpa Bill cracking macadamia nuts that we had collected from the garden. I also remember the tree that I would climb in his front yard.



As an adult living in cities I learned I needed to make more of an effort to receive the comfort of trees. Working in Sydney city I would spend my lunch breaks recharging and praying for creative ideas under the most magnificent fig. Almost two decades on, I would find myself underneath this same tree, getting grounded before a big live event I was hosting in Sydney.

I have planned many workshops under trees now that I reflect back. The very first workshops I did were called Spirited Sessions in London. I ran them with my friend Robyn Silverton. We would meet in Regent's Park, under what we called The Spirited Tree. That tree is still there today.

In a garden near my home is an ancient Yew Tree. I believe that it was partly this tree that called me to this property. Yew Trees are considered very Sacred and mystical, especially by the Druids. They are gateway trees, representing life and death. Some have reported that their branches continue growing even after they are cut. The seeds inside the berries are poisonous to eat and yet, in the summer, when the berries drop they release a vapor in the air that parts the veils between the worlds. I experienced this with my friend Hollie one day prior to knowing it was a Sacred practice!



Another fond memory of trees is the Christmas that my husband and I moved into our current home. We arrived just after winter solstice and I'd been questioning the learned Christmas traditions such as having a plastic or cut tree to decorate. We decided to start a new tradition that year and went to our local nursery and bought a different type of tree in a pot.

That Christmas I received a Damanhur music machine that you attach to the tree and it begins to sing through sound. We noticed that it would sing through the machine each time it was watered, whenever we opened the door and let sunlight in and when we walked into a room!



We planted the tree in our garden in the spring and it has now grown so much! I greet it each time I walk through the front gate.

It wasn't until I began my herbalism training that I discovered the full extent of trees in my life, from what I ate to the incense I used. It was inspiring, connecting and humbling. Over the years I have learned to identify many different species and work with them physically and spiritually. From preparing teas and salads, to foraging resin from trees on the land here in Somerset.

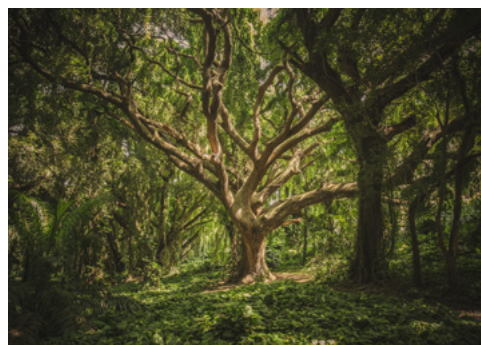


Now when I see new properties, one of the first thing that I do is find out what trees are in the garden. From Hawthorn to Birch, Eucalyptus to Spruce, trees have become such a big part of my world.



My prayer for *The Sacred Trees Mysteries* module is that it inspires you with effortless surrender and bountiful generosity. May you feel anchored by their intricate root systems and inspired by their boundless expanding branches. The life force of a tree is so subtle, and yet so remarkably powerful for us to tap into. Trees invite us to rest and to marvel. To connect upwards, outwards, downwards, in all directions. May your wise heart take this invitation to expand with the trees as you make your way through this module.

I pray that you can lean into the steadfast support that surrounds you, to rest your back on the trunk of this tree wisdom and receive. May you discover what has always been holding you. May this Mystery module encourage the innate Sacred intelligence in you to remember. May you feel cherished by all that witnesses you.





## YOUR JOURNEY WITH SACRED TREES

*Soul Inquiry*®

Take some time to reflect on your connection and journey with trees currently. Maybe you have experienced their energy for many years, or perhaps this is a new beginning for you.

Explain your journey with Sacred Trees so far. How have Sacred Trees been present in your life? What memories do you have of them?

What do Sacred Trees symbolize to you? What do you know about them? Do you see them as a Sacred guide? Or is this something new for you?



How have trees shown up for you in your life? This could be physically, symbolically or spiritually.

Where are there trees in your neighborhood or city? Are there old trees, spectacular trees or particular types of trees that resonate with you?

Have you ever visited a Sacred Trees site around the world?

Have you worked with trees in any other way? e.g. wishing tree, planting a tree, decorating a Christmas tree, burning resin or incense etc. Explore below.

With Sacred Trees as your guide, is there an area of your life that you would like to focus on during *The Sacred Trees Mysteries* module? Explain below.



# SACRED TREES MYSTERY TEACHINGS

*An exploration of history, folklore and myth*

Trees are essential for life. They provide us with oxygen, filter out air pollution, provide essential shade and shelter from the elements. They offer us their fruits and their flowers. We use their bark and wood for fire, furniture and foundations. We climb them, we encircle them, we rest our backs against them. They are elders of the living landscape. A living link between past and the future. Often outliving our human lives, they bear witness to generations.



As with each module, we begin with what science and history teaches us about trees, and then move into the more mythical narratives around trees and their landscapes. As always, the invitation is not to get stuck in academically learning the facts, but to allow it all to inform and color your own Sacred relationship with the Trees as you continue through this Mystery module.

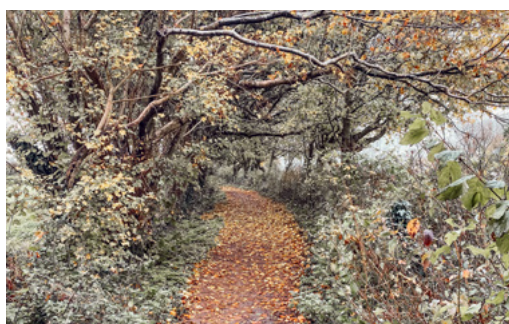
## WHAT IS A TREE?

A tree is largely defined as a tall, woody plant with a single stem or trunk with upper branches that grow leaves. Trees grow both upwards, downwards and outwards. Their branches, leaves, flowers and fruit grow up and out, whilst their deep foundations and root systems grow deep down into the earth for stability and nutrients.

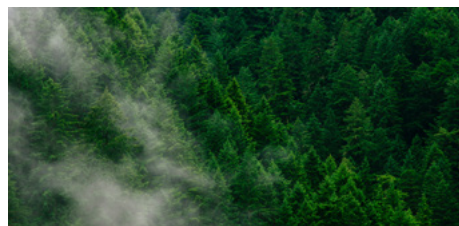


All trees can mostly be divided into two main categories depending on the behavior of their leaves:

- △ **Deciduous trees** shed their leaves with the seasons, their leaves changing color with the autumn and regrowing with the spring.



- △ **Evergreen trees** carry their leaves all year round. Whilst they do shed their leaves, they do so gradually over a long period of time, and mostly their leaves do not change color.

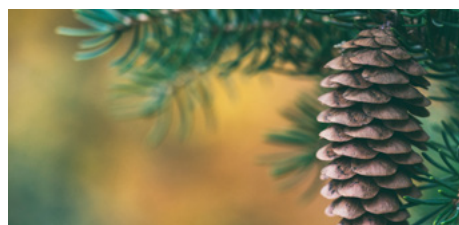


Trees can also be classified by their how their seeds form:

- △ **Angiosperms** produce seeds that, when matured, are housed in an ovule (usually a fruit) e.g fruit-bearing trees, Maple trees, Oak trees.

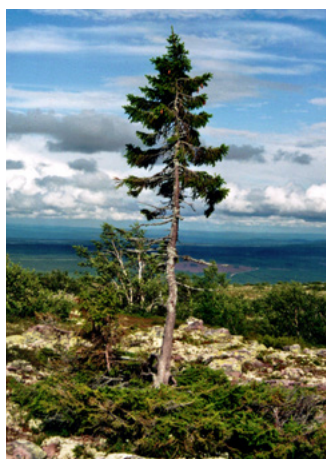


- △ **Gymnosperms** are non-flowering trees who house their seeds on the scales of cone-like structures e.g. Pine trees, Conifers, Cycads, Spruce trees.



## THE FIRST TREES

Stretching back to prehistoric times, it's believed the earliest trees were ferns, lycophytes and horsetails. Fossils of these first tree-like plants date back some 400 million years. Whilst they didn't yet have seeds, they were developing intricate vascular systems that would allow trees to eventually lift off the ground and form trunks and branches. Over millions of years these early trees slowly evolved their features, developing seeds systems, robust woody trunks, mastering water distribution and intricate root systems. Many of the trees we know and love today have been present on Earth for millions of years! Pine trees date back 150 million years. Maple trees appeared 67 million years ago. Oak trees have existed here for 56 million years.



Old Tjikko, Karl Brodowsky, CC BY 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons

One of the most wondrous things about trees is how long they can live. While living into our eighties or nineties with a healthy body is seen as a good result for humans, trees are perennial plants, which means they can live for many hundreds or even thousands of years!

In Sweden, carbon dating was performed on an ancient spruce tree known as 'Old Tjikko' and it was revealed that it was more than 9,500 years old. That's over 7,000 years before Jesus is said to have walked on Earth. Imagine the many ages this tree has lived through, the changes that it has seen and the wisdom it holds...



## PAUSE & REFLECT

*There is a subtle theme amongst all our Mysteries, of how they witness and endure, but the longevity of trees is something that really moves me. How simply and subtly they grow and give and withstand while being so alive. I can't think of any other living thing on our planet that actively breathes and grows for hundreds and thousands of years. Their endurance and remarkable life cycle is truly astounding. What beloved old trees do you have near you? What trees have you been able to visit your entire life? What trees from your childhood are still standing today?*

## THE TREE CYCLE

As with any complex living organism, trees follow the same circle of life whereby they are born, they breathe, they develop, they reproduce (if the conditions are right) and, eventually, they die. All trees begin life as a seed, holding within it all the intelligence it needs to grow into its full magnificence. Tree seeds are often dropped or distributed by the fruits or flowers of an older, mature tree.



The first job of a seed is to secure itself within the soil by sending its first unfurling root downwards, followed by its first upward reaching embryonic shoot towards the light. This shoot becomes a *seedling* once it cracks the surface of the ground. A seedling is then considered a *sapling* once it's grown beyond three feet in height. Trees are considered saplings until they start producing fruits or flowers, at which stage they are considered *mature* trees. This is when a tree is at its most productive.



The life span of trees at this point varies greatly from species to species. The UK's Woodland Trust offers examples of this in their article, 'Lifecycle of a Tree': 'A typical English Oak tree starts producing acorns at around forty years old, peaking in productivity around 80–120 years. Oaks, in general, can be productive for 300 years then rest for 300 years before moving on in the life cycle. In contrast, Rowan starts producing berries after around fifteen years, and by 120 years or so it is already at the end of its life.'

Once a tree passes through its mature years, it gains the title of 'ancient tree'. Depending on the species, a tree may be considered ancient once it is hundred or years old, or once it is thousands of years old e.g. Ancient Yews are often thousands of years old. Ancient Rowans are often hundreds of years old. It varies depending on the expected life cycle of that species.

Eventually, once the tree enters the final stages of its life, it becomes a snag, or a decaying tree. Although it may seem like the end of the life cycle, there is still an abundance of life found in decaying trees and they play a crucial role in the wider biodiversity of their landscape. The dying wood becomes the perfect home to many insects and fungi. Mammals, bats and birds often seek shelter in the hollows and holes of the softening wood.



## TREE OF LIFE

Humans have always had a deep connection and sense of wonder for trees, with the presence of trees found throughout countless myths and legends from across all religions, cultures and eras. Trees feature heavily in many creation stories, often depicted as the symbol of life or a metaphor of the spiritual journey. In some creation myths, the first man and woman emerge from trees. For example, versions of the Zoroastrian creation story states a huge tree grew from the corpse of the first human, its trunk then dividing into a man and a woman – Mashya and Mashyane – and the fruits of the tree went on to become the different races of humanity.



Yggdrasil by Oluf Olufsen Bagge, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In many creation myths, trees are a powerful representation of the axis point connecting the different worlds. 'Its branches hold up the heavens, its trunk stands in the earthly realm, and its roots descend into the underworld,' writes forest ecologist Nalini Nadkarni in her book *Between Earth and Sky: Our Intimate Connections to Trees*.

*Tree of Life, World Tree, Cosmic Tree...* there are many names for this Sacred and symbolic archetypal tree which features as a central structure of the universe throughout many religions and mythologies across the world. In Norse mythology, this tree is called Yggdrasill, a giant ash tree that reaches into many realms, connecting all living things.



‘In Norse cosmology, there is no more important entity than Yggdrasil. When it dies, the myths tell us, the whole world of the gods dies with it. Nearly every Norse text that mentions Yggdrasil emphasizes that the tree is not only Sacred, it is mortal, and sorely in need of compassion and protection.’ This extract from The Public Domain Review journal article ‘Yggdrasil: The Sacred Ash Tree of Norse Mythology’, further explains, ‘The deep origins of Yggdrasil are mysterious. The English scholar Hilda Ellis Davidson has plausibly suggested its mythology developed from ancient north Eurasian shamanic traditions, according to which a tree rising through the center of the world was thought to act as a sort of ladder to descend into the underworld or ascend into the heavens.’

## THE CELTIC TREE OGHAM

The Celts were deeply connected to nature and in the Celtic tradition, the same ‘World Tree’ concept a concept is made up of three realms:

- △ **Annwn:** the world below, symbolized by the roots of the tree.
- △ **Abred:** the physical world, symbolized by the trunk of the tree.
- △ **Gwynfed:** the heavens, symbolized by the branches.



The Celts were so connected to trees that they wove this connection into their writing system, known as ‘the Ogham’. In this ancient Celtic alphabet, each of its twenty letters are connected to a Sacred tree, and each of these trees represents a special feeling or energy; the essential nature of that tree. Like runes, the *Celtic Tree Ogham* can be used for guidance. Intuitives who work with it create Ogham sticks marked with the Ogham symbols from each of the twenty trees and plants that it encompasses.

## SACRED INDIGENOUS TREES

Trees are revered as Sacred in many cultures, with particular trees playing different roles within communities. In many First Nations cultures, trees and forests are acknowledged ancestors and hence protected and revered. As well as honoring ancestors, trees are also used to bless the living or mark the birth of new life. Some practices within Indigenous Australian communities celebrate a birth by creating a ‘Directions Tree’ whereby the placenta is mixed with the seed of the tree, creating the child’s own dedicated tree where the child can return at any point throughout their life for spiritual guidance. A cultural tradition passed down, there are also centuries-old Birthing Trees where women have sheltered during labor and birth, burying their placentas in the ground for generations, creating deeply Sacred landscapes and traditions.

Australian politician and proud DjabWurrung Gunnai Gunditjmara woman, Senator Lidia Thorpe, led the fight to protect a 12km stretch of land where new infrastructure plans threatened to bulldoze many of these Sacred trees, including Birthing Trees and Directions Trees. ‘Some DjabWurrung people believe many of the ancient trees on this land carry their DNA, their bloodline and act as guardians. Country is not just the ground underfoot or a spot on a map. The connection Aboriginal people feel to country – to their local landscape – is difficult to describe, especially in English. They have cared for it – its plants, its animals, the forests, rivers and mountains – for millennia, and all its living pieces are important. But there are places in the landscape – songlines and markers – visited by their ancestors, where this kinship is most powerful.’



We also see Sacred Trees revered in all corners of the world. In Madagascar, the mighty Baobab trees in particular are worshiped with the belief that they house ancestor spirits. Ritual offerings like honey, rum, candy or money are often laid at the base of the trees in honor of their beloveds whose ancestor spirits are watching over them.

## SACRED TREES IN RELIGION

We also find the presence and power of Sacred Trees when we look across the world’s main religions and faith traditions. Stretching back right back to the Garden of Eden, we see the role trees have played in the mythology and teachings of Christianity. Bas Fransen’s journal article, ‘The Value of Trees in World Religions’ clarifies that ‘Four trees hold the most significant importance in the Bible – the Tree of Life in the Genesis, Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Tree of Life mentioned in the Revelations, and, finally, the Tree that made the cross upon which Jesus was crucified.’



*The Garden of Eden* by Thomas Cole, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The most common trees mentioned throughout the bible are Cedars, Date Palm trees, Fig trees, Oak trees and Olive trees. Whilst the tradition of decorating Christmas trees feels innately linked to Christianity these days, its roots stretch back to ancient Winter Solstice practice of bringing evergreen branches and plants into their homes to mark the shortest night, normally around 21 or 22 December in the Northern Hemisphere.



When we turn to Buddhism, we find trees are present in key moments of the Buddha's life. For example, it's largely believed he was born under a Shala tree and that his first deep meditation experience took place under a Rose-Apple tree. But the most iconic tree in Buddhism is the 'Awakening Tree': the Fig tree (also known as the Bodhi Tree) where Siddhārtha Gautama sat meditating until he reached enlightenment and emerged as the Buddha some 2,600 years ago. Hence the Bodhi Tree has continued to be woven throughout a lot of imagery and literature representing Buddhism.



Within Judaism there is the annual festival of Tu B'Shevat, otherwise known as 'Rosh HaShanah La'Ilanot' which translates literally as 'New Year of the Trees'. Patricia Campbell Carlson's feature article in *Spirituality & Practice* explains more, 'Tu B'Shevat falls on the fifteenth day of the Jewish month of Shevat and is considered to be the day when trees wake from their slumber. Historically, Tu B'Shevat was largely an agricultural festival, related to the precise timing by which people would tithe the fruits of their trees. It takes into account the pacing of the trees themselves, so that they can fully mature before bearing fruit. Woven into Tu B'Shevat are some lovely customs, like making an effort to eat at least one fruit which you have not yet eaten this season.'

## TREE GODS + GODDESSES

In Roman mythology, Silvanus was a deity of forests, woods and uncultivated lands. As protector of the forest he presided over plantations and delighted in trees growing wild. Silvanus sometimes merges with the Greek God, *Silenus* and is also comparable with the Greco-Roman mythical character of *Pan*, who was also God of the forests and pastures. In one particular myth, Silvanus falls in love with a man named Cyparissus, until Silvanus accidentally kills his beloved stag and overcome with grief, Cyparissus transforms into a Cypress tree.



Cyparissus from set *The Rural Gods*, engraving by Cornelis Cort, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

Hathor, one of the most well-known goddesses of Ancient Egypt, was known for being the 'Sky Goddess'. However, in the old Kingdom of Egypt, she was also known as the Lady of the Sycamore. The *Ancient Egypt Online Journal* states, 'Hathor as the "lady of the southern sycamore" protected and assisted the dead on their final journey. Trees were not commonplace in ancient Egypt, and their shade was welcomed by the living and the dead alike. She was sometimes depicted as handing out water to the deceased from a sycamore tree and according to myth, she (or Isis) used the milk from the Sycamore tree to restore sight to Horus who had been blinded by Set.'



Cernunnos-type antlered figure or horned god, on the Gundestrup Cauldron, National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

In Celtic mythology we meet Cernunnos, a horned god who is renowned for protecting the forests. A master hunter, he is also commonly connected with male animals, particularly the stag. The *Learn Religions* online archive explains that 'because of his horns (and the occasional depiction of a large, erect phallus), Cernunnos has often been misinterpreted by fundamentalists as a symbol of Satan.'

'Certainly, at times, the Christian church has pointed to the Pagan following of Cernunnos as "devil worship". This is in part due to nineteenth-century paintings of Satan that included large, ram-like horns much like those of Cernunnos. Today, many Pagan traditions honor Cernunnos as an aspect of the God, the embodiment of masculine energy and fertility and power.' This story perhaps shows that it was not just the Pagan Goddesses that the push of Christianity by the Roman Empire demonized.

## BEECH TREES: THE WISDOM TREES OF AVEBURY

The UK has incredible ancient forests, and since moving here I have connected deeply with the trees in many of the Sacred sites I have visited. I have led many sacred pilgrimages to Avebury, which is in Wiltshire. As well as being home to Sacred stones, it also has some amazing old beech trees with the most sprawling, knotted roots. Beech trees are known as 'the Mother of the Woods' and these visible roots are one of their features. Our ancestors saw Beech trees as being connected to higher learning, communication, knowledge and wisdom from the Otherworld. They are also linked to many deities associated with these topics.





The wisdom and magical energy in these trees in Avebury is palpable; it is a really light, sparkling energy that feels almost faerie-like. I always noticed that a deeply joyful energy came over the group while we were connecting with these trees. They have a very nurturing presence and one by one, we were all drawn to sit at their roots and lean our backs against their smooth trunks.

## THE GRANDMOTHER LIME TREE

After living in Glastonbury for a year or so I was introduced to a beautiful old tree that is known as The Grandmother Lime Tree (also known as Linden tree). The energy of this particular tree feels so old, wise, gentle, strong and loving.

The Lime tree is seen as a Sacred tree by many, and is an important feature of the mythology and folklore of many cultures around the world. In Balkan mythology, there is a goddess of fate named 'Laima' whose Sacred tree is the Lime tree. Her devotees would bring offerings to place beneath a Lime tree and would pray for fertility and good fortune.



Whenever we bring a group to visit the Grandmother Lime Tree, a silence always descends for a few minutes while everyone tunes into her energy, and when you look around, you can see everyone's faces becoming peaceful and their eyes closing. It feels almost like sitting at the feet of an enlightened spiritual leader and being able to tune into a frequency of deep peace just from being in their presence.

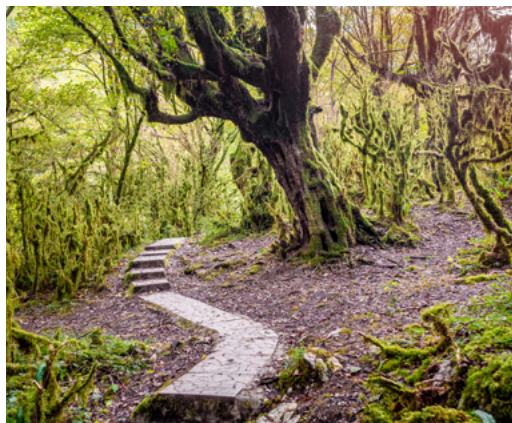
## YEW TREES: THE TREE OF REBIRTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Another group of trees that are very special to me are the Yew trees in the garden of my house. There are fifteen of them in total and one of them is ancient and protected. I often wonder if it is the tree that called us here. Yew trees are said to symbolize death and rebirth, new beginnings, fertility, transformation and changes and regeneration after a period of difficulty.



After years of praying for our home to call us, my husband and I found this property. From the moment we stepped through the gate we knew it was to be our home. I believe that it may well be these ancient trees that were calling us. For several nights after moving in there were two white owls mating in the Yews. And I don't believe it is a coincidence that within a month of moving in, we discovered we were pregnant! In the years that followed I was hurtled into a period of my journey that I call the descent, where it felt as though I was studying birth and death at a very intimate level. As if I was constantly being called to die while still fully living. To then learn about some of the myths and symbolism around Yew trees, it makes a lot of sense to me.

Yew trees are particularly Sacred in the Celtic tradition and often found in church gardens or graveyards. The reason being that often churches were erected on Druid temples and Sacred sites and as the Yew was a Sacred tree, it has likely been standing there for much longer than the church. Known as the 'tree of resurrection', there are stories of Yew branches growing new branches even after being cut down.



In her book *Walking with Trees*, Glennie Kindred shares that yews were known as the 'Tree of Immortality' and the 'Tree of Eternity'. They were revered above all other trees by our ancestors as they were said to mark the entrances to other dimensions and the Otherworld, where the spirits of the dead and the ancestors can be contacted.



Glennie also shares that Yew trees 'can give off hallucinogenic vapors, which on hot days can induce altered states of consciousness and initiate spontaneous shamanic journeys.' I have definitely experienced this subtle altered space prompted by the Yew trees over this past summer.

In the Celtic tradition, Yews were planted at the entrances of underground shrines to the Goddesses of the underworld (Helenes and Hecate). They were also associated with the crone or wise woman of the triple Goddess, which is made up of the maiden, the mother and the crone. It is also believed that the Yews are often planted above secret Sacred wells.



## TREES IN RITUAL

Trees and their gifts of wood, leaves, bark, fruits, resin and flowers have been used in Sacred rituals since our earliest ancestors ever gathered around a fire. Traditional smoke cleansing has roots in many indigenous traditions whereby dried leaves, bark or herbs are bundled together and lit to create smoldering smoke to bless or cleanse a space or ceremony. Similarly many incenses originate from the wood or resin of trees and are seen as Sacred for many cultures. We will explore this in more detail in the *Saining: Sacred Smoke practice in Part 2: Journeying with the Trees*.

*Encyclopedia Britannica* states, 'Incense-bearing trees were imported from the Arabian and Somali coasts into Ancient Egypt, where incense was prominent in religious ritual e.g, at the daily liturgy and in the mortuary rites, when the souls of the dead were thought to ascend to heaven in the flame.

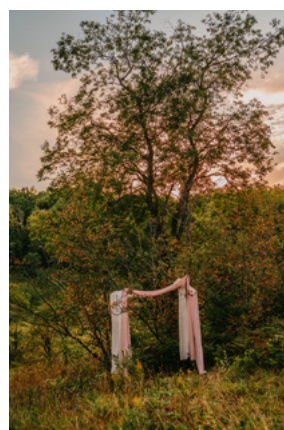
'Incense was employed to counteract disagreeable odors and drive away demons and was said both to manifest the presence of the Gods (fragrance being a divine attribute) and to gratify them.' From Frankincense to Cedar, Eucalyptus to Juniper, the use of burning tree branches, leaves, incense and resin can be seen in many different cultures the world over.



Planting a tree can be a ritual unto itself, often done ceremonially to mark an initiation such as the birth of a baby, or the death of a beloved. Tying rags or ribbons to trees is another popular ritual, often symbolising wishes or prayers of those who have journeyed to a particular place. Some rag tying offerings are also left as gifts with the belief that they serve as channels further connecting the worshiper to the divine. Visitors often tie colorful ribbons to the remarkable Beech Trees of Avebury and whisper their wishes into their roots and trunk.

Hammering nails into trees is also a common ritual for protection, believing it can ward off evil or bad spirits, as outlined by Amots Dafni in his journal article 'Rituals, ceremonies and customs related to sacred trees with a special reference to the Middle East'. He writes, 'Sacred trees in the West Himalayan region are the object of a custom where travelers hammer nails into the trunk when passing by as a protective step against diseases, death, and any damage to their sheep, cattle, or crops. The explanation for this act, according to traditional belief, is that it dispels evil powers. In Egypt, nails driven into tree trunks signify the prayers of the believers. People come to sheikhs' trees to be cured of headaches or other ailments. In asking the sheikh for help, they hammer nails into the trunk and wind some of their hair around the nails.'

Trees themselves also often created a Sacred altar, with weddings and other initiatory ceremonies taking place under dedicated trees in order to deepen the blessing and contract.



## TREES IN TAROT + ASTROLOGY

Trees (and/or wood) are often depicted on a number of Tarot cards: Two of Wands, The Hanged Man, The Four of Cups, The Lovers, The High Priestess, The Fool, Eight of Pentacles, Knight of Pentacles, Five of Pentacles. Often trees are used to symbolize material and/or spiritual potential. They can also represent structure and deep roots.



Trees don't feature in the traditional astrology signs. However, the Druids did create a Celtic Tree Astrology system, assigning a tree and quality to certain birth months similar to the Signs of the Zodiac. Trees have many spiritual meanings associated with them across almost every culture in the world; both as a concept in general and each individual species of tree. Many of the ancient druids spent endless years of study exploring the Cosmic expressions manifested in different trees, arriving at this division of the year by tree and astrological sign.



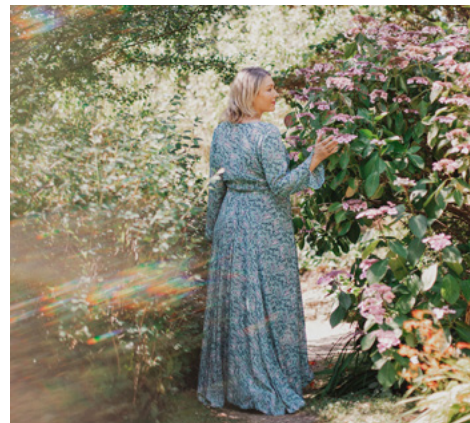
**24 December – 20 January:** BIRCH, The Achiever  
**21 January – 17 February:** ROWAN, The Thinker  
**18 February – 17 March:** ASH, The Enchanter  
**18 March – 14 April:** ALDER, The Trailblazer  
**15 April – 12 May:** WILLOW, The Observer  
**13 May – 9 June:** HAWTHORN, The Illusionist  
**10 June – 7 July:** OAK, The Stabilizer  
**8 July – 4 August:** HOLLY, The Ruler  
**5 August – 1 September:** HAZEL, The Knower  
**2 September – 29 September:** VINE, The Equalizer  
**30 September – 27 October:** IVY, The Survivor  
**28 October – 24 November:** REED, The Inquisitor  
**25 November – 23 December:** ELDER, The Seeker

## IF TREES COULD TALK

### HOW TREES COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Unlike the lightning-fast electrical impulses that the human body uses to fire different systems and trigger different processes, the electrical impulses that trees send out only move at the rate of one-third of an inch per second.

I was so interested to learn that trees use these electrical impulses, along with many other signals, to communicate with their neighbors. As a child I loved all the references in children's stories to trees that could walk and talk. Looking back, I think this was because on some level I sensed that trees, like all of nature, were sentient beings that had a much deeper awareness and much richer inner life than most people realize.



In his fascinating book *The Hidden Life of Trees*, forester Peter Wohlleben explains how trees also use other mechanisms to warn each other of danger. In certain places, if an animal starts to eat the leaves of a tree, the tree releases a chemical into the air to warn neighboring trees of the threat. As a result, they are able to protect themselves by pumping toxic chemicals into their leaves, so that the animal moves on. And this is not the only way trees warn each other of dangers; they also do so by sending each other warning signals through their roots.

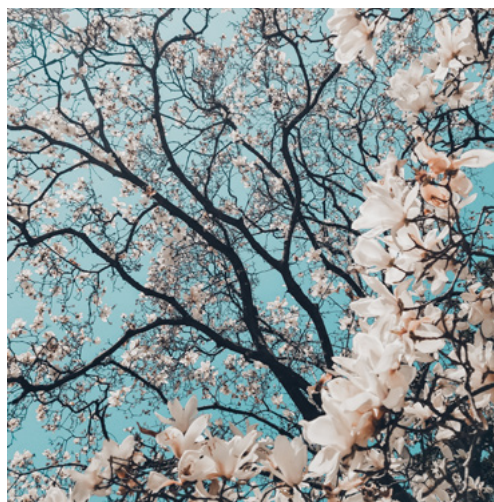
It's amazing to learn that trees protect each other in this way, and it turns out that this is just the beginning of how they support each other. It has been discovered that trees in a forest care for each other by sharing sugars and other nutrients through their roots. The stronger trees care for the weaker trees, sometimes even sending nourishment to the stump of a tree that has been cut down for hundreds of years, to prevent it from dying.

This proves that trees are not only aware of each other but want to work together for the wellbeing of all, and the wellbeing of their environment.



'Mother' trees also protect their children that grow nearby them, by providing them with shade from hot sun and allowing them to grow at a measured pace that results in a stronger foundation than rapid growth. Biologist Suzanne Simard, who has written in depth about how trees communicate with each other, performed groundbreaking research that revealed that if we leave these mother trees intact and cut trees down in smaller sections than is common in modern methods, forests can recover much more quickly, because these mother trees are often taking care of many trees in their network.

Wohlleben also shares that some trees seem to develop deep friendships, going against the popular concept of nature 'fighting it out' with itself and 'the survival of the fittest'. These trees deliberately grow in ways that support each other's access to light. Just like human beings who have formed such a strong connection that it is deeply painful to be parted, trees who are this tuned in to each other's needs are sometimes so tightly connected at the roots that they die together.





## WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE TREES

Trees support each other in all of these fascinating ways because they need each other. Lone trees are at the mercy of the elements, times of lack of water and nutrients, and 'attack' from insects and animals. But a forest of trees can protect each other from the Sun, the heat, the wind and the cold and share vital nutrients and water amongst each other. And as a result, trees living in communities live longer than trees that exist on their own. I believe people are the same.



Sadly, many of the plants that human beings have cultivated for agriculture and other purposes have lost their ability to communicate with each other and have suffered as a result. It's a poignant reminder of the importance of community, communication and supporting one another. Perhaps the same happens with humans when we move at such a fast pace.

## THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF TREES

A research project first released in 2017 entitled the *GlobalTreeSearch* was the first of its kind, consulting over 500 published resources and liaising with experts all over the world to learn that our planet holds a remarkable 60,065 tree species.

Many international studies have shown that the presence of trees has a strong positive impact on our physical health. Just the view of a tree outside a hospital window has been shown to increase the rate of healing in patients who have had an operation, and the risk of developing a disease associated with modern lifestyles diminishes in direct proportion to the number of trees in a person's environment.



In investigating the positive effects of trees on human health, scientists have discovered that molecules called terpenes released into the air by trees support our immune systems' defenses and protect against cancer, so the benefit of spending time around trees goes far beyond us simply feeling calmed by their presence.

Many Eastern cultures have a deeper understanding of nature as medicine, with Japan in particular allocating public funds to research on this topic. In his ground-breaking book *The Healing Code of Nature*, Clemens G. Arvay shares that the Japanese healing tradition of 'forest bathing' (*shinrin-yoku*) is also often translated as 'inhaling the forest atmosphere'. This practice is also popular in North and South Korea, China and Taiwan. Traditional Chinese medicine also acknowledges the concept of spending time in nature being healing, with many of the movements of the ancient system of qigong designed to help the practitioner absorb the energy of nature.

Trees also play a crucial role in the overall health of our global ecosystems, not just by purifying our air or converting sunlight into food, but also in more subtle ways. It has been discovered that when tree leaves decompose, the precious acids they release help fertilize plankton in the oceans. And when plankton thrive, the entire food chain benefits. This discovery led to a dedicated campaign in Japan called 'Forests Are Lovers of the Sea' whereby fishermen replanted forests along the river banks and coastlines in an attempt to see oysters and fish return to the region. The experiment was a success and the waters thrived once the trees had returned.



## PAUSE & REFLECT

*It's interesting to consider for a moment how the Mysteries overlap. We see in examples like this how the gifts of Trees feed into the health of the Waters. Whilst we are traveling through this training one Mystery at a time, keep an awareness of how they feed into each other. Not only in an environmental or ecosystem sense, but in a relational sense. As with everything, there is no separation between this Mystery and that Mystery. We compartmentalize them so we can more tangibly hold them. But let's keep in our awareness the wider perspective also of how all of our Mysteries interrelate with each other – and with you – in the wider fabric of Life and all that is Sacred.*

## SACRED ACTIVISM: TREESISTERS CHARITY

The famous adage reminds us that “the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the second best time is today.” The UK registered social change charity, TreeSisters, are devoted leaders in global reforestation and feminine leadership. Their website elaborates on their mission stating: “Through individuals and businesses that give back to Nature every month, TreeSisters has so far planted over 26 million trees across 12 locations in Brazil, Borneo, Cameroon, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Madagascar, Nepal and West Papua. We are actively encouraging the cultural shift required to grow from a consumer to a restorative culture. We encourage feminine leadership by providing resources, experiences and communities that inspire personal and collective action on behalf of the trees.” I’m pledging a percentage of my royalties for The Inner Temple Mystery School to TreeSisters. If you’d like to join me in making donation, visit <https://treesisters.org/give>





# JOURNEYING WITH THE TREES

*Part Two*

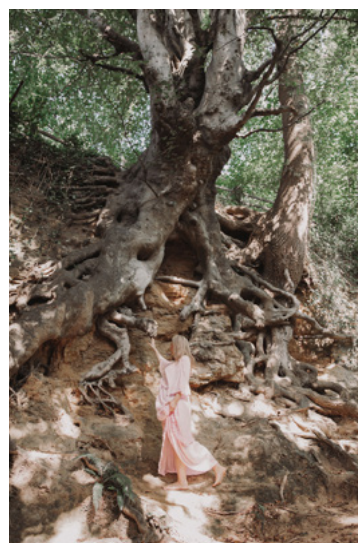
# JOURNEYING WITH THE TREES

## *The Trees as your guide*

Here we are at the experiential part of this module. This is where things really come alive. It is here that we invite Sacred Trees to be our teacher and guide. We will be using a selection of practices and tools as gateways to experience the Sacred in an embodied way. These practices are of course not finite, rather they are ones that I have found especially supportive in connecting with the Sacred and working with Trees.

All of the practices have been created so that you can do them over and over again as you are called. They are gateways for you to connect and to have a direct experience with the Sacred. This is the mystic way.

Stay open to being surprised and try to let go of expectations. Trust your intuition, be curious and open to the experiences. Maybe you will receive subtle visions, whispers, knowings, feelings, symbols, hunches, smells, tastes? Don't get disheartened if your experience is more subtle or different to others. The way you receive your intuition will be unique. We are not meant to be the same. Embrace your own unique experience.



For every practice and tool you will find space in this workbook to reflect through *Soul Inquiry*. *Soul Inquiry* is a form of intuitive writing. Stay open to receiving messages and guidance from both your soul and Sacred Trees as you complete each *Soul Inquiry*.



I really encourage you to take the time to do the dedicated *Soul Inquiry* after each practice, even if what you encountered doesn't necessarily make sense to you, or even if it feels like nothing significant came up for you. Tracking your experiences – in all their diversity – can help us establish a bigger picture, which in itself may hold information for us. For example, in what environments/conditions/paths did your intuitive nature walk feel alive, what environments felt harder to connect with? All of this is valuable insight: allow it all, and weave it into your process. Nothing is wrong or incorrect or absent. All of it is the path. All of it holds wisdom. Just keep listening.

May the whispers of your soul and the wisdom of the Sacred Trees reveal bountiful hidden treasures within you.

# THE SACRED TREES EVOCATION

*Calling in the wisdom of the Sacred Trees*

The Sacred Trees Evocation is a practice of calling in the Sacred Trees. This evocation is to support you in opening the Sacred container to work with this Mystery.

Light a candle or open Sacred space however you like. Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly and connect with the trees around you. Breathe in deeply and repeat the following evocation out loud:



*In the highest interest of myself,  
my loved ones and the world,  
I begin this evocation.*

*Come, come, Sacred Trees, come.  
Come, come, Sacred Trees, come.*

*Wise Ones, beloved Elders,  
you who were present long before me,  
and you who will continue after I have gone.  
I call upon you to be one of my guides.*

*I am open to receiving your grounded wisdom and support as I journey with you.  
I am ready to remember my ever-changing true nature  
and to return again and again back to the Earth and to myself.  
I am ready to take my place as an ancestor of the future with your guiding grace.*

*May I rest into your holding.  
May I be humbled by your ancient knowing.  
May I find the courage to walk the ever-deepening way of the Sacred Trees  
May I be held steady by your strength and surrender.  
May I stay curious and grounded with every step.  
May I take responsibility for my needs.  
May I return to myself, my body, the Earth and humanity.  
May I plant myself here more deeply than before.*

*Come, come, Sacred Trees, come.  
Come, come, Sacred Trees, come.*





## THE SACRED TREES EVOCATION

### *Soul Inquiry*

As you begin journeying with the Trees as your guide, is there an area of your life or a question you have that you would like to focus on during this module? Explain briefly below.

What do the Sacred Trees want you to know?

What do the Sacred Trees want you to remember?

What are the Sacred Trees calling you to do?

Looking at the above *Soul Inquiry* questions, circle the thing that came through the strongest and then ask yourself: what is one baby step you can do to act on this today to embody this mystical practice?

# SACRED TREES ALTAR

## *Creating Sacred space*

Altar work is at the heart of everything we do in the *Inner Temple Mystery School*. At the beginning of each Mystery, one of our first practices is to create an altar dedicated to our work with that Mystery, in this case The Sacred Trees!

Altars provide a physical and energetic container for us to focus our prayers, intentions, and devotion. They create a physical space for us to be in communication with the Sacred. When we create an altar we create an altared space. We open a Sacred container both physically and energetically.

The main way I work with Trees on my altar is by collecting fallen branches and leaves of trees near my home or in my garden. I'll often go for walks with my husband and son and we are known to gather interestingly-shaped sticks and pine cones that we often integrate into our altars.



One of my most treasured items is a tiny bird's nest that appeared on the doorstep to my office after the baby bird nesting in it in the Yew tree above the door flew its nest. An exquisite creation of nature, made up of hundreds of thin sticks and feathers, used to cradle precious new Life, I like to place a candle inside it and light it to represent the prayers or wishes that I am tending to.

I like working with oils, incense and resins made from trees such as Hawthorn, Spruce and Eucalyptus. I have a protected Yew tree in my garden and while many parts of the tree are toxic, I sometimes gather fallen branches.

We have a wooden statue that was gifted to my husband by a friend after he had a significant awakening experience connected to the branches of a Chestnut tree. Around the autumn equinox I will often gather fallen nuts and flowers from trees around me as well.





Near my office, there was a beautiful walnut tree that we used to forage nuts from each September. Unfortunately, one day we discovered that the tree needed to be cut down as it was growing into the main sewerage for the town, and so my husband managed to forage part of the trunk which is now in his office as a Sacred item. My dog Shakti loves sleeping on top of it.



One thing I have found important to notice when working with trees is the fact that many of the places I have my altars on are made of trees: wood. From tables to bookshelves, fire places to window ledges, trees really are much more present in our homes and lives than we may initially think.

For more information on how to gather your altar items, create and deconstruct your altar, feel free to go back to the *Altar Work* video in *Foundations Module 2*.



Once you have created your Sacred Trees Altar, your daily practice is to tend to it every day. You can do this by lighting the candles, freshening up any water and spending some time in prayer, meditation or reflection. You could call upon the wisdom of Sacred Trees by saying the whole invocation out loud or shortening it, for example, ‘Come, come, Sacred Trees, come.’

When you are done practicing at your altar, I recommend closing the energy by sharing your gratitude. For example you could simply say, ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you’ out loud.

So, now it’s time to begin gathering your items, clearing your altar space and building your altar. Don’t underestimate the power of this Sacred work. It has the potential to really open up a Sacred energetic container for you to deepen your unique personal connection with the Trees as your guide. It also has the potential to help you integrate the wisdom that comes through with this Mystery.

I’m really looking forward to hearing about your experience with working with the Sacred Trees altar.





## THE SACRED TREES ALTAR

### *Soul Inquiry*

Where did you build your altar and what items did you gather?

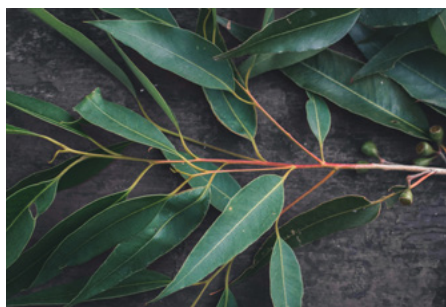
Share any reflections on the process of creating your altar and connecting with the energy of the Sacred Trees below.



# WITNESS THE TREES

*Truly see the gifts*

The invitation with this practice is simple: pay attention to the gift of trees in your daily life.



This may sound simple, but it's more than just looking out and appreciating the trees in your garden or neighborhood. It's about *really seeing*. The gift of trees, their oxygen, their shade, their fruit, their wood, their resin, their leaves, their ecosystems. Have we grown blind to just how profoundly the gift of trees reaches into our lives?

How intimate can we get with our countless daily interactions with this profound Mystery? How can we crack open our routines and return to that place of innate reverence for this powerful element of Life?

The treasure in this practice – if you truly embody it as you walk through this module – is that it will gently prompt you, time and time again throughout the day, to deepen your connection with the Mysteries and the Sacred that is woven all through Life itself.

With each touchpoint you have with trees throughout your day, the invitation is to speak your gratitude. In words that feel right or appropriate for you – speaking it inwardly or outwardly – create a moment of pause within every interaction you have with the gifts of Trees. You may wish to say *'Thank you, thank you, thank you,'* each time you acknowledge the trees, or, *'I see you. Thank you.'*

Every piece of fruit.  
Every roaring fireplace.  
Every wooden coat hanger.  
Every door frame.  
Every paintbrush.  
Every cooking utensil.  
Every cool patch of shade.  
Every waft of incense.  
Every piano sound.  
Every piece of furniture.  
Every bird song.  
Every inhale.  
Every exhale.



This simple exercise is enough to blow our minds. Let it. Invite yourself to let the awe in. The *Soul Inquiry* in your workbook is there for you to help capture what comes through for you.



## WITNESS THE TREES

### *Soul Inquiry*

How did you find this exercise? What did you notice? How did you find it?

Share any reflections, insights or learnings about trees, breath, the Sacred in the everyday and yourself below.



# KYTHING WITH SACRED TREES

*Hearing the whispers: receiving wisdom from the Trees*

I believe that trees have consciousness. And by connecting to them at soul level we can receive wisdom from them and through them that reaches back through the ages. Much like Ancient Stones, I see Sacred Trees as guardians, beings who have seen generations come and go. They can offer steady support and perspective that we might lack due to our comparatively short life span. And like anything on Earth, I see them as a potential vehicle to connect with ancestral wisdom.



For as long as I can remember I have connected to the soul and consciousness of plants, flowers, trees and stones. It is through this process that I do most of my writing. You could call them my muse. It wasn't until decades later that I discovered an almost lost word in the Scottish language known as Kything. Kything is the conscious act of spiritual presence or connection with an object.

The invitation in this exercise is to connect with the consciousness of a tree of your choosing. When we connect to a part of nature in this way, whether a rose, tree, flower or a stone, we are connecting to both the individual object as well as the species as a whole. Trees too have their own unique story to tell and wisdom to share. Different trees hold different stories. Trust the ones that call you to them. Tuning in and following your curiosity in this Inquiry can open doors to deepening insight and wisdom.

You can choose a tree that is revered as Sacred or you can select a tree that you are personally connected with, drawn to or hold personal memories for you. This is a practice that you build over time. I recommend trying it a few different times, with different trees, at different times. I encourage you to compare and contrast at least two different types of trees.





## HOW TO DO THE PRACTICE

### STEP 01

Find the tree that you wish to work with. This can be a tree in your garden, your local park or your wider neighborhood. Churchyards often have beautiful old trees as they were often the original 'Sacred place'. And if that is not possible you can also do this exercise using a picture of a tree.

01.

### STEP 02

Standing or sitting in front of the tree, soften your gaze and slow down your breath. Notice and appreciate its beauty. Breathing deeply, imagine a Sacred Tree at the center of your heart and invite it to open, revealing a light in the middle. This is your soul. Invite that to step forward now.

02.

### STEP 03

From the center of your heart connect with the soul of the Tree.

03.

### STEP 04

Introduce yourself to the Tree.

04.

### STEP 05

If you have a question you would like to ask the Tree, you can ask it now.

05.

### STEP 06

Soften your gaze and begin to observe the Tree with your soul and intuitive senses. What do you notice about it? How does the Tree make you feel? What does the Tree remind you of? Do you notice any patterns on it? What is the texture like? How old does it feel? What feelings are arising? Do you have a knowing? Are you receiving any visions? Are you drawn to a particular part of the tree? Did you have a memory of something?

06.

## STEP 07

Ask the Tree to give you a message and stay open to receiving that message now. You can write it down and journal intuitively if you like.

07.

## STEP 08

Thank the Tree for this connection and ask the Tree if there is anything it would like you to do for it.

08.



## KYTHING WITH SACRED TREES

*Soul Inquiry*

Tree Name

Location

What's known about this tree

Describe the tree that you decided to work with

The question I asked the tree(s) is

What message did you receive from the tree?

How did you receive this message and what did you experience?

Have you communicated with trees before?

How was this experience for you?



Reflect on your experience with the tree below.

Was there anything that the tree asked from you?

Is there anything that you are being called to do as a result of this practice?

Looking at the above *Soul Inquiry* questions, circle the thing that came through the strongest and then ask yourself: what is one baby step you can do to act on this today to embody this mystical practice?

# TREE OF LIFE SOUL JOURNEY

*Receiving ancient wisdom*

Trees are Sacred to many different traditions and the Tree of Life is a Sacred symbol that transcends any one particular religion or tradition. For the ancient Egyptians, Celts, Native Americans and Mayan mystics, the Tree of Life has been a focus of Sacred practice.

In Celtic Mythology, the Tree of Life is an Oak Tree and symbolizes longevity, wisdom and strength. I feel personally connected to Oak Trees from my years of intuitive nature walking in Hyde and Regent's Parks in London. I can also see an ancient Oak tree from the glass ceiling in my living room. I say hi to it each morning and it's incredible to watch its leaves change so dramatically throughout the year.



In the *Tree of Life Soul Journey*, we will be connecting with a nature guide who will guide you into a Sacred woodland to connect with the Tree of Life. Once you have finished the meditation, complete the following *Soul Inquiry*.



## TREE OF LIFE SOUL JOURNEY

### *Soul Inquiry*

Do the *Tree of Life Soul Journey* and then intuitively answer the following *Soul Inquiry* prompts below.

What was that soul journey like for you? Describe or draw anything you experienced (saw, felt, heard, knew etc) below.

Describe your nature guide: how did they appear to you? Describe or draw any details you remember here.



Did you recognise the type of tree that appeared for you? Describe or draw it below.

Did you receive any wisdom or insight from the Tree of Life? If you did, write it below now. Stay open to receiving more now.

What does the Tree of Life want you to know?

What is the Tree of Life calling you to do?

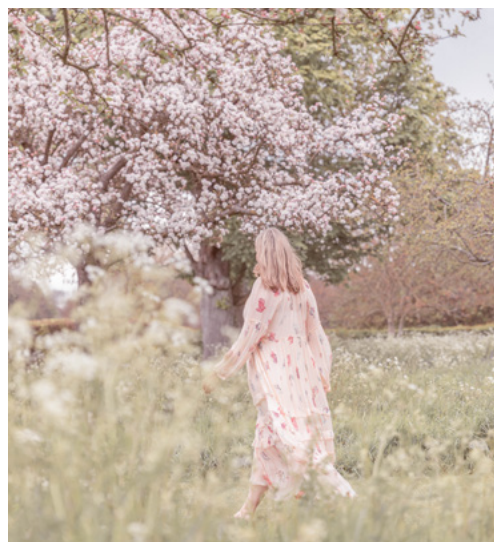
What is one practical baby step you can take this week to integrate this mystical experience?

# INTUITIVE NATURE WALKING

*Let the Trees lead you*

As I introduced in *Foundations Module 2*, *Intuitive Nature Walking* is a walking meditation practice done in nature. It is more than just walking, as you are connecting with the consciousness of the land around you and inviting it to lead you. Quite literally being physically led by the land around you. It's a great way to deepen your connection with the earth and the land on which you live.

For the Trees module, I invite you to practice *Intuitive Nature Walking* with a specific focus on the trees around you.



This is a wonderful practice for getting into your body, feeling more grounded and letting your intuition MOVE your body. My teachers always taught me that all of the creative ideas and intuition in the world are pointless unless you act on it, unless you embody it, unless you integrate it. This is a brilliant tool for strengthening that ability.

We're not separate from nature, we are nature, and in the busyness of our modern lives, it is easy to get disconnected from it. One of the best ways that I know to feel connected, grounded and to get back in our body is to do this practice.



## HOW TO INTUITIVE NATURE WALKING WITH THE TREES

### STEP 01

The first step of *Intuitive Nature Walking* is to go into an open area of nature such as a woodland, the bush, park or forest. Any open area of nature will do. As we are working specifically with the Sacred Trees, try and go somewhere that you know there are trees. If you live in the middle of a city and can't get to an open space just work with what you have.

01.

### STEP 02

Connect to your soul.

02.

### STEP 03

Connect with the land and the trees around you (the ones you can see and the ones that surround you from afar). Breathe in knowing that they assist this life-giving function for you. You may like to acknowledge the original custodians of the land and spirits of the trees themselves. Next, ask the land and the trees to lead you.

03.

### STEP 04

Invite your soul to step forward and lead your body by starting to walk. Notice where you are led. Maybe you are called to walk up to a tree and admire its stretching branches? Notice what season it is. Are there leaves on the earth beneath you crunching at your feet or are the leaves just about to burst on through? Notice the roots of different trees and imagine how deeply they go? Maybe there are trees on their own or perhaps there are trees living as a network? Maybe there are trees cracking their way through the pavement or maybe there are trees providing shade on a hot day? Maybe they are flowering or providing nuts and fruit? Maybe they are home to birds and squirrels? Notice what you might not normally notice. Stay open to attuning to the trees all around.

04.

### STEP 05

How do you feel? Breathing deeply, staying connected to the trees, continue to be led and moved. Really connect with the consciousness of the trees all around you.

05.

## STEP 06

Walk for as long as you like. If you feel called you might like to stop to meditate under a tree or write down any messages you receive. You could ask the tree permission to touch its trunk or forage a fallen leaf or stick for your altar. You could even do your Kything practice while on your Intuitive Nature Walk.

06.

## STEP 07

Once you are complete (or throughout if you wish), thank the trees around you for guiding you and ask if they have a message for you.

07.

## STEP 08

Finally, ask if there is anything it would like you to do for it.

08.



## INTUITIVE NATURE WALKING

### *Soul Inquiry*

Describe your experience. What was it like for you? Describe or draw anything you experienced (saw, felt, heard, knew etc) below.

What did you notice? Did you receive any messages?

What are the Sacred Trees calling you to do?

What is one baby step you can do to act on this today to embody this mystical practice?



# TREES BREATHING US

## *Mindfulness & gratitude practice*

This practice is all about connecting with your breath. It's an invitation for us to work with our ability to breathe. To feel the Pulse of Life that is breathing us. To deepen into the sheer simple miracle and Mystery of the breath. The journey you've been on together, you and your breath – from that very first gasp at birth – to this very moment in your life. The constant presence of our breath that will accompany us right to the end of our human life.

In order to really sit with our breath, we need to also weave in the gift of air. The gift of clean air, circulated for us by the intelligence of trees. The lungs of the Earth, trees truly allow our planet to breathe air that is clean. Not only do trees absorb carbon dioxide, they expel clean, pure oxygen.

I wonder how deeply you can connect to that process and invite it into your body. The life giving air, converted into oxygen by the trees around you. A constant, silent, unseen mysterious miracle that keeps our lungs full and our hearts pumping.



If you allow yourself to go deep into this practice, you may feel a gentle shift whereby you can sense yourself being breathed, rather than being the one *doing* the breathing. That subtle shift can often bring us closer into a relationship with that Sacred Pulse of Life that runs through everything. Experiment with where your awareness sits as you do this practice, a constant cycle of sharing breath with the Sacred Trees.

This practice is especially incredible if you can do it in nature with trees, although you can do it wherever you are with your imagination.

## HOW TO DO THE PRACTICE

### STEP 01

To do this practice simply slow down your breath and bring consciousness to the inhale and the exhale.

01.

### STEP 02

Feel the breath entering your lungs and supporting you to be alive. Feel the breath leaving your body. Feel your breath cleansing you and enlivening you.

02.

### STEP 03

Now knowing that the trees and the plants are the technology – the beings that make it possible for you to be here, to breathe here – offer gratitude to the trees near you now.

03.

### STEP 04

Continuing to breathe in and out very deeply, acknowledge the trees through the ages who have kept your ancestors alive. The very ones who dreamed your existence into being.

04.

### STEP 05

Thank the trees. Thank the air. Thank your lungs. Thank your ancestors.  
Thank your body.

05.



## TREES BREATHING US

### *Soul Inquiry*

How did you feel during and after the practice? Journal on your experience below.

What did you notice? Did you receive any messages?



# SAINING

## *A Sacred smoke Inquiry*

I have been working with particular trees in the form of burning incense, wood, tree leaves, herbs and resins for some time. However, my consciousness has significantly changed around this practice in this time. Like many, I began working with it through the use of incense early on my journey, and yet it wasn't until I really began working with plants and the earth and unpacking my relationship with them that I understood it and began to appreciate it in a meaningful way.



In my ancestral tradition, the use of herbal smoke is known as Saining. Saining is the practice of burning herbs or pieces of trees for healing and space clearing purposes. The practice of burning incense, wood and resins is seen as a Sacred practice in many cultures and traditions. From Sacred Indigenous ceremonies around the world, to Buddhist temples, to Catholic churches, the use of Sacred smoke is and has always been an evoking and mysterious part of spiritual tradition. Whether burning incense, dried herbs or tree resin, there is something ineffable about how Sacred smoke transforms a space, a moment and a being.

It has a profound ability to bless, to cleanse, to heal and to seal in prayers and intentions. Its scent can transport the senses and its beautiful dance upwards is intoxicating to watch. So fleeting, so real, yet so ungraspable; so effortless, so in flow with the conditions around it.

I use incense and resin from trees in my personal practice. For one of my UK retreats in Somerset, my friend Tash invited me to begin foraging the resin from the Spruce trees on the land where the retreat was, where she is also a custodian. We began the foraging process in February in order for the tree to create the resin for the summer ahead. It really invited me to deeply honor the Sacred resin from that tree and to use it sparingly. This experience in particular brought so much more consciousness and reverence to using incense, Sacred herbs and resins.



My invitation for us in this lesson is threefold. First, to take a moment to reflect on how you may have mindfully or unmindfully been doing this practice through burning of incense, herbs or resin. For example, the burning of Sacred plants such as white sage is one that has become quite problematic in spiritual communities. It has been commodified by those who are not of the culture it is Sacred to, and as a result this Sacred herb is now endangered.

Secondly, it is to reflect on what tree-based spiritual tools – such as incense, resin, Sacred wood etc – you may be using. And to Inquire into what tree it comes from, what traditions that tree is Sacred to and how you can bring more reverence to this practice. And finally, how can you be more mindful and sustainable when using these practices?



## SAINING

### *Soul Inquiry*

What tree-based incense, herbs and resins have you worked with?

How aware were you that these came from trees?

Do you know the process that needs to happen to create these products?

Do you know what traditions revere these plants as Sacred?

How can you bring even more reverence to this practice?



How can you connect more with the spirit of the plant in your practice?

How can you be even more sustainable in your practice?

# EARTH PULSING WITH TREES

*Connecting and surrendering*

This Earth Pulsing practice is one of my favorite tools to feel grounded, held, supported and calm. When I do this practice I can feel my nervous system, mind and body calming down, allowing me to enter into a deep state of replenishment, relaxation and holding.

It's also a simple tool to rest into our interconnectedness. I first created this practice in 2017 in response to a yearning I had to be held, healed and rejuvenated by the earth. I have always done this practice underneath trees, looking up at the canopy of branches above me and connecting to the roots below me. I imagine connecting to the pulse of the earth and the pulse of the roots of the tree. I see them as connected to each other.



To do this practice, I recommend finding somewhere you can lay that is underneath a tree or a group of trees. My favorite place to do it is under a group of trees. If you don't have access to a place like that, you can always imagine it. I like looking up at the branches above me and connecting to the network of roots below me. I invite my heart to sync with theirs. The same pulse that invites the water to travel up from the earth and into the roots and up into the trunk is being regulated in me at the same time. So, it's as if I am syncing with the trees and thus the Earth as a whole.

## HOW TO DO EARTH PULSING WITH TREES

### STEP 01

Find a place ideally in nature underneath a tree or a group of trees. Lie with your back to the earth (if you cannot get to nature, you can lie on the ground and imagine that you are lying on the earth under a canopy of trees).

01.

## STEP 02

Draw your attention to your heart space, particularly focusing on the back of your heart that is connected to the ground beneath you. Imagine your beautiful soul flower opening as you breathe in deeply. Slow down your breath so you are breathing into all corners of your belly and invite the oxygen to travel into and nourish every cell in your body.

02.

## STEP 03

Tune in to the pulse of your heart. Allow your own pulse to slow down. To calm down. Begin to feel the pulse of your heart at the back of your heart pulsing against the earth beneath you.

03.

## STEP 04

Tune into the pulse of the earth. The pulse of the trees. The pulse that invites the water to rise from the earth up towards the heavens through the roots, trunk and branches of the tree.

04.

## STEP 05

Breathing very deeply, invite your own pulse to slow down and sync into the natural rhythm of the trees and the Earth as a whole. Allow your heartbeat to surrender to this mysterious rhythm that is woven through all of life. Surrender to that. Let your heart beat in harmony to the pulse of the Earth, the trees and all of life.

05.

## STEP 06

Feel yourself breathing deeply the life-giving oxygen that the trees have provided. Thank the trees for making Life possible for you.

06.

## STEP 07

Take one final breath in reverence to the trees and the pulse of Life within all things on this planet.

07.





## EARTH PULSING WITH TREES

### *Soul Inquiry*

Describe your experience. What was it like for you? Describe or draw anything you experienced (saw, felt, heard, knew etc) below.

If the Trees could talk, what would they say?

What are the Trees calling you to do?

What is one baby step you can do to act on this today to embody this mystical practice?

# EMBODY THE TREES

## *Sacred Dance*

All of the mystical experiences in the world are pointless unless we can integrate them, ground them, anchor them, embody them. Sacred Dance is a wonderful way to embody the sacred and to let it move you.

When we are doing Sacred Dance we invite our soul to move us. And in this *Embody the Trees practice* we are also inviting the Trees to move us.

As we let ourselves be moved we are trusting the intelligence of nature (of our bodies and of Life) to work with us. Inviting your soul to truly embody your body is a powerful practice. Experiment with calling in different parts of your soul to lead the movement. Perhaps dance into some of the questions and answers that have come through in previous *Soul Inquiries*. How deeply can you allow your soul to experience the physical?



I have created a playlist for you to use for the *Embody the Trees: Sacred Dance practice*. If you have the time I recommend moving to several of the songs, but if you don't then you can choose one or two songs to do your Sacred Dance practice to.

## HOW TO DO THE PRACTICE

### STEP 01

Open Sacred space in a way that feels good to you. As we are working with the Sacred Trees, you may wish to have some incense burning, or do this outside with the trees.

01.

### STEP 02

Begin playing the music.

02.

### STEP 03

In the center of your heart imagine a light in the center of it. This is your soul, your ancient self. Invite it to step forward and move you now.

03.

## STEP 04

Call the Sacred Trees to be here now and to move through you and guide you through this Sacred Dance practice by saying,

*Come, come, Sacred Trees come.  
Dance through me now.  
Come, come, Sacred Trees come.*

04.

## STEP 05

Let the Sacred Trees and the music move you. If you feel like moving a particular part of your body, do it. If you feel like staying still, do that. If you feel like turning, do that. Trust how your body wants to move and let yourself be danced. You may like to close your eyes as you move and draw your attention deep within. Don't worry what you look like. Trust the intelligence of the movement.

05.

## STEP 06

Stay open to the Sacred Trees medicine working with you. For example, you could dance with particular parts of the tree, the roots, the upper branches, the trunk, the leaves etc. You could dance the lifecycle of a tree, starting as a seed and unfurling. Go with it and let it be a deeply intimate experience.

06.

## STEP 07

When the music or playlist is complete, offer your gratitude to Sacred Trees and yourself for showing up by saying,

*Thank you, thank you, thank you.*

07.

## STEP 08

Journal about your experience by answering the *Soul Inquiry* prompts on the next page.

08.

## STEP 09

Once complete, close the Sacred space in a way that feels aligned and if you lit a candle, blow it out to end the practice.

09.





## EMBODY THE TREES

### *Soul Inquiry*

How did you feel during and after the practice?

Describe your experience. What was it like for you? Describe or draw anything you experienced (saw, felt, heard, knew etc) below.

What message did the Trees have for you?

What are the Trees calling you to do?

What is your soul calling you to do?

Looking at the above *Soul Inquiry* questions, circle the thing that came through the strongest and then ask yourself: what is one baby step you can do to act on this today to embody this mystical practice even more?



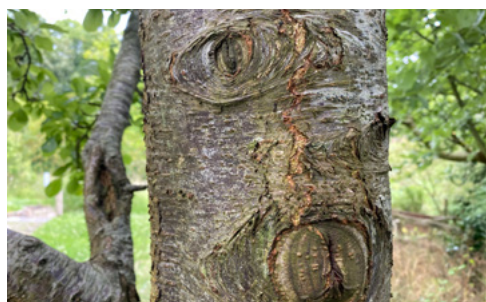
# THE SACRED TREES CEREMONY

*Part Three*

# THE SACRED TREES CEREMONY

## Activation

You have made it to the end of *The Sacred Trees Mystery*. Now it is time to really anchor the energies we have been working with, to honor the connection you have made with Sacred Trees and to activate both yourself and the altar item you have collected for *The Sacred Trees Mystery*.



## FOR THIS CEREMONY YOU WILL NEED

△ **Your Sacred altar item to represent Sacred Trees. Your object should be something that is relatively small and durable, as it will be part of your *Inner Temple Mystery School* altar. It should also represent the Mystery, in this case Sacred Trees. For example, a small twig, leaf, piece of bark, root, wood etc**

△ **A candle**

△ **Water or essential oil**

This ceremony honors the journey you have been on with Sacred Trees as your guide. As we do this ceremony we will be activating ourselves with this energy as well as our altar item.

## HOW TO DO THE SACRED TREES CEREMONY

### STEP 01

Open Sacred space in a way that feels good to you.

01.

### STEP 02

Light a candle.

02.



## STEP 03

Call upon the Sacred Trees,

*Come, come, Sacred Trees, come.  
Activate me with your wisdom and your grounding.  
Come, come, Sacred Trees, come.*

03.

## STEP 04

Take your object and hold it to your heart.

04.

## STEP 05

Imagine a Tree at the center of your heart. Invite the ancient pulse of the Sacred Trees to activate and envelop this Sacred object with its wisdom, grounding and life force.

05.

## STEP 06

Breathe deeply and fully receive the activation from the Sacred Trees within you at a cellular level, as well as within your altar item.

06.

## STEP 07

Reflect on all of the practices you have done with Sacred Trees as your guide. Reflect on the insights, wisdom, changes, healing, knowings and experiences that have come up for you while working with Sacred Trees. How have you changed? What insights have you received? What unlearning has happened? What shifts have you experienced?

07.

## STEP 08

Connect with Sacred Trees and say the following out loud, acknowledging the journey you have been on,

08.

*I have evoked Sacred Trees.  
I have communicated with the Sacred Trees.  
I have journeyed with the Sacred Trees.  
I have meditated with the Sacred Trees.*

*I have sung with the Sacred Trees.  
I have been breathed by the Sacred Trees.  
I have pulsed with the Sacred Trees.  
I have grounded myself with the Sacred Trees.*

*I have walked with Sacred Trees.  
I have honored Sacred Trees  
I have experienced the Sacred with the Sacred Trees as my guide.*

*Thank you Sacred Trees for being my guide.*

*I now infuse this Sacred object with your wisdom, grounding, holding,  
guidance and grace.*

*I know that now I can call upon you when needed in my journey.*

## STEP 09

Take a moment now to whisper any learnings or insights you have received from the Sacred Trees into the object now. Or you can simply blow into it three times to transmit the transformations and teachings now.

09.

## STEP 10

Take a deep breath and anoint your third eye and anywhere else on your body with the water or oils.

10.

## STEP 11

Take another deep breath and anoint your Sacred object with the water or oils now too.

11.

## STEP 12

To close, let's offer a final gratitude to the Sacred Trees that have supported us while holding your object.

Place your hands towards the heavens and say,

*I give thanks to the Sacred above me.*

Place your hands on your heart and say,

*I give thanks to the Sacred within me.*

Place your hands towards the earth and say,

*I give thanks to the Sacred below me.*

12.

## STEP 13

Place your item on your altar or in your *Inner Temple Mystery School* altar cloth, box or bag.

13.

## STEP 14

Close the space and container of the Sacred Trees in a way that feels right for you and then blow out the candle.

14.

We have now completed our experiential work with the Sacred Trees.



# INTEGRATION + REFLECTIONS

*Part Four*



# INTEGRATION + REFLECTIONS

We have made it to the end of *The Sacred Trees Mystery* module.

I'm a big believer in taking the time to integrate our mystical experiences through reflection. I recommend taking a moment now to reflect on your personal journey with the Sacred Trees as your guide. You will find the *Soul Inquiries* on the following pages.

See this as an opportunity to ponder on how you have changed through working with the Sacred Trees as your guide, and where you are being called to take this work. It might also support you in developing language to speak about your experiences and journey with Sacred Trees.



You will also find a reading sheet to do a two-card reading to complete your work with Sacred Trees.

Don't skip over this integration and reflections section. Make yourself a cup of tea and light a candle and as you complete it. Imagine those roots becoming deeper and deeper as you integrate your journey mentally.



## INTEGRATION + REFLECTIONS

### *Soul Inquiry*

Reflect back on your time working with Sacred Trees. Did you have an area of your life that you were working with? If so, what was it?

What was the main message that you received working with Sacred Trees?

How has working with Sacred Trees changed you?

What surprised you the most about working with Sacred Trees?

**What challenged you the most about working with Sacred Trees?**

**What has delighted you the most working with Sacred Trees?**

**What practice resonated with you most deeply and why?**

What have Sacred Trees taught you about yourself?

What have the Sacred Trees taught you about others, the planet and humanity?

What was the biggest lesson you learned working with Sacred Trees?



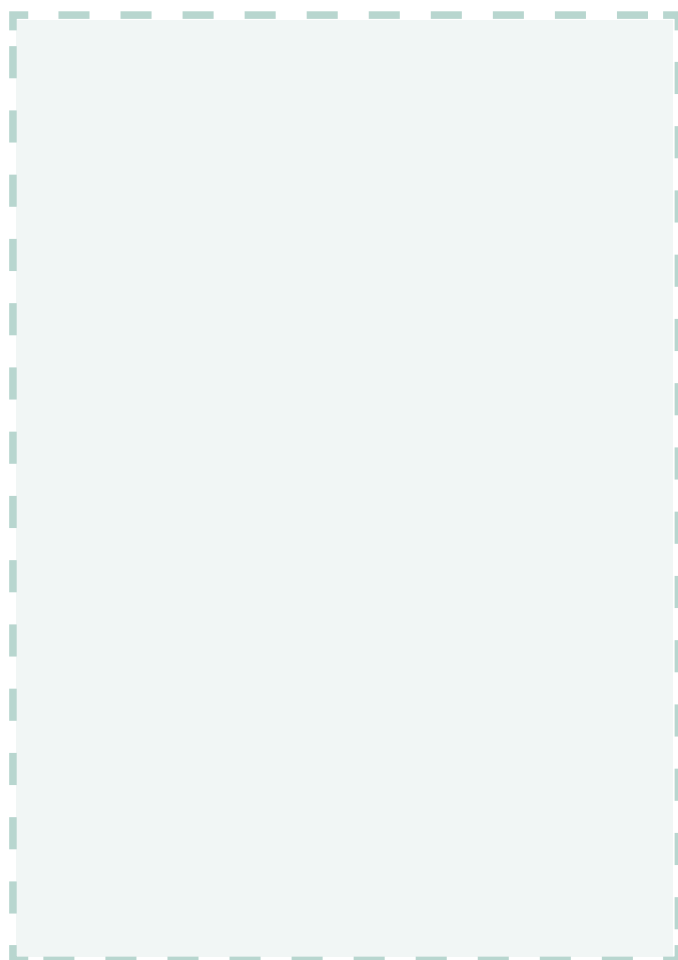
What practical thing do you want to integrate into your life from working with Sacred Trees?

In one word, how would you describe the Sacred Trees Mysteries?

# ORACLE CARD READING

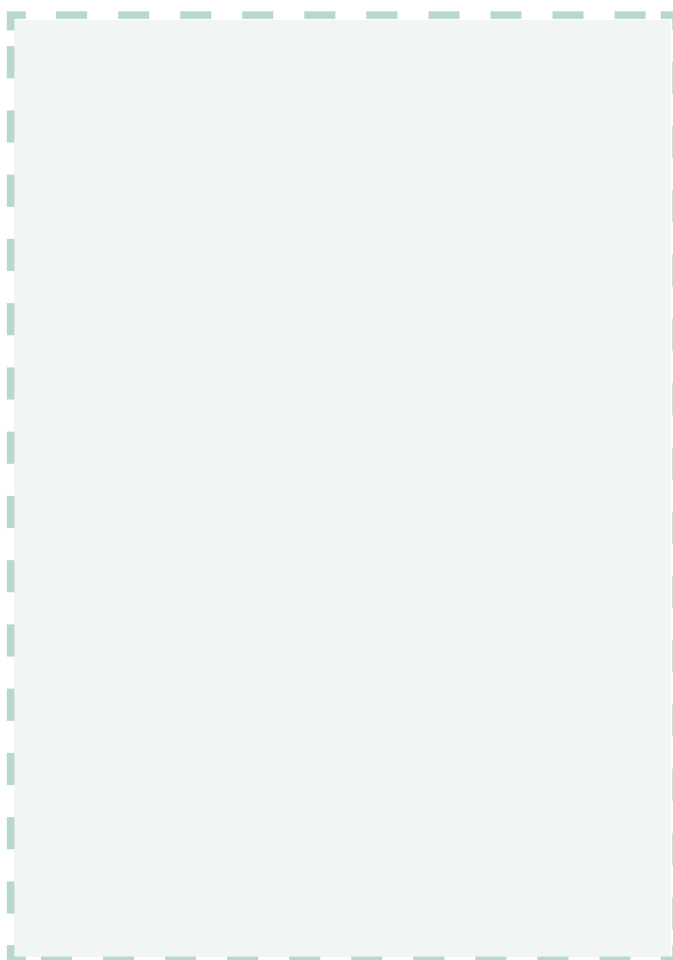
## *The Future Forest Two-card Spread*

This is a wonderful, quick reading to give you some perspective on a particular area of your life, your relationships or a project that you are working on. It offers you a glimpse of a possible outcome as well as clarity on where you are in this moment.



### POSITION 1

*The seed: Where are you now?*



### POSITION 2

*The future forest: The highest outcome.*



## ORACLE CARD READING

### *Soul Inquiry*

What symbols, colors or words are providing meaning for your soul?

What is the meaning?

What baby step can you take today to progress towards the future forest garden?



## GOING DEEPER

*Resources and further reading*





## GOING DEEPER

### *Resources and further reading*

#### BOOKS

- △ ***Between Earth and Sky: Our Intimate Connections to Trees*** by Nalini Nadkarni, 2009, University of California Press
- △ ***The Healing Code of Nature: Discovering the New Science of Eco-Psychosomatics*** by Clemens G. Arvay, 2018, Sounds True Inc
- △ ***Celtic Tree Magic: Ogham Lore and Druid Mysteries*** by Danu Forest, 2014, Llewellyn Publications
- △ ***Tree Wisdom: A Year of Healing Among the Trees*** by Vincent Karche, 2019, Hay House UK
- △ ***The Sacred Tree*** by Glennie Kindred, 2003, Self-published
- △ ***Tree Ogham*** by Glennie Kindred, 1999, Self-published
- △ ***Walking with Trees*** by Glennie Kindred, 2019, Permanent Publications
- △ ***Celtic Cosmology and the Otherworld: Mythic Origins, Sovereignty and Liminality*** by Sharon Paice MacLeod, 2018, McFarland & Company
- △ ***Whispers from the Woods: The Lore and Magic of Trees*** by Sandra Kynes, 2006, Llewellyn Publications
- △ ***Tree Wisdom: The Definitive Guidebook to the Myth, Folklore and Healing Power of Trees*** by Jacqueline Memory Paterson, 2011, Thorsons
- △ ***Ogam: The Celtic Oracle of the Trees: Understanding, Casting and Interpreting the Ancient Druidic Alphabet*** by Paul Rhys Mountfort, 2003, Destiny Books
- △ ***The Celtic Tree Oracle: A System of Divination*** by Liz and Colin Murray, 2021, Red Wheel
- △ ***The Secret Life of Plants*** by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, 1989, Harper Collins
- △ ***The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate: Discoveries from a Secret World*** by Peter Wohlleben, 2017, William Collins
- △ ***The International Book of Trees: A Guide and Tribute to the Trees of Our Gardens and Forests*** by Hugh Johnson, 1973, Mitchell Beazley

- △ ***The Great Trees of London*** by Time Out Guides Ltd, 2010, Time Out
- △ ***This Book Is A Plant: How to Grow, Learn and Radically Engage with the Natural World*** by various authors, 2022, Wellcome Collection
- △ ***The Cult of Silvanus: A Study in Roman Folk Religion*** by Peter F. Dorcey, 1992, Brill

## ORACLE + TAROT

- △ ***The Druid Plant Oracle*** by Philip & Stephanie Carr-Gomm, 2019, Edison Books
- △ ***The Wild Wood Tarot*** by Mark Ryan and John Matthews, 2011, OH!
- △ ***The Spirit of Nature Oracle*** by John Matthews and Will Worthington, 2003, Connections Book Publishing
- △ ***Celtic Tree Oracle*** by Sharlyn Hidalgo, 2017, Blue Angel Gallery


## ARTICLES + JOURNALS

- △ **'Lifecycle of a Tree: How Do Trees Grow'** by Woodland Trust
- △ **The first complete global database of tree species and country distributions**
- △ **'Why Trees Matter'** by Jim Robbins, *The New York Times*
- △ **'11 Sacred and Iconic Trees'** by National Geographic online
- △ **'Yggdrasil: The Sacred Ash Tree of Norse Mythology'** in The Public Domain Review
- △ **'What do these sacred trees tell us about Aboriginal heritage in Australia?'**  
by Sherryn Groch in *The Sydney Morning Herald*
- △ **'The Value of Trees in World Religions'** by Bas Fransen
- △ **'Rituals, ceremonies and customs related to sacred trees with a special reference to the Middle East'** by Amots Dafni

## WEBSITES

- △ **The Woodland Trust**
- △ **How many tree species are there in the world?**



A high-angle, wide shot of a lush tropical forest covering a mountain range. The forest is dense with various shades of green, and the mountains in the background are shrouded in a light mist or haze under a heavy, overcast sky. The text is centered in the middle of the image, written in a white, elegant script font.

*The life force of a tree is so subtle, and yet so remarkably powerful for us to tap into. Trees invite us to rest and to marvel. To connect upwards, outwards, downwards... in all directions. May you rest your back on the trunk of this tree wisdom and receive.*