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## Summer Solstice, Year 44 (June 21st, 2006)

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Calendar



**Midsummer Solstice**, the Longest Day, when the Sun is at the highest and most northerly point in the sky in the Western Hemisphere, a minor High Day in the druid calendar. Throughout Europe and in Scotland and Ireland from time immemorial bonfires were lit at dusk on hilltops on Midsummer's Eve to celebrate the Sun at the height of its strength and the daylight at its longest before the days began to shorten again. There was

much merrymaking with music and dance and drink and food for the celebrants and passers-by. The altar at the new Poison Oak Grove site has not yet been built, using the stones from the old site, on which to safely have our Midsummer bonfire. The grove site is still a work in process and we are using a large cast iron pot with sand in the bottom to serve as our altar until we get the new one built. This will probably happen after we get all the grove trees planted so that the altar has a central place.

Now that the rains finally ceased for the year, (Don't let anyone fool you that there are no seasons in California. There are, two, a wet one and a dry one.) we have finally started planting the eight sacred grove trees in earnest, beginning with the Pine for Oimelc. With five of the trees planted going in order of the corresponding High Days (one was in position already), as I had mentioned in the last issue it is starting to feel like a grove site now. Granted, one could say the site was already sacred before the addition of the trees, but for me, I needed the trappings that made it stand out from any other site, that designated it as ceremonial, or at least the comfort of the familiarity of something of our old site.



Our grove tradition, going back to the days of its parent grove Live Oak Grove, where Emmon had researched what trees to plant using Paul Friedrich's Proto-Indo-European Trees (1970, University of Chicago Press), Celtic history and tradition, had the eight sacred trees as part of the service. These trees were planted in the direction that corresponded to the particular High Day: in the North, corresponding with Yule was the Holly, "Cuileann," in the Northeast was the Pine, "Giuthas" for Oimelc, at due East was the Birch, "Beithen" for the Spring Equinox, in the Southeast was the Rose, Ros, for Bealtaine, in the South was the Valley Oak, "Darag" for the Summer Solstice, in the Southwest was the Live Oak, Perk, for Lughnasadh, in the West was the Mountain Ash or Rowan, "Ruis" for the Fall Equinox, and the Elder, "Ois" for Samhain. In the RDNA service after the Consecration of the Waters, we make an offering to the trees, adding blood meal to the water in the Tree Chalice during the Season of Life and plain water during the Season of Sleep to correspond to the Waters-of-Life and Waters-of-Sleep the human members were getting in the Grove chalice. The offering is made to the tree corresponding to the particular High Day and then the subsequent trees in the circle and continued each regular service during that season until the next High Day service when the offering is made to the next tree in the circle corresponding to that High Day, and so on.

There were some dilemmas we encountered when setting up the new grove site. The site itself is a lot smaller and is on the side of a hill versus being on a flat plain like the old one. The entrance could only be from one direction because of the drop off in two directions and a hill on another. We could not enter it from the NE and face NE after drawing the sigil and entering the space like the old site, but have to enter it from the SE. North faced the hillside and on the South was a steep incline. Having druids fall over the side would not be a good thing. the Did that mean that the new site was wrong? Would we be breaking some sort of spiritual law? The Preceptor put best when he said you work with the area you are in and adapt to it rather than putting a preconceived structure upon it. This opened up a different way of seeing things. Different traditions have different setups of their sacred space. For example in the Buryat shamanic tradition you enter the ceremonial space from the south. The way the space was we could enter from the SE, move to the South, draw the sigil, walk around the altar to the North, and face South, looking over a canyon, and facing the Sun. This has worked well, and enables us to see the Sun set at High Day services.



The other dilemma was that there was a small Bay Laurel tree already growing in the position Perk would be in for Lughnasadh. It didn't seem very druish to take out a pre-existing tree to plant another one. This seemed to fall under the category of "work with the existing area." Being a traditional sort I wanted to find precedence for using the Bay in a PIE sort of way. The Preceptor had also said once that the Celts as they moved across the continent and came across flora unfamiliar yet similar to what was in the are they had migrated from, would give the new flora the name of the plant that they had know. You can see this in modern botany. There is a tree in Northern California, the Toyon, that like the Holly is evergreen and has red berries at Christmas time. Hence the alternate name it has of California Holly. The goal then was to do a bit of research to find if in deed the Bay would work. In Proto-Indo-European Trees

there was no Laurel included in any of ten arboreal units listed. However one of units was the Nut or Nut Tree \*knw. In this category were the two trees the Walnut and Chestnut. These trees were considered

descriptively to mean "nut" in European languages and botanically don't fit into the other arboreal units that also produce nuts for food producers. Could we then draw a huge leap of a parallel to our Bay Tree? It bears a nut that that was used as a source of food by the native tribes of California. Like our Perk, the Coastal Live Oak, it is an evergreen and its fruit matures at about the same time as the Live Oak. This would work!

The next dilemma would be to find a Gaelic word for the Bay so when we make an offering to it in the service and say its name while doing so we will be able to call it something appropriate like we do the other trees. Whereas there are no California Bay Laurels growing natively in Scotland or Ireland there is the European Laurel, *Laurus nobilis*, in the same family. According to Gaelic Names for Flowers and Plants by Douglas Clyne, (1989, Cruisgean, Argyll) I found "Labhras" for the European Laurel. This was cross-referenced in Dwelly's and according to the entry the *Laurus nobilis* is the badge of the MacLarens. At Lughnasadh we will be able to officially welcome the Bay Laurel as part of the grove: A' Labhras!

And so by next year this time, with all the trees in place and the altar built, Poison Oak Grove hopes to join in the practice of the ages of lighting a bonfire on the hill at Midsummer's Eve.



## News of the Groves



For the [Full Grove Directory](#)



### **Digitalis Grove: News from D.C.**

As you may read elsewhere in this issue, Beth made the long pilgrimage to Carleton for her Vigil. I was happy to help a little in her training and research on modern Druidism. I wish her well in her new vocational work.

I also have gone through a truly transformative process after entering 6 weeks of training with the Foreign Service of the State Dept. I have gone from being a fool with an interest in languages to becoming a fool with a commission from the US Gov't. Seriously, 300 classhours on all aspects of diplomacy, have left me with the realization that I don't know very much about diplomacy, and that it looks like a very hard life. If you are in the depths of the jungle over there, why don't you stop by and see me some time?

My first post from March 2007 to March 2009 will be in Laos (S.E. Asia), a proud off-shoot of Thailand, filled with extremely diverse mountain tribes and a rather low per capita income. Being a nominally communist country, there isn't much in the way of modernization, but the people are quite nice, the land more pristine than you think, and lots of expatriates hiding from the real world.

The issue that will interest me is the heavy restriction on the practice of religion without government permission, that and human rights. Minnesota, my home state, is also home to many Laotians (esp. the Hmong). So I'm not certain if I can (or should) found even a nominal grove in Laos, and I should certainly

not try to recruit any of the locals there. I am a strong proponent of the separation of church and state, and since I am on duty 24/7, I feel that I must be quite careful in the practice of religious activity. There is an active Baha'ai group in the area, and on Irony's recommendation, I must check them out a little bit. But mostly, I think I will be investigating the theraveda branch of Buddhism (Japan was mahayana branch of Buddhism) and the animistic hill tribes on the side.

What this means, is that I will be closing the D.C. grove in March 2007, although Azeem will probably continue the Terrapin grove in MD. It has been seven years, and I am sure the hordes of pilgrims here will keep the gods more than busy. And I will certainly be back every once in a while on TDY visits, home leave, R&R and DC postings.

-Mike the FoOl



### **Palm Grove: News from Florida**

As spring turns into summer, So the small band of grove members grows into a large group; and fronds have sprouted from the main palm to keep the teachings elsewhere around the Florida area.

We are proud to announce the new frond of the Palmgrove. The Palmgrove -central frond being lead by a good friend of mine in the orlando -clermont area. Her name is susan, and though she is not on the internet She is a good person and will hold many wonderful ceremonies in her area for us.

Also the Palmgrove -East frond lead by Paula is beginning to take shape.

Meanwhile back in the Palm\*Grove main we Welcome several new members, and say "well whatever you wish" to others who do not wish to join in the meetings regularly. Please welcome all: Karen, Dawn and Dawn, Come to me from Darryl's Druidry class, which ended suddenly due to problems elsewhere.

The Palmgrove website is being rearranged and updated to take care of a more group setting, and the trees and herbs are beginning to grow here in the grove.

That's about it for now Take care and HUGS to all!

James



### **Greenman Thicket Proto-Grove: News from Arkansas**

Our proto-grove is called the Green Man Group. We meet at Chelsea's Irish Pub in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, on Sunday evenings There are about six of us at present (four showing up at any given time). The best contact address is this email address. I have started a magickal blog for the group and/or interested parties called Gnostic Hayride, at <http://www.gnostic-hayride.blogspot.com>, and a Yahoo group called eureka Springs druids.

Here's the description I posted on the Yahoo group: "We are forming a local group affiliated with the Reformed Druids of North America, as well as the Secret Order of Born-Again Druids and the Goobertown Illuminati. (If you don't believe the gods have a sense of humor, just look around!) We are magickal technicians, learning to practice what's known as druidic witchcraft, a cross between druidic practices and traditional witchcraft. To quote a Wise Man, we are "a simple rag-tag band of philosophers, anarchists,

dreamers and seekers of wisdom seeking Awareness through practice of the Ancient Magickal Arts. We seek wisdom through fellowship with each other and Nature. Which sounds awfully serious, though we aren't, not too much so. Our membership currently includes Chaos magicians, Thelemites, Wiccans, Native American spiritualists, and two Gnostic Voudon sorcerers. We are the Green Man Group, the Foliate Heads, the Hoodoo Science Temple. We welcome all sincere inquiries."

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### **Rockspray Grove: News from Indiana**

Rockspray grove is still chugging along. For Beltaine our group had some information about the holiday but did not hold an actual event. We will be taking a trip to Renfest as a group this summer.

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### **Moose Breechcloth Proto-Grove: News From Minnesota**

Salutations siblings!

Since the last installment, the garden has taken off to almost mutant proportions. I tend to grow them big around here. My paprika supreme seeds are disappointing though. All that cash sent to some far away online foo-foo seed company...and only two out of twenty-five paprika seeds germinated. The fiends! In other news, I finally collapsed under Lou's begging to put in a pond. However the compromise was instead of one large in-ground pond, we've got two whiskey half-barrels with the plastic liners for ponds. Complete with water plants, and full of goldfish. I wasn't counting on the local alley cats, however, interpreting this as a fast food fish joint. We've already lost two dozen goldfish to feline trolling.

Circle of Life, folks...Circle of Life.

As far as goings-on IN the house, Lou and I had a marvelous test of the strength of our relationship the past couple of weeks in the form of refinishing our dining room floor. We've been refinishing the floor for weeks...WEEKS! Not being one to have the right to point fingers in cases of severe anal retention, I quietly bit my tongue for weeks while Lou got all anal on sanding the hardwood floor. His constant complaint is that it wasn't "perfect". It's a 122-year old floor...NOTHING is going to make that floor "perfect". And this weekend the project finally came to the point of completion...however, Mother Nature decided to throw in one final curve ball.

During the multiple polyurethane applications, we had to keep the windows in the house open to pull the fumes out; so we didn't fry our brains, or the brains of our cats. And the Mother provided us with 95+ degree temperatures all weekend....with a humidity to match. And we can't shut the windows and turn on the AC.

Everyone in the house...including the cats...put on their crabby pants for the weekend. Tempers were unbelievably short all weekend. "DON'T TOUCH ME! TOO HOT TO TOUCH ME!" was my mantra all weekend. Lou actually slept one night in the basement because it was too hot upstairs. I would've joined him, but I have some unresolved spider issues. I like mice...I like lizards...I even like bats. But stick a spider in front of me and I'll scream like a 14-year old gum-snapping cheerleader. So I duked it out upstairs, alone, butt naked, with a fan. The only thing that came out of Lou's mouth all weekend was "IT'S NOT PERFECT, DAMMIT! WE AREN'T GOING TO STAIN THE FLOOR UNTIL IT'S PERFECT!" (followed by the whirr of a belt sander). Which of course was followed up by me retorting "SAND THAT DAMN FLOOR TO THE JOISTS AND IT STILL WON'T BE PERFECT!" The cats made themselves pretty scarce this weekend. But we did manage to call a periodic detente, and went to our favorite ice cream spot "Conny's Creamy



Cone" ...34 flavors of soft serve mixed while you wait...I'm partial to the lemon and the tutti frutti. Lou tends towards the crème de menthe. Life is good. Suffice it to say, with our forced lack of AC, we went to Conny's every day this past weekend.

One the plus side, the dining room floor is now complete, and it looks like a million bucks...no doubt a credit to Lou's over-the-top anal retentive floor sanding. Goes to show you what I know about refinishing floors. The fumes are now gone. So if the temperature rises again, we DO have the option for AC now. The heat spell broke, and we have BEAUTIFUL weather. Everyone in the house is speaking to each other again...including the cats. Our strawberries LOVED the heat from the past weekend, and are cranking out berries as fast as we can eat them. And Lou and I are going camping this weekend. Finally, normality has returned.

And enough with the home projects already.

Hoping the season finds all of you in the best of health, and the brightest of spirits. Gigawabamin Nagutch, and yours in the Mother,

-Julie Ann and Lou-



## **The Nine Oaks & Mystic Well Protogrove: News from Nevada**

It's been an unusually hot spring to summer here in the desert SW, with temps 10 degrees hotter than normal, and in a drought no less. We performed our Beltaine up on the mountain, amongst the beauty of the tree's and much plant life was flourishing in the cooler climates. We followed a different format for Beltaine that the one in the RDNA (ARDA), we took a more 'less ritualistic' and natural approach, with more enlivened meditations and did more 'bodhran drumming' and 'Earth Mother attunements', our offerings were 'plant food' and cleaning up the area of working, and a nice surprise an arborist, whom we know from another Druid grove came and gave a workshop on 'deserts, tree's and how to tend to nature' in the present times, and a very enlightening talk it was!!!

The Nine Oaks & Mystic Well Protogrove has voted to stay a Protogrove for a much needed time longer, as the seasons turn and we are reviewing books on botany, tree caring, and getting ready to foster land in Nevada and N. Arizona as a sanctuary and preserved nemeton. Much of the direction of the Protogrove is still 'in the works' but right now, planting gardens and tending to the 'Grove House' is a priority as our numbers are growing at a quickening rate.

We'll will be adding our energy to the festival on Tara Hill for her protection on June 20th and the 21st, in addition to organizing weekly meetings with rites of 'healing the Earth Mother' as a primary focus.

We pray all in the RDNA blessings and may the Mother smile upon you and yours,

Brid



## Clan of the Triplehorses: News from Oregon

For Beltane our group got together and created a life sized Wickerman which was burned during our rite. See our pictures at <http://home.earthlink.net/~triplehorses/id6.html>

Our Summer Solstice is planned for Saturday, June 10 up in the mountains. In July, we are looking forward to a crane bag/medicine bag workshop plus later in that month a visit to the local petting zoo for all Druidlings and Druidlings at heart.

For more information, please email [aigeann@earthlink.net](mailto:aigeann@earthlink.net)

Summer blessings,

Aigeann,  
Clan of the Triple Horses



## Canine Grove: News from Oregon

I am in Japan right now visiting relatives, and attending a Buddhist rite referred to as a Hoji. I will be back in the US by the time of the Summer Solstice (my personal favorite day of the year!) and hopefully this year it will be hot and sunny so that we (that is any and every-body that can be persuaded) can frolic in the water and glade as a celebration of life giving Sol.

Bindii



## Sunset Protogrove: News from California

Muddy paths and long wild grasses  
Loosen winter's grip as each day passes.  
Mustards, and Poppies and Lupins galore  
Spring's here and summer is knockin' at the door.

All the best to each of you!



## Poison Oak Grove: News from California

Publisher of "A Druid Missal-Any"

Periodically Poison Oak Grove does an alternative activity to the High Day service and social but one that still honors and celebrates the particular High Day. This year the Grove will be going to the First Annual Summer Solstice Revels on June 24th. This is the same Revels organization that holds the Christmas Revels pageants throughout the country. We'll picnic on the grass, learn and dance the Helston Furry

Dance, and sing traditional summer songs. Shay Black of Ireland's "foremost family of song" will be Master of the Revels with fiddler Shira Kammen, and three, count 'em three, Morris Dance teams. The Summer Revels begins at 1 pm across from the Scottish Rite Center on Lake Merritt in Oakland and the admission is free.



## An Introduction to Modern Druid Groups

By Susan Reed

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### Section Three: Statements of Belief/Mission Statements/Guiding Principles

#### Religion or Spiritual Philosophy/Method?

When I previously mentioned the differences between "druidry" and "druidism," I alluded to one of the ongoing discussions about the nature of druid philosophy and practices --that is whether Druidry/Druidism is a religion or a philosophy or set of practices that can be applied to any religion.

Three of these groups, OBOD, AODA and RDNA welcome members of any religion. OBOD considers its druidry to be more a spiritual philosophy or set of practices that can be performed by people of many faiths and there are Christian and Buddhist OBOD members. Based on intra-member communication, however, most OBOD members do seem to consider themselves Neo-pagan.

AODA, like OBOD, considers its druidry as spiritual method/philosophy and also welcomes mystically-oriented people of any faith.

RDNA is also more a way of working with one's own spirituality and welcomes people of many faiths. The people who stuck with it after its original purpose was fulfilled seemed to find that RDNA encouraged people to really question the bases for whatever beliefs they had and, in many cases, this questioning lead to the strengthening of their original faith. A later schism, the New Reformed Druids of North America, was emphatically Neo-pagan.

BDO is harder to pin down on this issue. The Order seems to consider its path a Pagan religion, but holds open rituals that are respectful of and may include other faith paths.

ADF and the Henge of Keltria both define themselves as religions.

I shall now go into a little more detail for each group. Whenever possible, I'm going to let the groups speak for themselves, quoting from their published materials.





## OBOD



OBOD describes its basic philosophy in the following way: We see the aims of Druidry and the Order as helping us experience and express Love, Wisdom and Creativity.

Creativity -- in opening us to our full potential: for bringing beauty into the world, for discovering the stories deep within us, and the stories that can be found in each and every person, and in the world of Nature.

Wisdom -- in the old myths and legends, in the Welsh & Irish triads, and in the centuries of scholarship to be found in the Druid tradition.

Love -- in the love of trees and stones, the love of animals and the body, the love of story and myth, the love of beauty and peace, the love of each other and the love of life.

OBOD tradition provides ways to develop deeper and meaningful relationship with the Spirits of the Land and our ancestors and through doing so, each member is encouraged to discover his or her own relationship with the Divine in whatever way it manifests.

OBOD has one of the strongest commitments to the environment that I have seen in any of these Druid groups. OBOD considers that its form of Druidry includes the spiritual heritage of Britain throughout its history, including the Neolithic ages, the Bronze age, the Iron Age Celts, the Anglo-Saxons, the Norse, and the Normans and beyond.

In 2005, the Order posted a section on beliefs. These included affirming and welcoming diversity in personal theologies and personal understanding of the Divine; belief in an Otherworld; belief in some kind of rebirth after death; belief in wisdom, creativity and love as the three goals of a Druid; belief that our spiritual paths should bear fruit in this world -- that is, a Druid shows reverence and respect for all life, here and now; belief that all are interconnected with an essentially benign universe; and belief of a law of "harvest," that what we do in the world creates an effect that will eventually affect us.

The overall "flavor" of OBOD, for me, is that of a pan-British, ecologically aware and ecologically activist, awen-seeking, peace-mongering, multi-faith group for which inspiration, communion with nature and guardianship of the earth are foremost values.

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## BDO



The British Druid Order draws its inspiration from "native British tradition," and the Order defines "British" as including all the peoples and spirits who have inhabited the island of Britain and the island of Ireland. BDO sees druidry as an ever-changing path that evolves with each generation.

The Order's primary function is inviting, contacting and using poetic and creative inspiration, called "awen" or "flowing inspiration." Its tradition draws inspiration from the sacred land and from the ancestors through their myths and mysteries. Members seek to reclaim a sense of sacred in all thing, so that they can start to heal their land, their society, and themselves.

The Order's web site says: "Those who work with the Order are encouraged to make their own links with this spirit of inspiration, through which they might find their own energy and creativity, and thereby discover and walk their own sacred path to joy, peace, healing, ecstasy and the gods."

The overall "flavor" for me is that BDO is a pagan pan-British, awen-seeking, shamanistic, animistic group that promotes contact with nature spirits and the voice of the ancestors. While it is similar to OBOD, it puts somewhat greater emphasis on contacting flowing inspiration and seeing the sacred in all things and less on environmental activism.

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## AODA



The Ancient Order of Druids in America is rooted in the Druid Revival, which was inspired by what was known or believed about the ancient Druids and combines this legacy with other sources to shape a nature spirituality that is relevant to today. The AODA welcomes men and women of any religious, cultural or ethnic background. "Creativity and the quest for personal Awen -- the inner light of inspiration -- are among the AODA's central values." The AODA is a "traditional" Druid Order and it shares many features with fraternal lodges and esoteric societies such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

Of the groups we will look at today, AODA remains the closest to its Revival Druid roots and uses many ideas and practices from Western Magical tradition.

For me the overall "flavor" of AODA is that of a Revival druid, magically-oriented, multi-faith group that encourages nature awareness and inspiration seeking through disciplined training.

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## RDNA



It really is best to let the Reformed Druids of North America speak for themselves. From the "F.A.Q. about Reformed Druidism" by Michael Scharding:

Question 3. What are your goals? Answer Awareness. Yup, that's it. Total world domination is just so out of fashion.

From the Carleton Grove web site:

On deeper examination of the RDNA, it might be said to have two important purposes:

(1) It offers a reasonable alternative for the person who cannot stomach organized religion, or who feels that it is somehow deficient.

(2) In communing with Nature, it seeks to promote a spirit of meditation and introspection, aimed ultimately at awareness of religious truth.

The Reform has only required two basic tenets of its members for the last 40 years. The long form found in the Druid Chronicles is:

The object of the search for religious truth, which is a universal and a never-ending search, may be found through the Earth Mother, which is Nature; but this is one way, yea, one way among many.

And great is the importance, which is of a spiritual importance, of Nature, which is the Earth Mother; for it is one of the objects of Creation, and with it we do live, yea, even as we do struggle through life are we come face to face with it.

The simplified form is:

Nature is good.  
Likewise, Nature is good.(8)

Again from the Carleton Grove web site:

This [the two tenants] is generally considered overly word[y] and verbious [verbose?] it has been shortened:

The search for spiritual truth is important.  
Nature is important and helpful in that search.

And:

It is possible to take a gander of some of the other sentiment of many Druids; the material realm, Nature, is often personified as the Earth-Mother. However, the Druids do not affirm or deny any religious belief, we consist of all types of people from many different traditions and backgrounds. The Druids at Carleton tend to change over time, sometimes drastically, due to the group being based at a four year college. Every four years there is an entirely different group of people that may have very different views from those who came before them. The Druids are continually questioning and each is conducting their own personal search for spiritual truth, however they may define that, which makes it difficult to say what Druids believe. There are very few things that we all agree on, even the wording of the tenets gets adjusted frequently, but this lack of set definition, the flexibility of the group and the devotion to questioning and learning is the very thing that attracts people to Druidism. Druidism is an alternative to mainstream religion, that means that we can't very well go mainstream ourselves.(9)

Its overall "flavor" for me is that RDNA is a multi-faith group that combines irreverence and reverence, does not take itself too seriously, sees "nature as a route to awareness," and believes in testing one's beliefs and concepts. After reading through RDNA materials, I can easily see RDNA as being the Discordians of the Druid community.

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## ADF

RDNA's child group, ADF seems also a complete contrast. ADF seeks to create a Neo-pagan religion that is based on sound scholarship about the ancient Indo-European pagan society, practices, and, where they can be known, beliefs in the areas of linguistics, Indo-European studies, archaeology, comparative religion, anthropology, ethnic studies, history and theology, but is adapted for modern times and does not require any ethnic affiliation for participation. Where gaps exist, imagination, inspiration, visions and borrowing from non Indo-European sources may be used to fill the gaps, but that these sources are fully and openly acknowledged and documented.



ADF's statement of what "Neo-pagan Druids" believe include: both the immanence and transcendence of Deity; Deity manifesting as female and as male; polytheism; nature worship; "cautious" technophilia; religious freedom; positive ethics; religious toleration; magic and mystery; liturgical art and science; connecting to the cosmos; "born again Paganism" -- afterlife without eternal punishment, often including reincarnation; hope and action (activism to make the world better); developing mystic vision; community responsibility; authenticity (walking the talk); and cooperation and defense (of beliefs).

One of the early goals of ADF is to create a form a Druidism in which modern Druids "would not be

ashamed to honestly compare themselves with the original Druids."

One of the things I have gotten out of reading ADF organizational materials is that they wish to have an organization that stands toe-to-toe with other mainstream religious organizations in clergy preparation and training, in rigorous theological study and in institutions that support a large community such as a mainstream church may have.

For me, the overall "flavor" of ADF is a semi-reconstructionist, pan-Indo-European Neo-pagan group that is focused on scholarship and intellect and in adapting ancient practices and beliefs for modern use.

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## Henge of Keltria



The current president of the Henge of Keltria says about her organization: "Keltrian Druidism is a Celtic Reconstructionist religious path dedicated to revering the Nature Spirits, honoring the Ancestors, and worshiping the Gods and Goddesses of our Celtic Heritage. The Henge of Keltria is a non-profit religious corporation dedicated to provide information, training, and networking to those who practice or who are interested in Keltrian Druidism, Druidism in general, or other Celtic Earth-based religions."

The "Greetings" from the President of the Henge of Keltria uses the term, "Gaelic heritage," rather than "Celtic heritage." Recently, the Henge seem to have narrowed its focus to just Gaelic paths, but this has not been reflected in the current By-Laws, which still allow Groves and individuals to work with any Celtic pantheon. I imagine changes to the by-laws may be forthcoming.

The Henge of Keltria also has a statement of beliefs that include belief in divinity that may takes several valid forms; a belief that nature is the embodiment of the Gods and that natural law reflects the will of the Gods; a belief that all life is sacred; a belief in the immortality of the spirit; a belief that our purpose is to gain wisdom through experience and that learning is an ongoing process; a belief that morality is a matter of personal conviction based upon self-respect and respect for others; a belief that evil is a matter of intent rather than essence; a belief in the relative nature of all things; a belief that every individual has a right to pursue knowledge and wisdom through his or her chosen path; a belief in honoring the Gods through the cyclical celebration of our Celtic ancestors and a belief in a living religion that is able to change and adapt to a changing environment. Keltrians also acknowledge three foundations of practice: honoring the ancestors, revering the Nature Spirits and worshiping and Gods and Goddesses of the Celtic Tribe.

The overall "flavor" I get from the Henge of Keltria is that is a semi-constructionist, Gaelic-oriented neo-pagan initiatory mystery tradition. I also get the impression that Keltrian ritual is a central focus of practice.

These three groups have a more intellectual basis to their philosophy and practice than the previous three groups. A person in the Reformed Druids of North America is likely to give serious thought and examination to his or her beliefs. Both ADF and Keltria base their principles, stated beliefs and practices on current scholarship. Nonetheless, there is plenty of room in these groups for seeking inspiration and mystical spiritual connection.

## Notes to Statements of Belief/Mission Statements/Guiding Principles

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## Section Four: Organizational Structure

Let's look at the organizational structures for each group. Complexity of organizational structures range from almost none to the highly intricate. I will also talk about what kinds of local branches each group has as well.

### OBOD

OBOD has three officers concerned with spiritual guardianship within the Order: The Chief, the Pendragon and the Scribe. Other volunteers run the office, the web site, coordinate 50 volunteer tutors, raise money for special projects, and coordinate camps, assemblies, workshops, and special interest groups. There is little "official" organization.



Local Branches -- Seed groups may be formed by any member at any point in his or her study. These are informal groups for study, meditation, celebrating and/or seasonal rituals, etc. Although some seed groups may restrict their meetings to members only, many seed groups permit nonmembers to participate.

A Grove may be formed by two members of the Druid grade. A grove meets regularly, celebrate the eight festivals together, and offer initiations. As with seed groups, some groves restrict participation to members; others do not.

Assemblies -- The Order holds two assemblies each year and occasionally camps, moots and other gatherings. These foster inter-branch and branch-solitary member interaction and communication.

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### BDO



The BDO is in the process of re-establishing itself after the departure of one of the Joint Chiefs. The current Chief, Philip Shallcrass (Greywolf) is assisted by Sparrowhawk who is the primary office manager and administrator. The Order also has a Council of Elders, composed of regional leaders and event coordinators who meets four times a year. This acts as a "Board of Directors" to the group.



Local Branches -- Groves and seed groups may affiliate with the British Druid Order by sending the Order a form found on the BDO web site.

Similar to the camps held by OBOD, the various branches of British Druid Order sponsors open gatherings called gorseddau of Druids and other Pagans.

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## AODA

According to the AODA web site: "The governing body of the Order is the Grand Grove, which consists of four Archdruids -- the Archdruid of the East, who is responsible for ritual; the Archdruid of the South, who is responsible for the funds and resources of the Order; the Archdruid of the West, who is responsible for the study program and membership; and the Archdruid of the North or Grand Archdruid, the presiding officer of the Grand Grove, who has ultimate responsibility for all. Archdruids hold office for a life term, unless they retire or leave the Order, and vacancies are filled from the ranks of Third Degree members by unanimous vote of the other members of the Grand Grove."



Local Branches -- Study groups may be chartered by any Second Degree AODA member and Groves may be chartered by any Third Degree AODA member. AODA members of any grade are encouraged to meet informally, to celebrate holidays together and to help each other with training.

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## RDNA

RDNA is a loose collection of individuals and groves. One of the members, Michael Scharding collects information about groves.



Any three people who wish to form a RDNA grove may. Actually, groves may not necessarily consist of humans -- some groves are reportedly actual groves of trees. If at least one of the members does a "third order" vigil (see membership and training), the group is a grove; if no one does, then the group is a protogrove.

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## ADF

It is with ADF and the Henge of Keltria that we get come to the more complicated organizational structures. The Mother Grove serves as the Board of Directors for ADF. The Mother Grove includes: The Archdruid (long-term spiritual guidance and leadership; vision); the Vice-Archdruid (designated successor to the Archdruid); the Scribe (secretary); the Preceptor (supervisor of the study programs); the Members' Advocate (represents individual members and minority factions); the Administrator (general membership services and oversees the financial operation of the organization, supervises the Administration Committee that is staffed with such officers as the Pursewarden, Chronicler, Office Manager, etc.); the Chief of the Council of Senior Druids; Regional



Directors and non-officer Directors that are elected by the ADF membership as a whole. The Mother Grove approves new groves, decides on policy and rules for the organization.

There are other committees, boards and special interest groups as well. Some of these are: the Council of Senior Druids, the Administrative Board, and other groups such as the Solitaries Special Interest Group. Guilds are organization-wide groups that focus on study and training in a particular area; many of these groups are involved in creating ADF Study Programs. Some of the Guilds include the Liturgist Guild, the Warriors' Guild and Scholars' Guild.

Local Branches -- Protogroves may be formed by one or two voting members in an area who are trying to start a grove. Protogrove status is usually granted as long as there is a publishable name and official mailing address.

Groves may be formed by three voting members in an area. Groves must also meet at least twice a lunar month for study or practice Druidism and must be chartered by the mother grove as a local congregation. Groves must perform eight public High Day rituals at year, perform quarterly community service, and meet other requirements set forth by the Mother Grove.

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## Henge of Keltria



The Henge of Keltria also has a complex structure. The day-to-day running of the Henge is done by a Board of Trustees, which at this time should be composed of three or more members from the membership of the Henge of Keltria elected for three years terms, and four officers: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. All but the treasurer are elected by the membership at the annual meeting.

Theological direction is provided by a Council of Elders. This council is composed of no more than nine members elected from and by the active members of the Ring of Oak (see membership and training). The Council of Elders can override the Board of Directors and officers in all matters pertaining to the spiritual and philosophical goals of the organization. The spokesperson of the Council of Elders is the Arch-druid, who is elected from the Council of Elders.

Local branches -- Groves may be created by three active members. Groves must apply to the Board of Trustees for a charter and be approved by the Council of Elders to become a Keltrian grove. A newly formed Grove is designated a "seed-grove" until the Council of Elders chooses to remove that designation after review of grove activities. Groves must meet at least once a month.

If the grove leader is a member of the Ring of Birch (or higher), then the grove may be designated as a "Birch Grove." If the grove leader is a member of the Ring of Yew and at least two other members of the Grove are members of the Ring of Birch or higher, a grove may be designated as a "Yew Grove." If a grove leader is a member of the Ring of Oak and at least two other members of the Grove are members of the Ring of Yew or higher, a grove may be designated as an "Oak Grove."

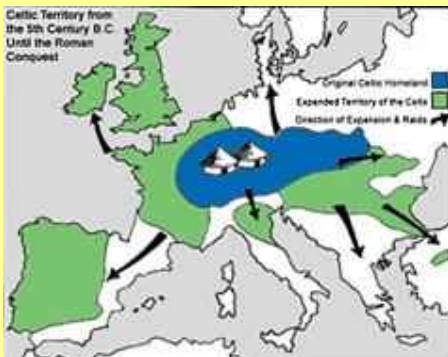
Keltrian Study Groups are informal groups of people who gather to study Keltrian Druidism and regularly practice Keltrian ritual that may be formed by any member.

## Notes to the Organizational Structure

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previous version of the "Frequently Asked Questions," accessed July 16, 2004, stated: "To summarise we could say that the Order works in a way that resembles a network or spiders web that ultimately includes all the membership but which is upheld by about 90 active decision-makers who can be seen as nodes in this five-dimensional network." This web page is still accessible at <<http://www.druidry.org/obod/intro/faq.html>>. Information about seed groups, groves and other gatherings can be found at <[http://www.druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic\\_id=2&page\\_id=6#section5](http://www.druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=2&page_id=6#section5)> and in "Gatherings for Order Members," <[http://www.druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic\\_id=2&page\\_id=80](http://www.druidry.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=2&page_id=80)>.

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## MEDI-EVAL OR MEDIA-EVIL?

'Druidry' from a traditional continental perspective

By 1x2Willows

There's much to be said about 'Druidry' but little is known to the general public. Druidry is reportedly an oral tradition. Druids never committed their knowledge to writing, except for some who would use carved or poetic code, while personal study materials in various languages would be shared amongst trusted individuals only.

Some might object and point to the wealth of monastic manuscripts from medieval Ireland, Wales and a very few other places, which are seen as kind of a Rosetta Stone for deciphering authentic older ways, while leading linguists assure us of an overwhelming christian bias which leaves only tiniest traces of practical information to be discovered.

Others continue to commit 300 year old label fraud and advertise their ceremonial magic and freemasonry as "druidic" without blinking an eye. Others yet subscribe to the tenet "Anything goes", combining mix and match theology with lots of crystals, unicorns and happy esoteric feelings.

Fortunately, nothing is truly lost even though everything changes, and also advanced modern science leaves continually less room for speculation with every new insight. Romantic notions from the last two centuries are now getting debunked almost by the week and simultaneously, new digs, finds and analyses show us an ever clearer picture of an exciting past which was all but blurred and speculative until relatively recent. Translations from Old Irish, which we only knew flawed and heavily biased by either religious or political/nationalist interests are now being reworked to read what the originals really say. Our understanding of Gaulish has 'quantum leaped' in the last few years alone. Even the terminology used in the academic

discipline called "Celtology" is getting modernized to rid itself of centuries old stereotypes and fit objective standards instead.

Especially when it comes to the definition of "Celt(s)" the noun and the adjective "celtic", we have witnessed an incredible expansion of their meaning in scholarly debate. While it mostly meant Gaeltacht and Irish-Scottish nationalism due to general ignorance and disinterest in other factors during the Victorian era and beyond, scientific studies now treat "The Celts" as one of the most influential semi-indigenous European cultures, their domain as one of many thousand square miles and one of millennia in time; roughly from 1800BCE to the present.



An insight into the meaning of "Celtic" by modern scholarly standards is at: The Celts never existed! Sense and nonsense of the cultural designation in Archaeology and Celtology" by Dr. R. Karl Mphil, PhD, MIFA, FSA, Scot <http://tinyurl.com/flpc5>

A recent broadcast on BBC Radio4 entitled: "Trench Warfare—The Politics of Archaeology" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/trenchwarfare/pip/w49h3/> reinforced the same point, although with a deservedly warning undertone:

"Malcolm Billings lifts the lid on the politics of archaeology and explores areas where archaeologists find themselves digging in dangerous ground. From the 19th century, when an interest in excavating the past moved beyond the preserve of the gentleman enthusiast, archaeology has always been bound up with politics. This programme looks at how archaeology has been used to prove ownership, to promote nationalism or to assert religious or racial superiority or the concept of separateness."

For all past atrocities committed in the name of nationalism intertwined with religion, some people, celtophile or not, have now come to observe local insular 'Neo Druidry' with reasonable suspicion - and some of its aggressively publicised US American spin-offs even more so—because they seem to be headed in the same direction as mentioned by Billings. Both varieties clearly promote nationalism and separatism through an almost exclusive focus on hibernocentric affairs and both seek to assume 'ownership' of the title "Druid" by an ever increasing flood of seminars, correspondence courses, Internet presences and books in plain sight of the public.



Druidry has not frozen in time and space however, and it is this single-tribe approach, which provides for the ultimate contrast to universal celtic or 'Core' Druidry (which I have personally come to call it); an almost irreconcilable approach which has been known and commonly practiced on the European Continent before mounting pressures of military invasion and religious conversion to Roman style polytheism forced it underground. Based on cultural history and church records, one can also assume with certain confidence that this pressure resulted ultimately in a schism between traditionalists and other members of the pan-celtic community who were willing to compromise by integrating first polytheist, and later christian ideals.

'Core Druids' can be called 'shamanic' in essence (as always, only for lack of a more appropriate term), not purely animistic in nature as their predecessors were, yet not quite polytheists like their successors. This approach embodies a spiritual philosophy of universal knowledge which neither relies on any one tribe's history, lore or myth, nor depends on any single land or nation. In short--the approach itself is being mirrored and confirmed by physical and cultural sciences and all they know to date about ancient continental Celts. We find differences only in some Greek and Roman histories as well as later religious works, whereby this should come to no surprise, since all of those



which are available to the general public have been authored by ill- or not at all informed outsiders.

This approach enjoys many commonalities and a deep spiritual understanding with many other indigenous cultures around the globe, and it is seen as one, but only one, of many identical ways with different cultural veneers by Druids who practice it.

OMNIA MUTANTUR  
NIHIL INTERIT



## Apostasy

Fiction Written by Irony Sade, Hemlock Splinters Grove  
Part Two of Two

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Copyright 2002, Irony is seeking publishers for his stories



In his hut on the hill, high above the town, Jugoom woke with a cry. He stared at the sweat puddled on his chest. He rose, seized his staff of twisted bone, and stalked purposefully out and down the mountain.

He found Eldest in the shade by the newly built boathouse carving fishhooks from slivers of root and bone.

"I had a dream, Eldest," Jugoom stated.

"You did?" Eldest squinted up at him. "What was it?"

"I saw a great whale swimming in the air. It was circling the village. My heart cried out in fear, and Foundling came running. The whale saw him, and it laughed. Its breath blew me from my feet. 'Hold onto the ground!' Foundling shouted. 'Hold on to the ground!'"

"The whale heard him and laughed again. I seized a great tree root and held tight. Foundling was blown spinning into the air. He drew his knife to fight, but the whale swallowed him whole. And then it came for me."

Eldest stared up at the scarred and wrinkled man. White birds mewed and wove above the waters.

"What does it mean?" asked Eldest.

Jugoom stared at the sea, wind teasing his stubborn hair.





"The whale was not a whale," he said. "This man is our friend. I think he is trying to protect us from something. Perhaps we should listen to him."

---



Six months later, Foundling lay in the warm night sand with his wife Lau-dean beside him and the crabs skittering up and down above the sighing waves. She was teaching him the names of the brightest stars, the chains and paths the Kal used for navigation. Between one name and the next she paused, for the man had stiffened at her side. Glancing at his face, she saw tears were streaming down it, reflecting the deep, lingering light of the sea.

"What is it?" she asked him.

Foundling was staring upwards, his eyes fixed on one star that moved freely from the rest, a slow silent slipping from cloud to constellation.

"Damn you." He whispered. "Why here? Why everywhere? Can't you leave anyone in peace?"

---

Three weeks later there was a throbbing in the air. The women looked up from their weaving. Men glanced around from their work on the boats, Foundling amongst them, his features shaded by a wide woven hat. They felt a buzzing deep in their ears, and seven new figures stood on the rocks, soft clothes on their bodies, skins pale from the light of a different sun.

Foundling stiffened besides Eldest as work in the village ground to a halt. His right hand tightened on a heavy mallet, his left brushed his braided belt, checking that his knife was near.

The newcomers gazed around the village smiling. They raised their hands in peaceful gestures and began walking slowly toward the men who stood nearest. Foundling eased back into the shadow of the boat house.

"Remember," he whispered to Eldest as he passed. "These are the Sellers. Remember what I taught you c"

The tallest of the newcomers bowed before the men. Straightening, he touched his ear, then a box at his throat. The sounds that emerged from it were different than the shapes his lips were making.

"Greetings, people of Kal," he smiled. "My name is Jason, from the land beyond the stars. I have come to offer you gifts, and friendship." He opened his arms, their ears buzzed, and a box appeared, gleaming at his feet. Within it, Eldest could see heaps of cloth finer than the best his people could weave, mirrors, metal axes, and knives that looked sharp enough to cut through stone.



"We offer you these tokens as gifts in hopes that you will think kindly of us." Jason smiled widely.

Lau-dean left the women and walked down to join her father.

Eldest glanced down at the crate, then up at the man in front of him. "You would sell us these things?" he asked.

"No, we would give them to you," said Jason. "We expect nothing in return."

"If you expect nothing for them, you should give them to the sea. The sea will be sure to give you nothing back."

A flicker of annoyance crossed Jason's face, but the voice that emerged from his throat box was pleasant. "But the sea would not think kindly of us."

"Nor would we," stated Eldest, "for only fools expect nothing for their gifts."

"If you wish to sell to us that is a different matter," Eldest continued, "but we have nothing to trade with you for anything so fine."

The newcomers behind Jason shifted, one muttering to two of the others.

"Surely you have something to trade," said Jason. "The beautiful weavings your women wear, the knives that shine like pearls at your belt, the secrets of these ships you build and sail c"

Eldest shook his head politely. "One who comes with clothes like that and knives like those needs nothing we can make, and a man from the land beyond the stars has no use for a simple boat like mine. I am sorry. We have nothing to sell to people like you, and no need for any gifts."



Jason tried again. "If you have no goods to trade, what about a piece of land- a place where we could rest from our journey, and maybe build."

"Build what?" Asked Lau-dean.

"Build buildings," said Jason, "where we could rest, where our people could come to visit this beautiful island, and sail on your seas- they would pay richly for the opportunity, I assure you."

"They might," agreed Lau-dean, "but they would also need feeding, and entertaining, and people to teach them about the sea and islands. Kal has only enough food on it for us, and finding more would take time away from the things we love. I think we'll keep the land the way it is," she finished.

"Just like all the other islands!" growled a man behind Jason. "What is it with this place!"

From out of the shadows, Foundling laughed.

Jason started, peering into the darkness. "I know that voice," he muttered.

Foundling stepped into the sunlight, still laughing.

"Thomas!" one of the women behind Jason sputtered.

"You traitor," cried Jason. "How did you get here? What have you done to this lousy planet?"

"Saved it from exploitation. I told you I would stop this madness. These people need nothing from you, and they know it. You won't destroy them like all the others."

"We ought to take him back for trial," said the woman who had sputtered.

"Trial?" spat Jason. "We ought to kill him where he stands!" He started forward, reaching for a handle on his belt.

The men of Kal rose with a growl, their faces darkening, and closed around Foundling like a living wall.

"Try it," said Foundling. "Violence will turn them against you forever. You lose, Jason. Take your trinkets and leave us alone."

"Foundling told us you might be coming," Eldest stated, watching Jason closely. "I did not believe you were as bad as he said, but we spread the news to the other islands just in case. Now I see he spoke the truth. Let us be. We want nothing from you."

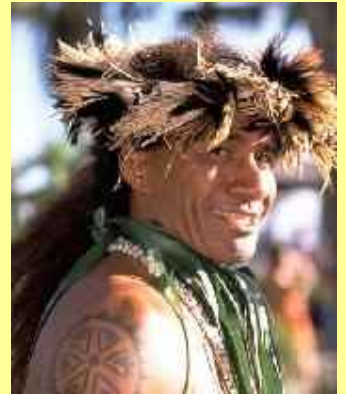
Jason stared around the village, a vein throbbing at his left temple. The voice that emerged from his lips was choked, but the one from his translator came out as smooth as ever.

"There will be other worlds, Thomas. Other planets- places that you'll never find. You can't get everywhere. You can't stop progress."

"No, I can't," said Thomas. "But you'll never know where I have been before you, where I've already warned them about Greeks bearing gifts. And when news gets out that worlds are closed to you, Jason, how long will you last? The Company doesn't tolerate failure. How much did this trip cost them? The research, the planning, the fuel and time? You'll never recoup your losses here. How will you repay it? How many failures will it take before they eat you alive? You lose, Jason. Go home."

"You damned apostate," spat Jason. "They'll find you, Thomas. I'll tell them where you are if it's the last thing I do. One day you'll simply disappear. No one quits a game like this. They'll find you."

"Maybe they will," said Foundling, standing tall. "But it was worth it. If I saved just this world, then it was worth it."



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### Optional pessimistic ending:

Three weeks later there was a throbbing in the air. The women looked up from their weaving. Men glanced around from their work on the boats, Foundling amongst them, his features shaded by a wide woven hat. They felt a deep buzzing in their ears, and seven new figures stood on the rocks, soft clothes on their bodies, skins pale from the light of a different sun.

Foundling's left hand lashed out like a spear.



Twenty meters away two of the forms were hurled backwards in a burst of reddish mist.

The tallest figure stretched out his right arm, and Foundling went rigid, thin lines of fire crackling across his skin. The people of Kal heard a tooth snap as his jaw clenched and chattered.

The five remaining figures began to walk toward them.

"Eldest-" Foundling gasped, blood speckling his chin. "These are the Sellers- the people I fled from. They are the reason I taught you that game. Remember!"

The tallest of the newcomers stopped before the group.

"Thomas!" He smiled. "What a surprise! I see you've kept a few of your implants."

"Only to burn your eyes out," hissed Foundling.

"Don't do that. I want you to show me around the place. Beautiful planet you've found here."

Foundling's muscles writhed in unhealthy patterns as he struggled to raise his hands.

"You won't have it!" he grated. "Not this one. You won't destroy it like all the others!"

"Who said anything about destruction? We've just come to offer these people all the modern conveniences, like you used to do. All part of the game."

"There are other worlds...." spat Foundling. "Places you'll never find. You can't get everywhere."

"Don't bet on it," stated the tall man. "Jane- take Thomas to the ship and send down one of the standard boxes."

A slim woman stepped forward and touched Foundling's arm. Both vanished, to be replaced by a gleaming silver crate. Within it, Eldest could see heaps of cloth finer than the best the Kal could weave, mirrors, metal axes, and knives that looked sharp enough to cut through stone.



The tall man smiled and touched a box at his throat. Suddenly he was the most beautiful human being Eldest had ever seen. The sun gleamed golden upon his skin. His teeth shone like pearls in the tide.

"Greetings!" The man began, in a voice that skipped his eardrums and vibrated directly into Eldest's mind. "All this can be yours, to use and share, and help your people. All we ask is next to nothing, a tiny spot of land where we can build...."

The End



Score One for Trees



To keep the mighty from falling, L.A. has toughened rules protecting oaks, sycamores and other trees. Some say it's about time. Others predict headaches for homeowners.

By Chip Jacobs  
Special to The Times

May 7, 2006

<http://www.latimes.com/classified/realestate/la-re-oak7may07,0,966043.story>

From the Los Angeles Times

READY or not, Los Angeles is about to confront its inner tree-hugger.

A recently toughened city regulation protecting four species of indigenous trees could, as never before, pit homeowners' control over their land against preservation of the Southland's development-thinned urban canopy.

The stricter native tree ordinance, which went into effect April 23, covers all oaks (except the scrub oak), the California bay laurel, the Southern California black walnut and the Western sycamore. It is now illegal to remove or fatally harm any of these species if they measure at least 4 inches wide at 54 inches above ground level; the previous width threshold was 8 inches. Now even parcels of less than 1 acre must comply, tugging homes of all sizes into the regulatory mix.

"Before this [enhanced] ordinance, Los Angeles had the worst protection of trees," said Paul Edelman, deputy director of natural resources and planning at the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. "People could do whatever they wanted. Now we're knocking on the door of the more elite, native-tree-protective cities."

Preservationists insist that the strengthening of this law comes none too soon. For years, they claim, subdividers have killed adolescent trees to avoid the controversy of later removing a grown oak. In some parts of the city, Sundays are sometimes called "chain-saw day" because people have lopped trees, knowing inspectors wouldn't be around to stop them.

Until now, homeowners were required only to safeguard oaks. Cutting one down without a permit or taking actions that resulted in its death was grounds for up to a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail, depending on what the L.A. city attorney's office recommended. Today, those same penalties apply to all four species, along with an added punitive bite: Officials can withhold building permits for as long as 10 years in egregious cases.

Damaging a native tree by poisoning it, burning it, imperiling its root system or changing its natural grade also is forbidden. As before, L.A. property owners don't need a permit to prune these trees, though experts caution against trimming an oak by more than 10% of its green foliage at one time.

Homeowners do have wiggle room. They can eliminate a protected tree if, among other criteria, it's in danger of falling, it's too sickly to survive or it stymies the property's "reasonable development." For a go-ahead, residents must hire an arborist or other tree expert to advise them, request a permit -- the review process can take one to two months -- and replace the lost tree with two new native ones somewhere on the lot. Also, homeowner-planted trees are exempt.





"This idea is not about bureaucracy, it's about ecology," said City Council President Eric Garcetti, who championed the regulation. "We expect to see more stable hillsides, cleaner air and a generally better quality of life. These trees act as great anchors."

Several pro-business groups view things differently, suspecting the beefed-up ordinance is intended to blunt residential construction in the foothills ridging the Westside, the Hollywood Hills and elsewhere. City officials expect subdividers will be most affected.

Brad Rosenheim, chair of the land use committee for the Valley Industry and Commerce Assn., said he believes average landowners will bear the brunt of the stricter rules.

"The ordinance, good intentions and all, is going to create a ton of surprising headaches for homeowners trying to go about their daily lives," Rosenheim said. It will create inadvertent violators of the law, he said. "You want a safe environment for your home, or to expand it, and you don't know you have to go to the city to get a tree permit."

Los Angeles has mostly been on the sidelines of man-versus-tree skirmishes experienced by more rural suburbs such as Thousand Oaks and Calabasas, which have large numbers of oaks and have gone to lengths to protect them. Activist John Quigley made national headlines in 2002 when he lived in a historic Santa Clarita Valley oak for 71 days to spare it from the bulldozer. Old Glory, as the Stevenson Ranch oak was dubbed, was eventually moved to a site a quarter of a mile away.

Every city and county has rules about indigenous foliage. In unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, property owners may not remove, trim or encroach on any oak if it's 8 inches or wider at 54 inches from ground level. County officials are mulling tougher regulations that could be in place by the end of summer.

For the L.A. County Fire Department's Forestry Division, which enforces the policy, the most common problem is feuding neighbors attempting to get each other in trouble over oak maintenance.

"It's a daily occurrence, people squabbling about it," said Frank Vidales, assistant forestry chief. "But for the most part we haven't seen many cases where people try to destroy the trees, sneakily or not."

Oaks can be frustrating for homeowners because their prickly leaves fall year round, creating drainage and maintenance issues, and their roots fan out. Oaks' acorns and walnut trees' seeds can spawn saplings rapidly after rains.

Partly because of that, the estimated 1 billion oaks in California today are not on the federal endangered species list. Neither are the other species protected by the expanded city ordinance, experts said.

Still, city foresters and environmentalists believe too much green has vanished. As housing tracts, golf courses, brush clearance and development crept deeper into woodlands, the general tree cover started showing bald spots. The thinning was first visible in wildlife habitats, which drove regulations in the 1980s.

"We just don't have that many native trees in Los Angeles, and we think the oak is the most important," said Ronald Lorenzen, superintendent of the city's Urban Forestry Department. "They're a valuable resource that was here before people, and by that alone they're worth saving."

There has been a wave of calls to the city about the ordinance, Lorenzen said, and he hopes education will minimize the prosecutions. The Forestry Department has 12 to 15 inspectors covering the city's 465-square-mile ecosystem.

"But remember," Lorenzen added, "we're tree people, not the tree police."

Influential groups such as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Assn. embraced the rule change, but some arborists have not. They fear that Los Angeles will go overboard as they claim some small cities have done by exerting their power to use tree fines as a cash cow.

"You can get into so much trouble cutting an oak, it's not worth it," said veteran arborist Robert Wallace. "Your whole life can be turned upside down overnight -- fines, city hearings, misdemeanor charges. Generally speaking, homeowners absolutely love and treasure their oaks, and go to Herculean efforts to save them..."

Certainly they have protectors in the community. "I don't see oaks being cut down all over the place," Wallace said.

Several years ago, about 40 residents from or around Multiview Drive in the Hollywood Hills convened an emergency neighborhood meeting to demand that a property owner who had razed half a dozen mature oak trees to clear land for a home stop the destruction and replace what'd he'd ripped out.



Patricia Marlatt of Hollywood Hills wants native trees in her neighborhood protected.

"These trees remind us where we live," she says.

(Allen J. Schaben / LAT)

"These were professionals, busy people with jobs, and for them to show up on short notice tells you how strongly most people in the area feel about the environment," said Patricia Marlatt, a homeowner who attended the gathering.

Under pressure from the city and others, the property owner eventually planted fresh oaks on the sloping, wooded parcel just south of Universal Studios.

Fran Offenhauser, the project's architect, said the owner removed the trees during escrow after he received a brush clearance order from the fire department that mentioned nothing about oak-tree protections. The project today sits in limbo over design specifications.

Marlatt said she protested the oak destruction because the trees provide a bucolic feel in the big city. Marlatt is also working to protect a huge, 200-year-old-plus oak on her property from a possible street widening. Over the years, the tree gave her solace and shade as she battled a chronic illness.

"These trees remind us where we live," Marlatt said. "If the city allows them to be destroyed, they're taking away history."



Patricia Marlatt supports L.A.'s recently passed native tree ordinance, which strengthens protection of oaks and other trees including black walnuts and Western sycamores.  
(Allen J. Schaben / LAT)

Chip Jacobs is a freelance writer who can be reached at [chip@chipjacobs.com](mailto:chip@chipjacobs.com).

To learn about the city of Los Angeles, tree policies and maintenance of its urban forest, go to <http://www.lacity.org/boss/streettree/index.htm>, or call the Bureau of Street Services, (213) 485-5675.

For information about tree regulations in unincorporated Los Angeles County, go to [http://www.lacofd.org/Forestry/EnvironmentalReview\\_OakTreeCareAndMaint.asp](http://www.lacofd.org/Forestry/EnvironmentalReview_OakTreeCareAndMaint.asp) and click on "Oak Tree Ordinance," or call (323) 890-4330.

**Contacts for general information:**

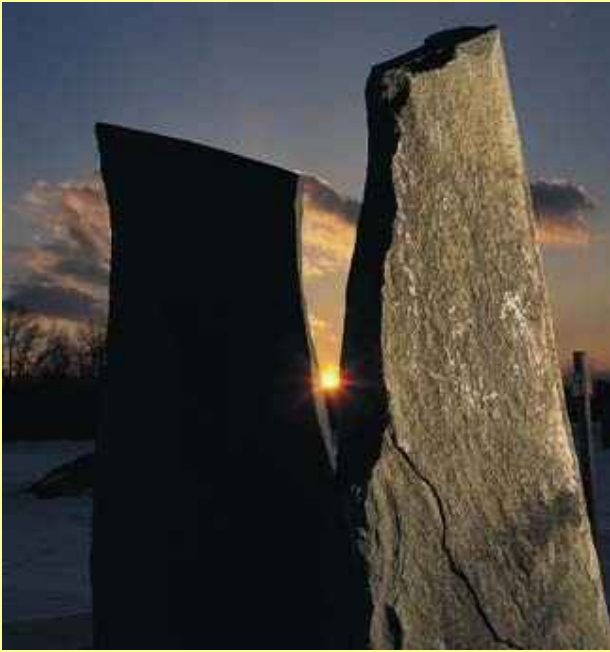
California Oaks Foundation, <http://www.californiaoaks.org>

California Native Plant Society, <http://www.cnps.org>

TreePeople, <http://www.treepeople.org/>



**SUMMER SOLSTICE SUNRISE  
AND SUNSET GATHERINGS  
At the U.MASS. SUNWHEEL**



June 21 & 22, Wednesday & Thursday  
5:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Both Days

Members of the University community and general public are invited to witness the passing of the seasons by joining Dr. Judith Young of the U.Mass. Dept. of Astronomy to watch the Sun rise and set over the tall standing stones in the U.Mass. Sunwheel for the SUMMER SOLSTICE of 2006. Visitors for the sunrise viewing should arrive at 5:00 a.m., and visitors for the sunset viewing should arrive at 7:30 p.m. The sunrise and sunset events will be held on BOTH WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY, June 21 and 22, 2006.

For those interested in learning about the sky, there will be a presentation which will include the significance of the solstice, the cause of the seasons, the changes in the Sun's

position in the sky during the year, the phases of the Moon, and the story of building the Sunwheel. There will also be an explanation of the Moon's 18.6-year cycle, since 2006 is the peak of this cycle, also called the major lunar standstill. Bring your questions, your curiosity, insect repellent, and be prepared for cool temperatures when the Sun is down. Visitors are also welcome to bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit on. The gatherings typically last an hour, and visitors are welcome to stay longer and ask questions.

A \$3 donation is requested to help with the cost of stone pathworks and exhibit expansion which are planned for the Sunwheel. Sunwheel T-shirts and sweatshirts will also be available for purchase.

At the time of the summer solstice, when the days are longest and the nights are shortest, the Sun rises and sets at its most northerly azimuth, over the tallest stones in the Sunwheel. The word 'solstice' means standstill, and refers to the fact that at solstice, the Sun appears to rise in a fixed NE direction for over a week (and set in a fixed NW direction as well). Even though the instant when the Sun is most northerly is on June 21 at 8:46 a.m. EDT, visitors will be able to see the Sun rising and setting over the summer solstice stones from roughly June 17-26. The astronomical cause of the Sun's standstill is one of the topics which will be explained during the Sunwheel gatherings.

The UMass Sunwheel is located south of McGuirk Alumni Stadium, just off Rocky Hill Road. The Sunwheel can easily be reached from the center of Amherst, following Amity St. to the west, on the right hand side of the road about 1/4 mile after crossing University Drive. The gatherings are held in all types of weather except rain. In the event of rain, visitors are encouraged to visit the Sunwheel on their own at any time.



Midsummer Solstice, when the Sun reaches its highest and most Northern point in the sky, will occur on Wednesday, June 21st at 5:26 a.m. Pacific Daylight Time.

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This is the end of the Summer Solstice issue



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Webmastered by Mike Scharding

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