

Autumn Seasonal Feature *Magical Notions*
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Autumn – The Gathering Time: The Season of Alchemical Earth

I've always thought it an odd irony that so much starts in the fall. The impulsive wanderlust of summer gives way, to a time of discovery. Both children and newly minted adults return to study and unveil life's many mysteries. Such irony is only superficial however. The sun enters Libra, an Air sign as the season begins. Thus, while Earth rules autumn, its first expression is tinged with Air.

Put into English that means fall is the season when knowledge is gathered. Our hopes (Fire), dreams (Water) and aspirations (Air) find concrete expression (Earth) through deliberate labor. In alchemy Earth is the only four-part Element, composed of each of the other three plus itself. There is also a difference between taking action (Fire) and working a plan (Earth). Thus here is the season of working your plan. That entails a different kind of doing – a concentrated, synchronized working.

The Fiery impulsiveness of summer gives way to Earth's practical thoughtfulness. As Earth is an amalgam of all the Elements, we can now take the lessons, strengths and warnings from all those other Elements (seasons) and mold them into both an understanding and plan for the future.

In agrarian societies this was harvest time, and the time to prepare for winter. Metaphorically it is still harvest time. Now is when we can harvest the lessons and gifts that we acquired while living through the other seasons and appreciating their Elements. You can review discussions of those Elements/seasons and the exercises I designed for them by going to my blog page at www.magicalnotions.com. Just look for Seasonal Features/Exercises.

Autumn is also when many cultures ended their year. It was a time of reflection, appreciation, gratitude and preparation. It was also a time to balance out your essence. That began with an acknowledgement of your mistakes, your stupidest actions, your real shortcomings (ie Yom Kippur) and a personal pledge to right your own ship in the coming year.

Thus autumn was equally a season that presaged the death of the old self. Recall that tripartite Scorpio (scorpion, snake, eagle), is also an autumnal sign. Earthy autumn is when we can aspire to our best traits (eagle) by acknowledging our worst ones (scorpion). We accomplish that task by deliberately transforming (snake) ourselves using the knowledge we have gained since the previous autumn. That requires real personal labor, as Earth's gifts must be earned.

Don't let that frighten you, but take it as fair warning. Balancing your alchemy is ongoing, never ending and not easy. It requires honesty, discipline and perseverance. Those aspects and their difficulty possibly caused earlier peoples to seek out the aid of their ancestors. Who better to trust with such a delicate and intimate task?

Thus pre-Christian cultures celebrated – and many still celebrate – Samhain, Dia de los Muertos, and Halloween in mid-autumn. When you get beyond the crass marketing, Halloween is still a day of scary atonement allied to ancestral remembrance. It remains the time when the human and spirit worlds are closest. So for those who still admit there's more to life than what we can see, Samhain/Halloween/Dia de los Muertos remains the best time to connect with sacred mystery.

Doing so via my *Grounding Exercise* demonstrates a magickal interpretation of alchemical Earth that I first elucidated in my 1984 article *Magic in the Elements in Magical Blend* magazine. Therein I asserted that unlike other spiritual systems, or even the opinions of many in the magickal arts, Earth contains both spirit and matter. One does not ascend to attain a 'superior' spiritual state, rather one descends to discover the unity in all that there is. As long as Earth (the physical) is viewed as inferior, corrupt or somehow less than spirit, we as a species will continue to degrade and defile our natural environment. I suggest we accept that matter and spirit (energy) are in fact on a continuum with one another – not a staircase. Consider the Middle Pillar on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life forever pulsing between Malkut and Kether.

You can find the *Grounding in Fire Exercise* in Summer's Seasonal Bonus #2 Exercise on my Blog page. To modify it for Earth is simple. Visualize the Earth's energy as a tree or sprout, without using any light (Fire) imagery. Just stick with natural botanical imagery. For an unusual treat, try *Grounding* on Samhain/Halloween/Dia de los Muertos, within a prayer circle

followed by a Tarot reading – only if you know how to read for yourself. This is not a communal exercise, but one between you and the sacred. So please treat it with respect.