



The Sacred Herbs of Samhain: Plants to Contact the Spirits of the Dead

Ellen Evert Hopman

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Ellen Evert Hopman's *The Sacred Herbs of Samhain* is a fascinating sourcebook of lore, history, magical methods, and practical information regarding plants sacred to the festival of Samhain. Samhain, observed at the end of the Celtic year as autumn turns to winter, is also noted for being a time when ancestral and otherworldly spirits are most likely to interact with the living.

Drawing on her extensive experience as a teacher, lay homeopath, herbalist, and Druid, Hopman's compilation of herbal and spiritual wisdom is well referenced and engaging. Over 70 plants and trees are included, each featuring healing properties, cautionary advice, magical uses, and traditional reverence. Apples, for example, show their otherworldly link through the pentagram of seeds visible when the fruit is cut in half, while rosemary can help cure eczema and was worn by Greek scholars for its ability to improve focus and memory retention.

The book features botanical illustrations and intriguing recipes, such as the star anise added to Dia de los Muertos's Pan de Muerto (Bread of the Dead), or the ground acorns for Acorn Flour Cake, also made with cinnamon, nutmeg, honey, and applesauce.

The Sacred Herbs of Samhain concludes with detailed instructions on how to hold a Samhain "Dumb Supper"—a gathering of the living with an open invitation to those who have passed away. Foods are prepared, the table decorated and set, candles are lit, and silence is mandatory throughout the meal.

Though its focus is on the beautiful and haunting time of Samhain, *The Sacred Herbs of Samhain* can be used year-round to appreciate and explore the cycles of our natural and mystical world.

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