



Angelica archangelica root is carried in Druid Samhain ceremony.

Available as a flower essence from my list

## Samhain and the Stars

*As I tasted the salty Pleiades*

*Orion dipped his foot into the water.* Seamus Heaney

The constellation Scorpio was once considered a gateway to the Otherworld. When the sun moves into this constellation, for all in the Northern hemisphere, darkness is triumphant. Scorpio rises at dawn, while Orion, the warrior hunter is setting. Scorpio becomes death pursuing the hero.

We can't see the stars in the constellation Scorpio when the Sun enters with his daylight brilliance. Instead we can mark the beginning of Samhain when we see the Pleiades rise soon after sun set. The Celts saw these seven stars as the Fates. When the Pleiades rose after sunset and sunk below the horizon before dawn, women refrained from sewing because, if the thread snapped, the connection to the life force might be severed. This time became associated with the dead. It was and still is a perilous time in the life force. For perhaps that reason, Druids carry a bit of Angelica archangelica root with them during the Samhain ritual (see picture above).

This is a time of year of the third harvest festival, when what has been growing and expanding all summer is cut down, or dries up, scattering the seeds of the next growing season.

Samhain is a fire festival, a cross quarter day, an ancient celebration of the cycle of the year and the movement of the stars around the Pole Star. In Celtic countries Samhain is the whole month of November, and marks the time of the New Year.

This time of year has collected a tradition of mischief, Hallowe'en, Guy Fawkes Day, a season of No Time and No Law. Scorpio's reign marks a turnabout of normal order. Death is honored.

The connection to death and to the dead deepens the sense of mystery and both pre Christian and Christian traditions celebrate this as a season of reverence and fear of the Ancestors.

Even if you weren't born during the period when the Sun is in Scorpio, you may have planets or important points in this sign. Scorpio in an astrology chart carries a message of transformation, and death is the most extreme change for those left behind. Scorpio, a water sign, somehow combines the mobility of water with the immovable quality of the four signs we call fixed. Their symbols: The Bull of Taurus, the Lion of Leo, the Man of Aquarius and the Snake of Scorpio are found in many old churches. They symbolize the four gospels, yet their older meaning, connected to the seasons, directions and elements marks the four corners of all structure.

Scorpio communicates and listens, not with words, but with some deeper and older form of speech, and often gives the gift of psychic powers. The polarity of Scorpio is negative, and draws what it desires to its side, rather than traveling outward to gather it, and yet the planet associated with Scorpio is Mars, and the energy is relentless.

Among people who celebrate Samhain in modern times, there is the usual controversy about when the holiday should be celebrated. Unlike the Equinoxes and Solstices, which can be defined by the moment when the Sun enters one of the Cardinal signs: Aries, Cancer, Libra and Capricorn, the fire festivals have a variety of traditions which astrologers and earth celebrants use. We could celebrate Samhain when the Sun is at 15° of Scorpio. Scorpio is a fixed sign and 15° is the center of that fixed point. Here in Boston that moment takes place this year on November 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:10 pm. In London it will happen at 1:10 am on November 7<sup>th</sup>.

Or we could celebrate at the New or Full Moons. At the New Moon, October 28, we have both Moon and Sun in Scorpio so the power of that constellation is doubled. We could wait until the Full Moon on November 13<sup>th</sup> when the Moon will be in the sign of Beltaine: Taurus, and will light our ritual circle. Of course there are the traditional dates of October 31, Hallowe'en, the eve before All Saints Day (November 1), when cleansed souls were celebrated, and All Souls Day (November 2) when those who died still immersed in sin were offered prayers. All of these moments hold sacred timing for our rituals. On the night you choose, look into the Eastern sky and find the beautiful Pleiades, listen to their music brightening the dark sky.

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