

Whispers from the Willow



Willow Moon Herbals *Quarterly Newsletter*

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Spring Equinox, 2009

Spring Equinox/Ostara

Spring!

A long awaited Season!

The season of Spring is often synonymous with hope and change. It is an exciting time of year inspiring new beginnings, sunny days, sunny moods and healthy growth.

As this is written, it's March, the ground is still mostly frozen, and frost still comes nearly every night. The days are getting noticeably longer, and the spring equinox is only days away. While walking through the woods, we still see the brown and

grey tree trunks, a coloring mirrored in the ground litter of leaves from the previous year. There is no hint of green ...yet! Not only the temperature but the whole mood of the woods is still cool, reflective of winter that continues to hang on.

Then, as we walk down to the edge of a meandering stream in the Evans Preserve, the ground is not quite as frozen, ~ even though patches of ice still linger between groups of bushes and small trees that dominate this wetland area.



Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) spathe poking up thru moist soil in early March, Chester, NJ

In this still world, pockets of emerging life are visible, the first sign of early spring. What we see are the four-to-six-inch-high, hood-like leaves that enclose the flowers of skunk cabbage. These protective hoods are called spathes, and the spherical head of flowers

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Spring Herb Walks Announced

Join us on Saturday, May 16th in the Evans Family Preserve, Chester, NJ for another of our annual **Spring Herb Walks** - part of our continuing education Botanical Awareness Series. Open to all ages, we'll explore the medicinal botani-

cals that masquerade as 'weeds'. 10-Noon and 2-4PM. \$10/person per session.

We believe that greater familiarity with herbs will increase informed use of herbal products and build

public support for maintaining personal choice in the use of botanicals.

Check our website as additional herb walks are still being finalized. ☺



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Willow Moon Herbs is a women-owned enterprise dedicated to maintaining wellness, health and healing. We are Certified Herbalists, and our approach is rooted in the Wise Woman Tradition: attaining wholeness through supportive compassion, the use of basic, simple ritual, and the gracious assistance of our common, green plant herbal allies. We offer herbal consultations as well as educational herbal workshops, our ongoing Botanical Awareness Series, and much more. Visit our website to learn more about us, our recycling endeavours, community activities and our products. ☾

Spring Equinox/Ostara, *continued*

inside is called a spadix. On this 45 degree day, for the first time we have the sense that spring is on its way. It is on days like this that one might even see the first bees of the year flying in and out of the skunk cabbage hoods.

Of all the Spring herbs to discuss, why skunk cabbage? *Symplocarpus foetidus*, a member of the Araceae family, does indeed have a strong fetid aroma. Historically, this herb has been used as an antispasmodic to

the lung and is highly effective for mouth and throat pain as well as muscle spasms. Jethro Kloss' classic antispasmodic formula contains skunk cabbage and has been used for muscle spasms with pain in the back, neck (torticollis) or face (TMJ pain or trigeminal neuralgia). ☾

Note: Any remedies discussed here are from historical references and used for teaching purposes only. The contents are not meant to diagnose, treat, prescribe, or substitute consultation with a licensed health-care professional.

The Not-So-Humble Egg

The egg is inarguably the symbol for spring festivals and celebrations. Within its shell is contained all the archetypal connections humanity has ever held with life, death, and life renewed. This eternal cycle of rebirth at spring is a major theme in the spring holidays of virtually every one of the world's religions, from the most ancient Pagan expressions of spirituality to the most modern sects of Christianity.



Loosely adapted from E. dain McCoy's "Ostara".

(Graphic from www.webweaver.nu)