

Nature Ritual Wheel

The Complete Tutorial and Resources Guide

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6. Trees – Celtic Tree Ogham

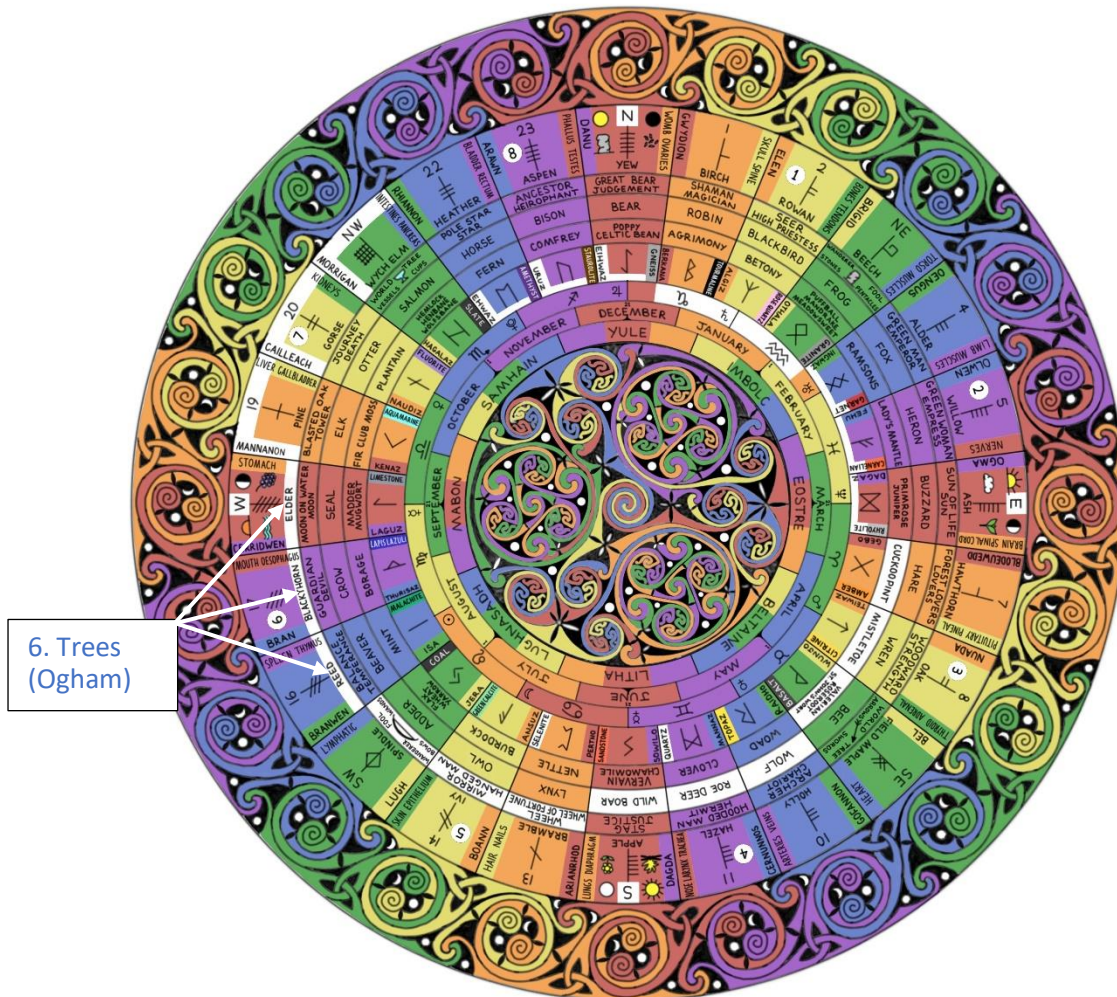


Figure 1. The Tree realm is chosen when the divination stick lands in segments 16, 17, or 18, highlighted in white on the Nature Ritual Wheel

Divination Method:

The 'two turns' method of divination, as described in the 'Quick Guide to Nature Ritual Wheel', is used for the Tree realm. The **first turn** of the Wheel indicates which '**nature realm**' is chosen, and the **second turn** of the Wheel indicates which '**nature being**' within that nature realm is chosen.

If the divination stick lands in segments 16, 17, or 18 on the first turn of the Nature Ritual Wheel (See Figure 1), then the Tree realm is chosen for that divination.

The second turn of the Wheel will then choose one of the 24 Trees around the Wheel (See Figure 2). For example, if the stick lands in segment 8, then the Oak tree has been chosen.

You can then explore the meaning of the tree through the online links in the 'Guide to Resources' section below.

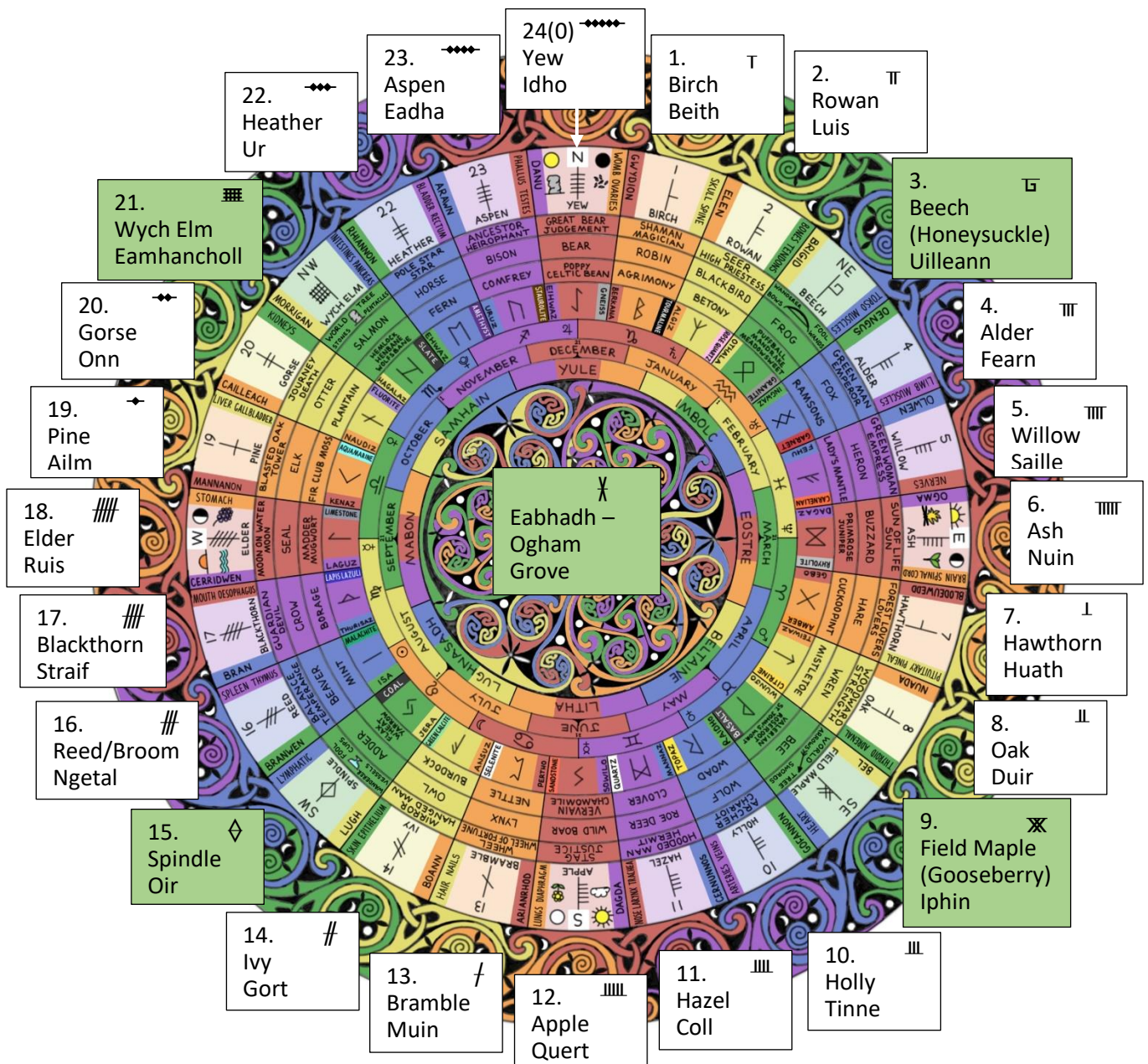


Figure 2. The 24 Trees of the Ogham, highlighted in white around the Nature Ritual Wheel, along with each Ogham tree symbol (The five Forfeda are highlighted in green)

The Wisdom of the Trees:

It was through my ritual connection with trees, and sitting under two ancient Yew trees who live locally, where I first received the guidance and inspiration, which gave me the impetus to begin my work on the Nature Ritual Wheel. It is said that much knowledge is stored in books, but that much more original knowledge is stored in the living trees before they are cut down to make those books, and I believe this to be true.

The Celtic Ogham Tree Calendar:

The trees placed around the Nature Ritual Wheel follow the Ogham, or 'Celtic tree alphabet.' The Ogham is an ancient script that was carved vertically into stones, most prevalent in Ireland and West Wales, but also found in Scotland and England. The alphabet was mainly used to write in old Irish and Welsh and originally consisted of 20 letters, which all have a 'tree-like' appearance with their letters drawn like branches coming off of a central line or 'trunk'. These 20 letters are called 'feda', meaning trees, which were then grouped into four groups of 5 letters called 'aicme', meaning 'family or tribe'. A further 5 letters called the 'forfeda' are generally believed to have been added at a later date (See online links in the 'Guide to Resources' section below for more information).

There is much academic debate about the ancient origins of the Ogham alphabet and how far back it dates. The stone Ogham carvings are believed to date from 4th to 6th centuries AD, with written manuscript sources dating from 6th to 9th centuries AD. However, the Ogham alphabet is generally assumed to have been carved on wood long before this date, which would have since perished. Old Irish literature describes characters writing Ogham messages on sticks to record information and to do magic.

Medieval manuscripts are the first known sources to associate the Ogham alphabet with particular trees. Again, it is debated which trees are assigned to which Ogham letters, and whether this association of the Ogham alphabet with trees goes back much further in history, or whether it is a more recent association.

In a manuscript called the 'Ogam Tract', the Ogham alphabet is said to have been invented by the ancient Irish god, Ogma, who was a god of learning, skilled in speech and poetry.

It is also believed by many, including myself, that these letters of the Ogham alphabet, and their association with native trees, functioned as powerful symbols with deep significance and meaning to those that used them historically.

Divination:

There is also a tradition of using the Ogham trees to derive meanings from divinatory practice, and this is how they can function within the Nature Ritual Wheel.

There are many books which outline the traditional meanings of the Ogham trees for divination (See 'Guide to Resources' section below), and this can be a really helpful way to build a deeper and more meaningful connection with our native trees.

It can be seen in Figure 2 that I have placed the 20 trees of the Ogham in their original order around the Nature Ritual Wheel, starting with 1. Birch and ending with 24. Yew.

The Five Forfeda:

I have also included the extra 5 forfeda letters of the Ogham alphabet in the Nature Ritual Wheel, and had the intuitive inspiration, to place 4 of the forfeda in the Northeast (NE), Southeast (SE), Southwest (SW), and Northwest (NW) directions on the Wheel, which are also aligned with the Celtic cross quarter festivals of the solar year; Imbolc, Beltane, Lughnasadh, and Samhain respectively (See Table 1). These are seen as 'transformation' or 'liminal' points on the Wheel. This placement of the forfeda in the Wheel was partly inspired by a diagram in the Book of Ballymote (1390) which actually shows the 5 forfeda placed in the 'cross quarter' directions on a wheel (See image 1.)

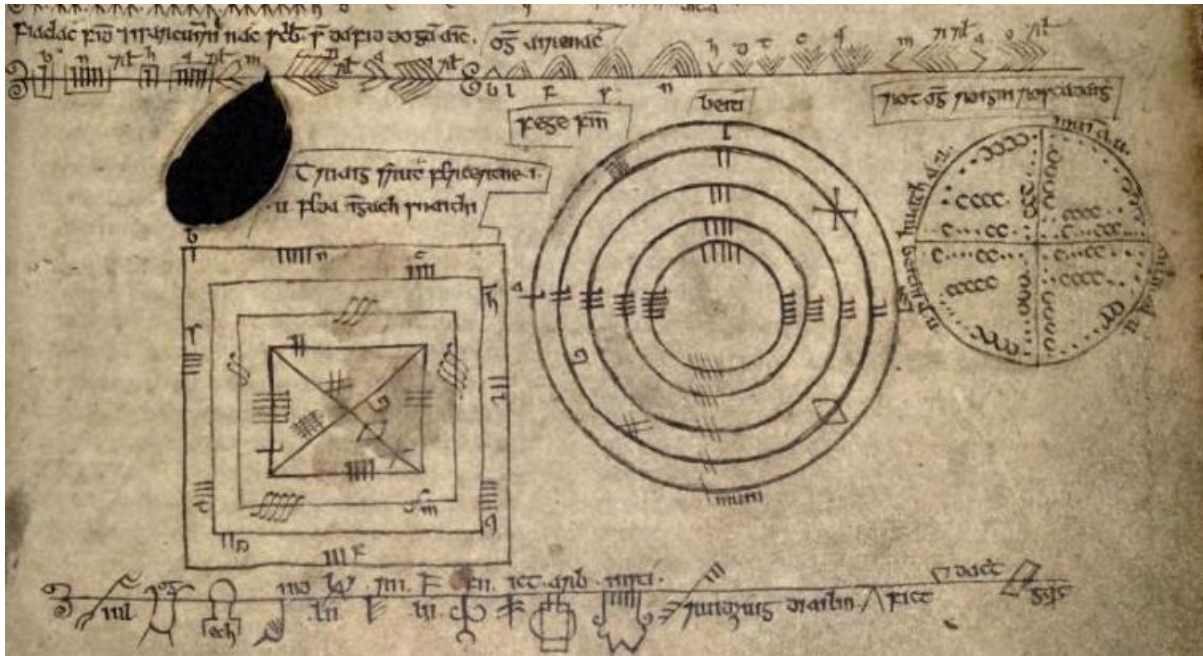


Image 1. From the Book of Ballymote (1390)

Number and Direction on the Wheel	Celtic Cross-quarter Festival	Forfeda Letter/Symbol	Traditional Association	Association on the Nature Ritual Wheel
3. Northeast	Imbolc	☐	Uilleann: Honeysuckle or Beech	Beech
9. Southeast	Beltane	⌘	Iphin: Gooseberry or thorn	Field Maple
15. Southwest	Lughnasadh	◊	Oir: Spindle tree or Ivy	Spindle
21. Northwest	Samhain	⌘	Emancholl: 'Twin of Hazel'	Wych Elm
The Whole Ogham Grove	The whole solar year	⌘	Eabhadh: Aspen	Centre of the Wheel

Table 1. The 5 Forfeda as they are positioned in the Nature Ritual Wheel (See Figure 2)

It can be seen in Table 1. that I have used some 'poetic licence' in associating Iphin (⌘) with Field Maple, Emancholl (⌘) with Wych Elm, and Eabhadh (⌘) with the whole Ogham grove at the centre of the Wheel. The other two letters have been associated with their more traditionally associated trees: Uilleann (☐) with Beech, and Oir (◊) with Spindle.

I therefore wanted to be transparent as to where I have used my own intuition and 'poetic licence' in assigning the Maple tree and the Wych Elm to the forfeda in a non-traditional way, as well as assigning

one of the letters, Eabhadh, to represent the whole Ogham grove of trees at the centre of the Wheel. It felt important to me, to include our native maple tree, the Field Maple, and our native elm tree, the Wych elm, among the tree beings of the Nature Ritual Wheel, and it felt intuitively fitting to put them in those positions on the Wheel.

Honeysuckle and Gooseberry bushes are also more traditionally associated with Uilleann (𐌚) and Iphin (𐌛) respectively, so you can substitute these bushes for the trees associated with these two Ogham letters depending on your preference (See Figure 2).

Add Your Own Favourite Tree if it's not already in the Nature Ritual Wheel:

There are many other native trees that are not included in the traditional Celtic Ogham tree calendar. If you have a favourite tree that is not included, you could always add another tree to a particular segment, such as adding Sycamore to Field Maple as they are both trees of the acer family for example.

I add the Chestnut tree to segment 20. Gorse, and the Horse chestnut to segment 22. Heather, as another example.

The point is really to connect with the trees of the tree realm in a way that works for you. It is more about the process of connecting ritually with the tree realm that is important, rather than getting too bogged down in the different traditional associations, and the academic debates over whether the Ogham letters were originally associated with trees at all.

However, that being said, it does seem to me and others (See Yuri Leitch, in 'Guide to Resources' below), that the positions of the Celtic Ogham trees around the wheel of the solar year, align very well with the seasonal festivals, and the cycle of the solar year, so I do believe that their ordering in the traditional Celtic Ogham Calendar has very deep and significant roots that tap down into ancient meaning, mythology and lore.

[Guide to Resources for Trees](#)

The Wikipedia page for the Ogham gives a very comprehensive historical description of the Ogham alphabet and its various uses, with accompanying photos, diagrams and illustrations and is a good place to start:

Website: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ogham>

There are several websites that give the traditional meanings of the trees that form the Celtic Tree Ogham. This page on the 'Learn Religions' website, gives quick and concise descriptions of the traditional meanings assigned to the Ogham Tree symbols:

Website: <https://www.learnreligions.com/ogham-symbol-gallery-4123029>

The 'Eco Enchantments' website gives lovely detailed descriptions of the healing properties, mythology and uses of the Ogham trees. It uses Lunar symbolism to order the trees rather than the solar wheel of the year used in the Nature Ritual Wheel. There is no 'right or wrong' about this, just different ways of finding patterns and correspondences in the Ogham tree calendar:

Website: http://www.ecoenchancements.co.uk/myogham_applepage.html

The author, Danu Forest, has written a superb book on the Tree Ogham, with detailed and comprehensive descriptions of the lore, uses, healing, and meanings of the Ogham trees. This book is my personal 'go to' resource for Tree realm:

E-Book/Book: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Celtic-Tree-Magic-Ogham-Mysteries-ebook/dp/B00NJ2U6E6/ref=sr_1_4?dchild=1&keywords=tree+magic&qid=1612188703&s=digital-text&sr=1-4

Author and Illustrator, Yuri Leitch, also writes about, and illustrates beautifully, the Tree Ogham, relating it closely to the wheel of the solar year, as does the Nature Ritual Wheel. He has written several books on the subject, has a YouTube channel, does Zoom talks, and also has a very vibrant Facebook group page on the Ogham Grove, all of which I would highly recommend for inspiration:

E-book/Book: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Ogham-Grove-Celtic-Druidic-Sun-Faced-ebook/dp/B07GZ66YSF/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1484986271796692/>

YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCw4ZFmS1WCN_AQxAlwfd9NQ

Glennie Kindred has written a really wonderful, short, illustrated book on the Tree Ogham:

Book: <http://www.glenniekindred.co.uk/booksprints/thetreeogham.html>

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