

# **The Apple Branch**

## **A Dianic Tradition**



## **Priestess Mentoring Program**

### **From the Branch**

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## Introduction

The women of the Apple Branch identify as Witches but we believe that much of what we do was done by our ancestors the Bandrui of the Celtic people and of the Volva's of Northern Europe. As such, we are creating a sacred life based on nature as did those ancestors. They began in a time when men and women were equal in all ways. Certain distinctions, did of course exist, but were not prohibitive.

We incorporate a way of life that is based on the beliefs and practices of our ancestors. Our teachings evolved from the animistic philosophies of the early people who merged to form the Celts and other European cultures. Thus, our ways are deeply rooted in the Ways of Nature and the Otherworld, a belief structure centered around the concept of "balance in all things".

The cosmos is made up of three interconnected realms...Land, Sea and Sky interwoven with the Sacred Fire, the Divine Spark within all living and non-living beings. A woman of the Apple Branch follows the Lunar Cycles applying her knowledge of the Ogham as her guide. Work is done on the 13 New Moons, as well as on the Full and Dark Moons. She keeps the Cycle of the Year, that Great Spiral that guides her in her daily life. The pantheon followed is her personal choice. She believes that "like attracts like" thus, she works with the female divinities to allow for greater focus.

The Apple Branch opens their practices to welcome deities from all cultures, so long as the practice is in keeping with a nature based philosophy.

Service to the Goddess and to humanity is an important part of our life and character. We believe that there are many paths to enlightenment and to truth...no one path is "better" than another. All have validity. As such women of the Apple Branch serve in a variety of ways. All are trained to assist others in life passages. There are those who specialize in the healing arts. They may be teachers, counselors and artists. There are those who serve as "edge walkers" and who specialize in the awareness of and use of energy. Regardless of the specialty, all work with the natural order of life, in balance and harmony with all.

Magic is viewed as a potential for creation, a potential that exists within all things... living and non-living. We draw upon this energy and the energy within ourselves to bring into manifestation that which is needed for the highest good of all. We give thanks and offerings respectfully as we know that we still have much to learn.

Specialties may include, but are not limited to: Ritual Priestess, Guardian Priestess, Healer Priestess, Temple Priestess, Creative Priestess (writing and the arts), Eco-Spiritual Priestess (environmental), etc.

All women will follow the prescribed course for Apple Branch Priestess Mentoring

as well as chose a specialty for focus studies. She may have more than one focus area if she chooses.

Women being mentored in the Apple Branch may also apply for admission to Shaman College where they will have access to a wide variety of courses upon which to base their academic education. Special pricing is available to full time Apple Branch students.

Overview of the Components of the Studies (none of this is set in stone, but serves as an example)

- Ogham
- Historical and Anthropological Roots of Goddess Worship
- Feminist Theology
- Core Shamanism
- Nature Studies
- Divination
- Eco-Spirituality
- Special Studies

## Level One

Each student must make a commitment to complete assignments and attend the 13 Lunar rituals. Sabbats ought to be observed as well – but in all cases – communication is vital. Certainly exceptions can be made and we wish to be flexible – but attendance is a measure of commitment that is watched.

Suggested studies:

- Ogham – required
- Historical Roots of Goddess Worship
- Magic
- Crafting Goddess Ritual
- Cycles of Womanhood
- Birth–Death–Regeneration: The Triple Goddess
- Begin Study of one form of divination - select from Tarot, Astrology, Numerology
- Two Electives from Goddess Studies, Shamanism, or Neo-Paganism Courses

Specialties: Students with declared specialties develop course of study with mentor for this year

## Level Two

The Student must commit to the entire year – and each on-line Moon and Solar rituals are required attendance. These are suggested studies.

- Ogham Studies - Year Two
- Continue with divination study – select from Runes (our first choice), Tarot, Astrology, Numerology
- Goddess & Feminism
- Anthropology of Shamanism
- Three Electives from Goddess Studies, Shamanism, or Neo-Paganism Courses

Specialties: Students with declared specialties develop course of study with mentor for this year

## Level Three

- Ethics & Professional Practice
- Personal Celebrations and Passages
- Select Readings of Feminist Authors
- 4 Electives areas of your choice

Specialties: Students with declared specialties develop course of study with mentor for this year

Practical Application – Apprenticeship – Work in the Community – Service

- - Crafting Your Future as a Priestess – Personal paper – this is where you create your work – what it will look like, where you will do it, how you do it, your goals, plans and dreams for your future work.
  - Lunar and Solar Rites – each on the Day appropriate. Each of the students will facilitate for the Lunar rituals in their third year for those who are in second year. Third Year Students work with me in setting goals and outline the entire year and will include public ritual at least four times and teach on-going classes – creating – setting up and teaching in location of their choice. At all classes and rituals they hand out survey sheets to be completed by those attending – with comments and questions being answered about content – performance and energy of rites. Goals must be met and on time.
  - Students are encouraged to set up an on-going study group so that a group is available to work with. They are all informed that this is a part of their training. They also help with the teaching of first year students. Each student is encouraged to volunteer to do rituals for festivals and events in the community. Further study on areas of choice. Reading list should be relatively completed.

Each student must do public service work as a part of their commitment to Goddess. This work is to be documented as well. Time frames are optional – it is a schedule worked out between teacher and student – goals are set – commitments made and followed through. These time frames are minimums set for completion. The process could take much longer depending on how much time each person has available to devote to the work.

## Hiving

Those students who are interested in hiving as high priestesses must find a way to meet with me at least once before completion of studies. Qualification will be determined by the student's spiritual, intellectual, emotional, personal and professional readiness. Such readiness will be determined by your mentor and/or Bendis, Mother of our Tradition.

By the time the work is completed, each student will have done the work of the Tradition and will be considered. It depends on the level of commitment and what plans are made for doing the work. Priestesses who have hived off from The Branch, establish their own guidelines and teaching policies, which may even include calling themselves by another name, or they may establish their own tradition, independent of The Branch. That is the beauty of autonomy.