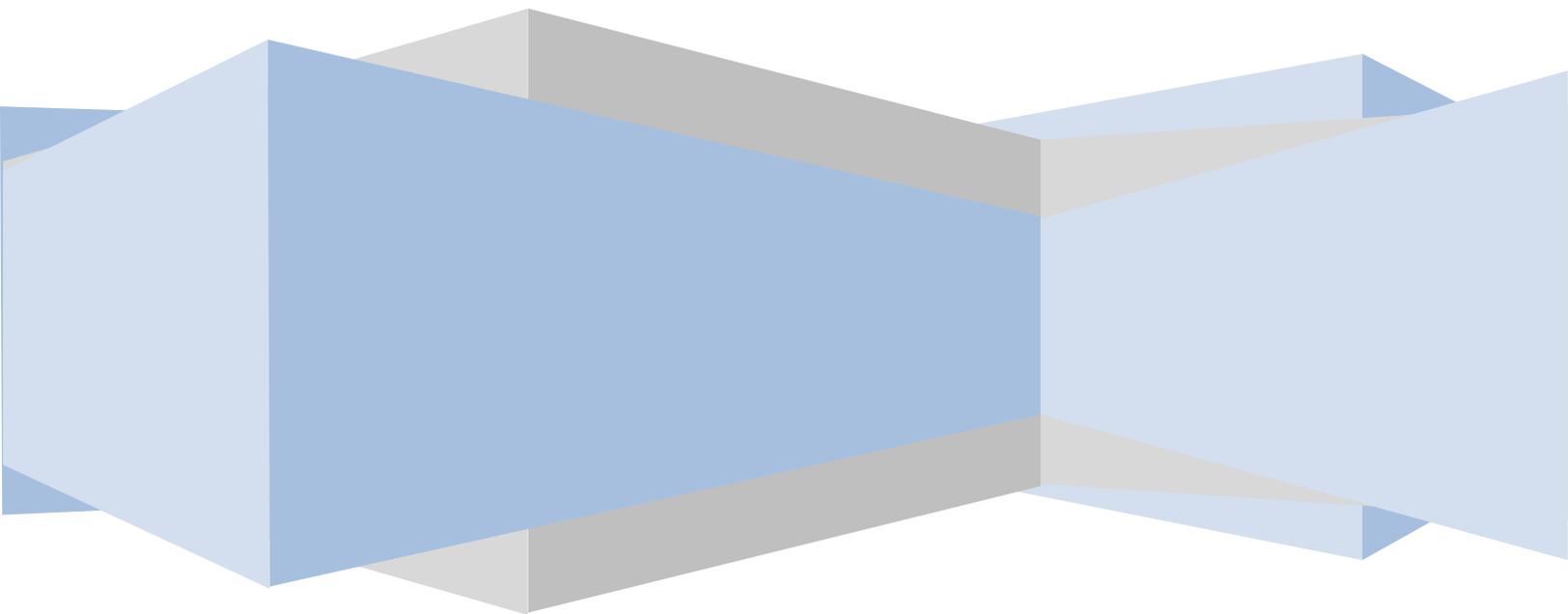


The Apple Branch

# Guardian Priestess Program



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## Introduction

Within Dianic Tradition, a priestess has been taught to not only channel for the Goddess, but also to hold and maintain the energies within the Circle. Unless she has someone appointed for this task, she also provides energetic protection for the Circle (Sacred Space). We have found that while this can be done, there are women whose natural inclinations lean in this direction. For the most part, these women are not interested in holding "center" in sacred rites but prefer to be what we call "edge walkers" and monitor not only the energies of those in sacred space, but also provide energetic protection against any outside forces beyond the boundaries of the Circle. A big part of their task is to monitor the energies of the Priestess, making sure that her energy levels are maintained appropriately.

Women who have applied to the Apple Branch to train as Guardian Priestess will follow the same studies as the ritual priestesses with special emphasis on working with energy and shamanic techniques needed for "edge walking."

A Bandrui is a female Druid. Legends tell us that many women were indeed Druids. They began in a time when men and women were equal in all ways. Certain distinctions, did of course exist, but were not prohibitive. Today, women claim the same equality. The women of the Apple Branch identify as Witches but we believe that much of what we do was done by the ancient Bandrui. As such, we are creating a sacred life based on nature as did those ancestors.

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 Bandrui's 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 the 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.

## Working With Energy

**Guidelines** - Begin to develop an understanding of energy, spiritual and magical and its use in healing, self-development, and protection.

**Purpose** - Become familiar with the basic techniques of working with energy.

### **Ideas for things to do:**

- read several books dealing extensively with the subject of energy or attend classes equaling a minimum of ten hours
- study grounding and the projection and receiving of energy
- learn about sensory perception - how we perceive energy - who we receive and project and how it varies from person to person
- a minimum of ten hours of video presentations on this topic or participating in an ongoing discussion group of ten hours or more on this topic with a minimum of five individuals or any combination of the above or equivalent activities agreed upon with your mentor.
- Research aspects within the Ogham teachings that deal with and can be applied to protection
- Study and develop basic techniques of psychic protection
- Take a class in magical and spiritual energy at an alternative education center.
- Attend a workshop, conference, or seminar which teaches about energy.
- Consult someone who is an energy practitioner about how they learned to do this work and follow their suggestions.
- Research energy on the web. Make a list of the other names by which it is known and its uses.
- Develop your own techniques of protection for yourself

## Effective Communication

### Guidelines

- "Communications" shall be any form of nonfiction oral or written communication.
- classes taken shall equal a minimum of six hours
- the organization joined shall be one which is specifically devoted to communications.

### Purpose

- To increase your skills in communications -*Those in positions of spiritual leadership are often asked to represent themselves, their beliefs and/or their religion in a public forum. It is important that you be able present yourself in an articulate and expressive manner.*

### Ideas for things to do:

- Join Toastmasters.
- Take a writing course at a local community college.
- Join or organize a group which is focused on improving communications skills.
- Attend a communications class for executives.
- Attend a class in radio production which teaches you about how to use your voice and make public addresses.
- Join a drama club in your community
- Read Marshall Rosenberg, Non-violent Communication, The Language of Life
- Take a course from a facilitator of Non-violent Communication
- Take a drama class
- Take a speech class

## Shamanic Studies

### Guidelines

- To begin to develop the ability to walk in two worlds
- To learn about animal helpers
- To develop skills in trance and altered states
- To read at least five books on shamanic studies, animal and bird lore

**Purpose** - to introduce you to working in the Otherworld with helpers there as well as learning to read signs in nature

### Ideas for things to do:

- Take at least two courses in shamanic studies, preferably Siberian/Mongolian and Celtic
- Learn to journey with drumming
- Begin work with Helping Spirits and Power animals
- Begin your study of animals and birds, their habitats, their prey and what they prey upon. Ted Andrews books, *Animal Wise* and *Animal Speak* are excellent tools.
- Read *The Magic of Shapeshifting* by Rosalyn Green and *Shapeshifting* by Ted Andrews
- Work with techniques of shape shifting, mask making, and ecstatic dance
- Create a tree book of all trees on Branch Alphabet studied this year. Include in your books as many samples of parts of the tree as well as drawings, and information on that tree.

## Body Awareness

**Guidelines** - to develop a keen sense of your own body

### **Purpose**

- To improve or maintain your body awareness
- To provide experience in participating in physical movement
- To provide diversity and exposure to a variety of movement activities
- To provide a basis for later activities

### **Ideas for things to do:**

- Participate in a sport - with a team or individual
- Take a class at your local fitness center
- Learn Feldenkrais
- Join a folk dancing group. Participate regularly and learn different forms of dancing like English Country, Greek, Scottish Country, International, contra, ring and other traditional folk dances.
- Select and participate in some type of frequent physical exercise that will help you focus inside your body. Become familiar with two different areas of movement (swimming, sports, dance, etc.) which focus attention on and in your body.

## Health & Nutrition

### Guidelines

- For purposes of this section, a health "survey" will equal, at a minimum, an evaluation which includes movement, breath, right livelihood, emotional health, thinking processes, communications, sex, eating habits, and recreation.

### Purpose

- To provide impetus for reflection on your condition
- To assist in assessing the health and physical condition of others
- To inform you about what standards may be used to assess your health and physical condition

### Ideas for things you can do:

- Conduct a personal inventory of all areas of your life. (see bottom of this section)
- Make an appointment with your doctor for a physical if you have not had one in over a year.
- Make an appointment with your dentist for a checkup if this is not a regular part of your life.
- Use your intuition to inform you about your physical condition and then begin information- seeking about whatever insights you gain using this process.
- Have your health assessed by an alternative health care provider, e.g., an acupuncturist, herbalist, or chiropractor.

### Part Two - Assess your diet and nutrition.

### Guidelines

- For purposes of this section, "assess" will equal, at a minimum, an evaluation which includes intake of vitamins and minerals, water, protein, carbohydrates, fats, and any compulsive or addictive eating patterns.

### Purpose

- To provide impetus for reflection on your diet/nutrition
- To assist in assessing the diet and nutrition of others

- To inform you about what standards may be used to assess your diet and nutrition

### **Ideas for things to do:**

- Keep a log of what you eat for two weeks. Make any adjustments you feel are necessary based on the information gained from this log.
- Study and determine what you believe to be the optimal eating plan for you. Make a plan about how you will implement this diet.
- Have your cholesterol checked and make changes to your eating plan based on the information you gain.
- Read books about diet/nutrition. Evaluate the information you gain from them and implement any changes which you feel are necessary.
- Take a class in diet/nutrition. Use the information you learn in this class to assess your diet/ nutrition.

### **Personal Evaluation - how it is, not what you wish it to be**

- Diet - include things in diet etc. that abuse your body
- Exercise - - work, play
- Sleep Patterns - how many hours regular rhythm?
- Body rhythms - up times, down times, peak performance
- Emotional Life - Know your stressors - learn to recognize the effects of stress
  - What are the things that upset you? How do you react? Act?
  - What behaviors from others upset you? How do you react? Act?
  - What kind of situations upset you? How do you react? Act?
  - When do you feel peaceful? What is your response?
  - What makes you feel sad? What is your response?
  - List things that make you happy. Explore times in your life and events that made you happy. How did these periods of happiness affect your life and those around you?
- Do values assessment
  - List personal Strengths and Abilities . Include how you are using them now and in the past. Note if you are not
- Mark areas Needing Improvement
- List goals - One Year (up to 10)
- Prioritize in order of importance.
- Note what kind of time you will require, daily, weekly, monthly to achieve. Do you have that kind of time? Where can you make it? Are there things you are doing now that you

don't need to do or don't want to do that you can do without? What life style changes do you need to make and are you willing to make them?

- Prepare list of old habits, blocks, things that you allow to stand in your way of a more fulfilling life.
- Personal Space Time - Do you have time in your life right now for doing nothing? Time to just smell the roses?
- Prepare list of old habits, blocks, things that you allow to stand in your way of a more fulfilling life. Include limiting beliefs
- List sources of help (books, classes, people you know)
- List how you could stage these events in your life now.
- You - Your Best Source of Information
- You are your own best source of information. No one else knows what is best for you. If you need answers to life's questions take time to be still, ask and the answers will come. Be patient.
- Diet, Sleep and Exercise
- Research food groups, natural food eating, chemical substances, yoga, tai chi, aerobics, walking, herbs
- Find ways to give of yourself. Share your skills and talents with those who have needs.
- Reinforce your spiritual values and beliefs. Know what they are and live them.

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## Being a Spiritual Warrior

### Part One

- **Guidelines** - Explore and become acquainted with the idea of being a spiritual warrior. Study and understand the role a warrior plays in society. Be able to articulate the spiritual principles the role of the warrior. Become acquainted with at least three different forms/types of action arts. For purposes of this section, "explore" shall equal the ability to demonstrate tangibly the knowledge gained. Accommodations can be made for physical challenges. Some suggested methods for achieving this knowledge are:
  - attending classes equaling a minimum of nine hours or
  - watching and participating in a minimum of nine hours of video instruction on actions arts or any combination of the above or equivalent activities agreed upon with your mentor.
  - Study the role of the warrior in Celtic society

**Purpose** - To encourage a broad understanding of the various forms of action arts

### Ideas for things you can do:

- Take a class in archery.
- Take a class in swordsmanship/knife throwing
- Take a class in staff/stick fighting
- Have an action arts video night and participate in the instruction. Discuss your reactions with the other participants.
- learn one form of a martial art (Eastern) like Tai Chi, QiGong
- Learn basic fighting techniques for participation in events at the Society for Creative Anachronism.

### Part Two

**Guidelines** - Be able to articulate the spiritual principles of being a warrior in society. Your documentation for this section shall reflect, at a minimum, an outline of the spiritual aspects or being a warrior.

**Purpose**

- To define your own spiritual principles in relationship to being a spiritual warrior
- To create a knowledge of and language for your work

**Ideas for things you can do:**

- Interview others who practice warrior techniques art about their spiritual philosophy. Record your findings.
- Research and identify the spiritual philosophies of Celtic Warriors.
- Study the history of Celtic Warriors and their myths. Record your findings.
- Read books on each of the action arts you explored. Identify their spiritual philosophy. Record your findings.
- With a group of individuals who are also exploring action arts, watch videos which detail various spiritual philosophies. Discuss these with the other participants and record your findings.

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## Security and Safety

Guardian Priestesses may be called upon to research and provide safety at a variety of events. This may include what to do in the case of fire, injury or accident. Security and safety activities as a part of event planning will educate you in this concept.

Develop a personal philosophy of security and safety. Be able to articulate this philosophy in oral, written, or graphic form, Create and implement a plan to develop your observational and communication skills. Make a list of short- and long-term objectives and a plan for achieving them.

**Part One - Guidelines** - Develop a personal philosophy of security and safety. Be able to articulate this philosophy in oral, written, or graphic form. You may demonstrate it in written form, on video, or by her attendance at a presentation. Other forms of demonstration are acceptable with the agreement of your mentor.

### Purpose

- To define your own security and safety principles
- To create a knowledge of and language for your work

### Ideas for things you can do:

- Interview others who have performed security and safety activities and/or those who might ask you to provide them. Record your findings.
- Research and identify as many different security and safety styles as you can. Consider these styles and evaluate their effectiveness. Record your findings.
- Consider what type of security and safety is appropriate for a particular type of environment (a conference, an outdoor ritual, accompanying a ritual facilitator). Evaluate your potential work using this criteria.
- Create an evaluation instrument and use it to assess the security and safety you observe. Use this evaluation to inform your own work.
- Study the history of those who have provided security and safety. (Samurai, medieval knights and/or current professionals.) Create a scrapbook with pictures of and commentary on these activities.

### Part Two

**Guidelines** - Create and implement a plan to develop your observational and communication skills. Make a list of short- and long-term objectives and a plan for achieving them. For purpose of this section, a plan shall consist of a minimum of 3 activities designed to enhance your observational/communication skills.

**Purpose** - To gain skills needed to be successful at security and safety

**Ideas for things you can do:**

- Take a class in tracking or become part of a hiking team.
- Become familiar with nonviolent communication or some other form of communication which deescalates volatile situations.
- Visit the communications center of a local law enforcement agency. Observe the dispatchers and interview them about their work.
- Ask a group of your friends to assist you in creating experiences designed to enhance your observational skill. This might include: moving things at your home/room/work or talking with you about your observations of persons or events.

## Conflict Resolution and Mediation

### Part One

**Guidelines** - Become familiar with the many types of conflict resolution and mediation and their uses. For purposes of this section, "familiar" shall equal an understanding of the basic purposes and techniques of conflict resolution and mediation. Some suggested methods for achieving this familiarity are:

**Purpose** - To provide a basic understanding of conflict resolution and mediation

Ideas for things to do, Part One

- Take a class in conflict resolution and mediation from a local adult education program.
- Go to a law library and read books about mediation
- Form a discussion group with others who are interested in conflict resolution and mediation. Encourage members to research and make presentations about types of/uses for conflict resolution and mediation.
- Get mediation videos from your local library or order them through inter-library loan.
- Interview a person who acts as a mediator. Record your findings.

### Part Two

**Guidelines** - Demonstrate your knowledge of the ethics involved in conflict resolution and mediation. Completion of this section shall call for an activity which demonstrates how you informed yourself about conflict resolution and mediation ethics. Some suggested methods for demonstration are:

- a written report or
- a chart, flow chart, diagram or
- a taped report or
- a video or slide presentation or
- how you have integrated aspects of conflict resolution and mediation with spirituality principles
- any other form of presentation with the agreement of your mentor.

**Purpose** - To provide an ethical grounding for your work in resolving conflicts and as a mediator

## **Ideas for things to do, part two**

- Develop a list of ethical considerations which effect conflict resolution and mediation. Add and delete from this list using other resources to check your suppositions.
- Interview someone who provides mediation services and ask them about the ethics of mediation. Record your findings.
- Make an outline of information shared in a book which details the ethics of mediation.
- Search the web for information about the ethics involved in mediation. Print and archive your findings.
- Create a list of what you believe might be the ethical considerations of providing mediation.

## **Alternative Healing Practices and Emergency Safety**

**Guidelines** - To encourage a broad understanding of emergency safety and the use of alternative healing arts

**Purpose** - emergency safety is something a guardian feels naturally called to. To learn various methods to help in emergencies as well as being able to provide comfort when needed.

### **Ideas for things to do**

- Become certified in CPR
- Take a class in emergency First Aid
- Attend a workshop, conference, or seminar which teaches about massage.
- Study the energy centers known as The Cauldrons of Poesy
- Read three books the healing energies of plants and trees.
- Join or create a book discussion group. Read books about natural hands on energy healing and discuss them with the other participants.
- Have a video night and watch presentations about homeopathy. Discuss your thoughts and feelings with the other participants.
- Study the uses of aromatherapy and flower essences