

## FOAK LORE

(Narrative, Sue Schuit)

**The lore which surrounds a particular tree or wood often echoes the force past and current cultures sense from their presence.**

For thousands of year's native people the world over have attributed magical properties to trees, which are said to have personalities, healing powers, and wisdom to share.

The splendid oak tree is one of the most famous of magical trees, and is considered sacred in many parts of the world. It has been associated with the World Tree and creation myths in which the first human was born from its leaves.

The oak tree is associated with lightning and thunder and as such is known as the tree of the gods of thunder, including the Norse god Thor, the Greek god Zeus, the Roman god Jupiter and the Irish god, the Dagda. The oak is also the tree of the white mare and the Welsh goddess Rhiannon and the Egyptian god Thoth. The oak's root system is easily as large as the height and width, making it one of the strongest and long lived of trees. It was believed that the oaks deep roots penetrated as deep into the Underworld as its branches soared to the sky.

The druids considered the mighty oak sacred, as it was believed to impart divine knowledge. Indeed, it is thought that the word "druid" which may have referred to those with "knowledge of the oak" is derived from the Sanskrit word "duir", which gave rise to the word "oak" and "door". The leaves of the oak whispered secrets, and the acorns were considered magical and when eaten, gave the gift of prophecy. The oak tree sometimes bears mistletoe, a plant that is known as the Golden Bough, also considered sacred. In fact it is believed that oak groves throughout Europe are inhabited with the druid spirits performing their rites and rituals. The old saying "fairy folks are in old oaks" mirrors the belief that the roots of the oak tree are a passage to the underworld and a door to the realm of the fairy.

The oak tree is the tree of the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year. It is at this time that the sun is reborn and the days start getting longer. It is said that the Oak King rules this time of year (from Winter Solstice to Summer Solstice, at which point the Holly King takes over). \*

Even today, the mighty oak is known for its strength and its powers of protection, famed for its endurance and longevity and synonymous with strength and steadfastness.

Mine's a tale that can't be told  
My freedom I hold dear  
How years ago in days of old  
When magic filled the air  
- *Ramble On, Led Zeppelin*

### THE GREEN MAN

The legend of the Green Man is an enigma. Dionysus is considered to be one of the earliest precursors of the Green Man. Indeed there is a leaf-clad statue of Dionysus dating to 420 BC which is often considered to be one of the earliest Green Men images.

The most common interpretation of the Green Man is that of a pagan nature spirit, a symbol of man's reliance on and union with nature, a symbol of the underlying life-force, and of the renewed cycle of growth each spring.

By far the most common occurrences of the Green Man are stone and wood carvings in churches, chapels, abbeys and cathedrals in Europe (particularly in Britain and France). This is of no great surprise when one considers that much of the continent of Europe was once covered with vast forests.

The human-like attributes of trees (trunk-body, branches-arms, twigs-fingers, sap-blood), as well as their strength, beauty and longevity, make them an obvious object of ancient worship. The Green Man can be seen as a continuing symbol of such beliefs. The Green Man is most often associated with spring, but there are also Green Men which exhibit a more autumnal cast. For example, some Green Men prominently incorporate pairs of acorns into their designs. Hawthorn leaves frequently appear on English Green Men and they are often portrayed with autumn berries rather than spring flowers.

The Green Man legend has been interpreted and survived, waxing and waning throughout the ages, in many cultures and religions, myths and legends: Sumerian, Roman, Tibetan, Christian, Hindu, Egyptian, Aztec, and the list goes on. He can be seen as an archetype for metamorphosis and transformation, for rebirth and rejuvenation. He is a symbol of our primeval, collective consciousness with our intertwined and ever-present relationship with nature. \*\*

*"Fair lady! said Frodo again after a while. Tell me, if my asking does not seem foolish, who is Tom Bombadil?"*

*He is, said Goldberry, staying her swift movements and smiling.*

*Frodo looked at her questioningly. He is, as you have seen him, she said in answer to his look. He is the Master of woods, water and hill.*

*Then all this strange land belongs to him?"*

*No, indeed! She answered, and her smile faded. That would indeed be a burden, she added in a low voice, as if to herself. The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves. Tom Bombadil is the Master. No one has ever caught old Tom walking in the forest, wading in the water, leaping on the hill-tops under light and shadow. He has no fear. Tom Bombadil is master.” – The Fellowship of the Ring, J.R.R. Tolkien*

### **WISDOM OAK**

*Follow the path through the old woods or the prairie and meadows beyond, in search of the wise Bur Oak tree.*

I am not humble by nature, there is quite simply no need, and here at SENO/Kenosha/Racine Land Trust Conservancy, I am not hard to find. I stand at the edge of the meadow, just beyond and to the north of the pavilion, my offspring and guardians at my side and behind me. I have a plaque at my base in honor of me, for I am clearly the tree to be seen, the wisdom tree, the one I am sure you seek.

No doubt about it, there is great beauty and much to see at my Conservancy. Quiet, shaded rambles winding through oak savannahs, upland and bottomland forests and wetland marsh; wide pathways formed through tall, rustling prairie meadows of many hues, humming with dragon and butterflies, crickets and frogs; and many companion and elder trees of noble rank and stature.

But I am the status tree, the venerable, mighty Bur Oak. My trunk is vast and impressive and my great, winding branches which reach up towards the sky and down towards the earth, support an immense canopy of great heft, height and width. I am of dramatic and elegant design; at all times, in all seasons.

### **THE TIME IS NOW**

Leaves are falling all around  
It's time I was on my way  
Thanks to you I'm much obliged  
For such a pleasant stay  
But now it's time for me to go  
The autumn moon lights my way  
– *Ramble On, Led Zeppelin*

Your time is of my time, but my time is greater. My time progresses oh so slowly, oh so steadily and with such profound purpose. I measure my time of awakening, sustenance and rest in seasons, phases and cycles, much the same as your days, months and years. I have been for approximately 220 cycles and am now in the prime of my time, with many cycles yet to be.

*O spring-time and summer-time, and spring again after!  
O wind on the waterfall, and the leaves' laughter! – The Fellowship of the Ring, J.R.R. Tolkien*

I have seen much in my past, I will see more in my future; my fate is your fate and we are all tied to nature. I have observed the comings and goings of countless migrations, untold cycles of many creatures of the forest, the eager rising from the earth and the inevitable sinking back, the passing of my native's

and the steady march of a new immigration; and I, I have been the constant, silent witness to the time of my time.

Come visit Seno for all paths lead to me.  
come sit in my shade,  
imagine my mysteries.

You may meet the Green Man taking a break from his rambles,  
he visits me often, when he feels the need,  
for he and I are old friends,  
Green Man and Oak Tree.

We talk of our lore, our legends and stories,  
we're happy to share, if you care to hear  
the tales of our Mother, our history,  
our years.

For your time is our time,  
but our time is greater.  
Our fate is your fate,  
and we are all tied to nature.

– Sue Schuit

Information obtained:

\* [www.deannasrealm](http://www.deannasrealm.com), [www.druidry.org/library/trees/tree-lore-oak](http://www.druidry.org/library/trees/tree-lore-oak)

\*\* [www.greenmanenigma](http://www.greenmanenigma.com).

---

**Trees We Love, 2017**  
**Hoy Audubon Society**  
**Bur Oak (Quercus Macrocarpa)**  
**Approx. age: 220 years**  
**44" Diameter at breast height**  
**65' Height**  
**Proud Stewards: SENO/KRLT Conservancy**