

Autumn 2025

WILD WISDOM and AGE WELLNESS

A seasonal space for women shaped by
age, experience and truth



Wild Women Columnists - Autumn Skies - Foraging

Canines & Cafes - Go with the Flow - Seasons of You - EQ Drain

Wild Wisdom and Age Wellness



AUTUMN 2025

A Seasonal Space for Women shaped by
Age, Experience and Truth

Made in Rannoch, Highlands, Scotland

Autumn 2025

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A Seasonal Space for Women shaped by Age, Experience and Truth



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I'd love to create a Wild Wisdom and Age Wellness Community Life Membership for women to gather friends and contacts, seek help, offer advice and share a lifeline when needed. It won't be on facebook!

In addition to an online presence, I'd love to organise themed breaks and retreats here in the highlands.

Interested?

Let me know, pop 'community' in the subject and email me at Linda@agewisdomwellness.co.uk



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W E L C O M E !



Welcome to My camera rarely leaves my side, the autumn a faithful companion in capturing the edition of autumn's unfolding beauty, even in Wild Wisdom and the garden, there are colourful leaves. Age Wellness.

This season's pages are filled with the deep hues of autumn: cosy colours, outdoor moments, and reflections on life's shifting rhythms. Back in August, even as the heat lingered here in the Highlands, I began to sense the first whispers of change. The mornings carried a sharper freshness, crisper than the easy warmth of June and July. The dew grew heavier too, soaking the dogs as if they had been caught in a sudden shower on their first walk of the day.

Shorter evenings and cooler air arrived with a quiet glow, a gentle reminder that it is nearly time to coorie in – that lovely Scottish word for nestling in, staying warm, and embracing comfort. The weather has been unpredictable, shifting between warmth and chill. On the morning I photographed our beautiful cover model, Lucia, the sun broke through, adding an unexpected warmth to September's edge.

Now, summer's lush greens are softening into a painter's palette of ochres, russets, deep reds, and mustard golds. The Rowan trees, symbols of protection and good fortune, are heavy with bright berries, while the purple heather across the hills begins to fade. It is, arguably, the most magical time of year to be outdoors, witnessing the landscape transform and feeling that same sense of change within ourselves.

In this edition, we celebrate the season of gathering and grounding. Charlotte Gilfillan shares her richly detailed foraging adventures, illustrated with woodland photography that brings her renewed connection with nature to life. Helen Owen of Hayloft Healing offers gentle guidance on staying grounded as the season turns, and Charlotte Lauren brings her Moon Wisdom to our pages. Looking forward to our Winter issue, we'll hear more from our cover model Lucia, due out early December.

The Wild Wisdom and Age Wellness community continues to grow. As you turn these pages, I hope you find something that resonates: a quiet recognition, a spark of curiosity, or a gentle nudge to try something new.

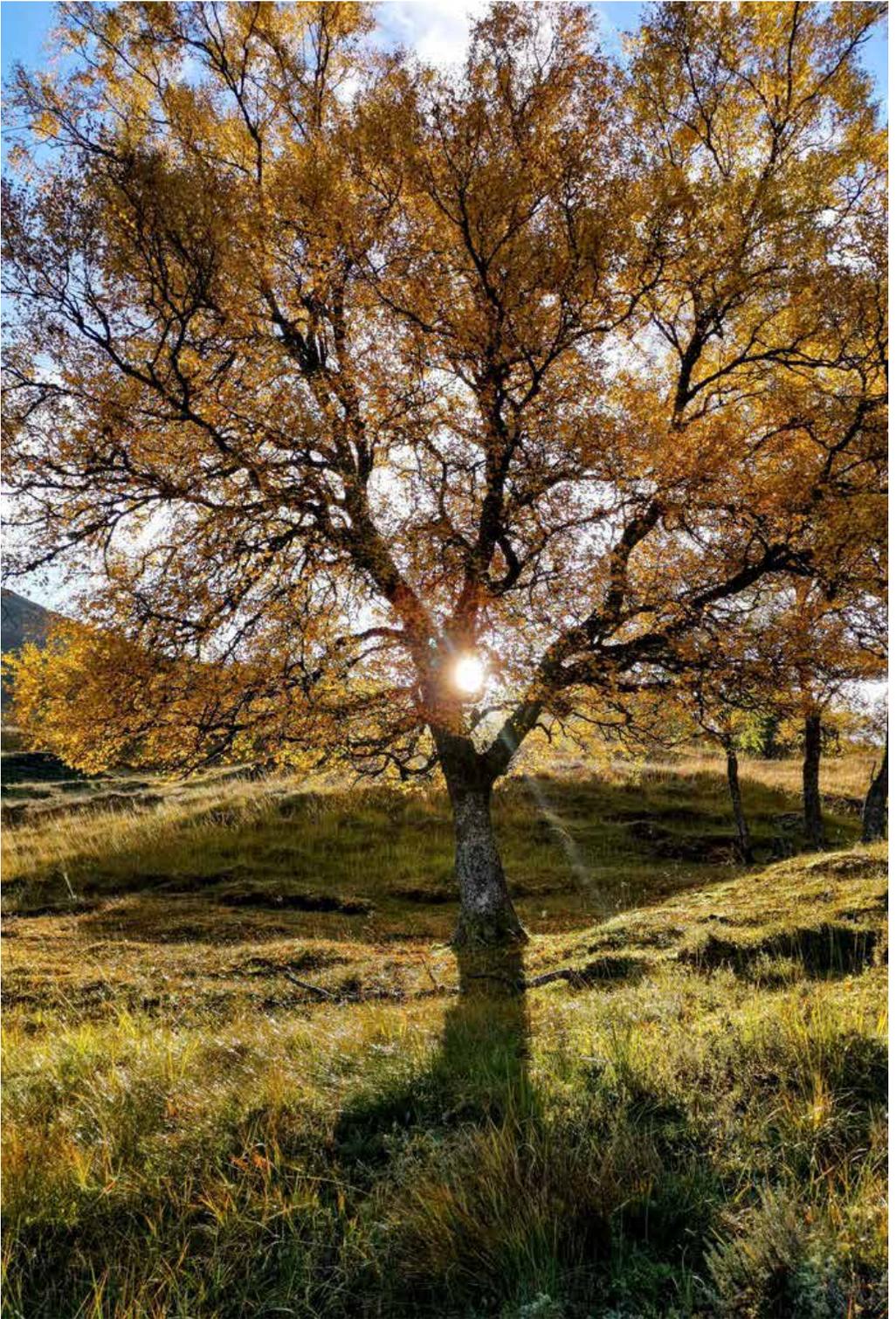
This magazine is created with care, connection, and deep respect for the richness of women's lives as we grow older. Thank you to all the ladies taking part in this edition, I couldn't do it without you!



Let us honour this season of life with wildness, wisdom, and wellness.

- Linda Mellor

Editor, Wild Wisdom and Age
Wellness



Wildly worth it!

Each issue, we gather a handful of recommendations from our contributors, things we genuinely love and reach for often. Whether it's a beautifully crafted book, a calming ritual, or a product that brings joy or ease, these are the little things that have stood the test of real life. No sponsorships, no fluff just honest favourites, wildly worth it.



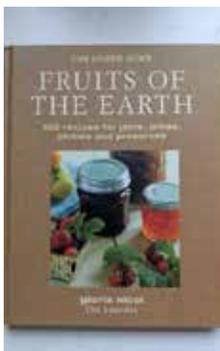
Linda said: "The wax melts are gorgeous, I love them all so much, it's hard to pick a favourite. It's a lovely treat right from the moment they arrive as they're always beautifully presented!"

Moon Phase Wax Melt Collection:

From the new moon to the waning moon, this beautifully presented, hand crafted, Wax Melt Collection allows you to take an aromatic journey through the lunar cycle. These artisan melts, lovingly created with pure essential oils blends by Charlotte Lauren (See page 44), Aromatherapist and Moonologer, have been designed to help you attune to the moon and all she brings.

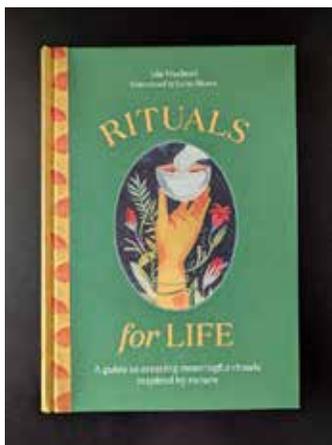
[https://www.](https://www.cosmicallyconscious.co.uk/shop/moon-phase-wax-melt-collection)

[cosmicallyconscious.co.uk/shop/moon-phase-wax-melt-collection](https://www.cosmicallyconscious.co.uk/shop/moon-phase-wax-melt-collection)



"I love books throughout the year but there's something about Autumn that makes me seek out seasonally nurturing, creative and comforting books. They can range from recipes (right: wild Raspberry jam) to new project inspiration. On a cold, dark and windy night, there's something special in snuggling up warm with one of Charlotte's wax melts setting the perfect scene for a book reading evening." Linda, Editor.





“Rituals for Life by Isla Macleod is a beautifully illustrated guide to living with more intention, connection, and ease. Part practical handbook, part soulful invitation, it offers simple yet powerful rituals. Some for everyday moments, others for life’s big transitions, that help you feel grounded and inspired. Isla writes with warmth and sincerity, encouraging you to trust your intuition and weave more meaning into your days. It is a nourishing read you’ll return to again and again with lots of seasonal content. This is a book worth keeping and dipping into whatever time of the year.” Linda, Editor

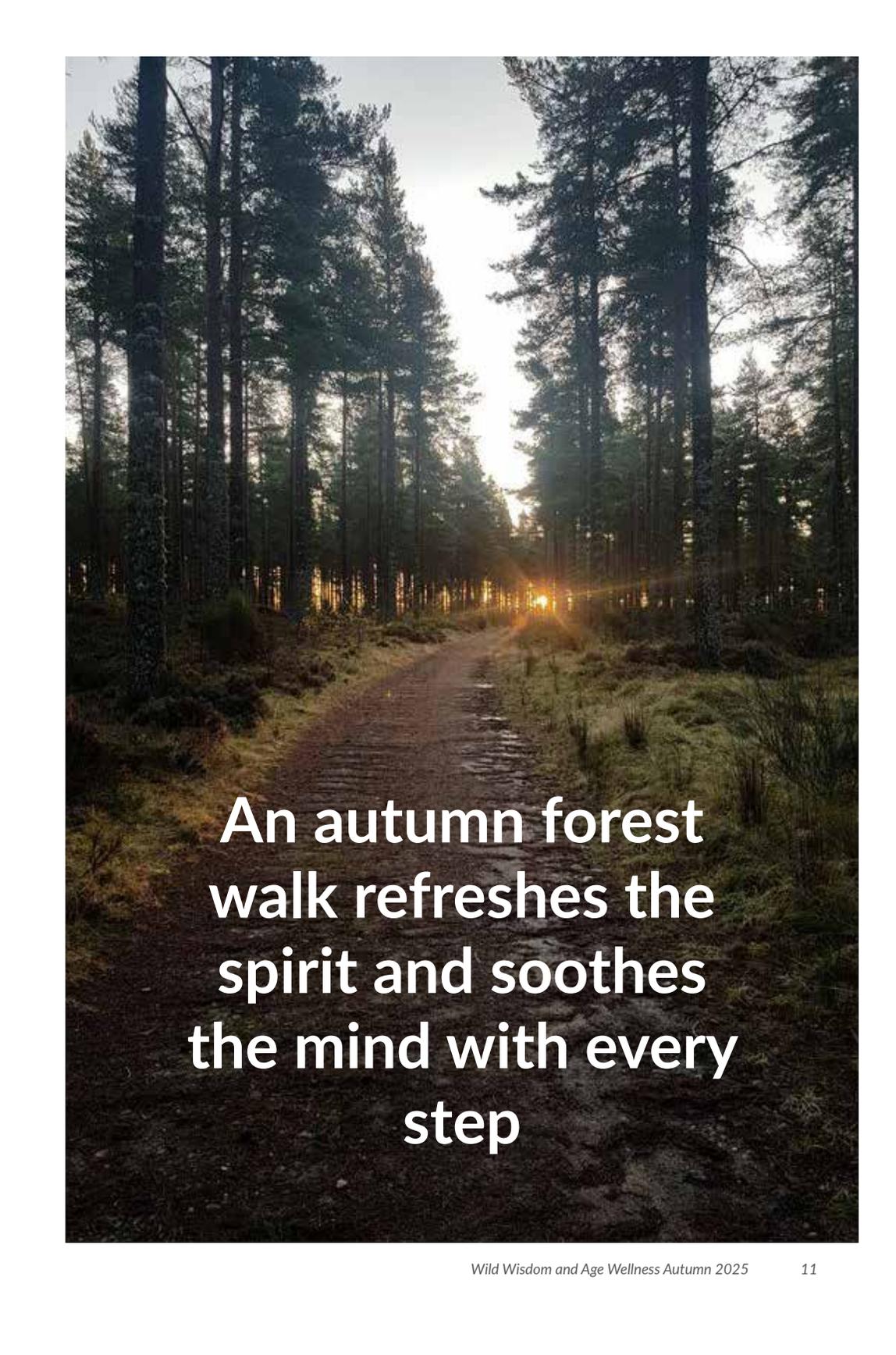


Helen from Hayloft Healing recommends: “After borrowing *The Sacred Tree* by Glennie Kindred from a friend, I was hooked and purchased it for myself, along with 4 others. (I must treat myself to the rest!). I have the printed copies but you can buy the handwritten, hand sewn copies direct from her website, www.glenniekindred.co.uk I just absolutely adore them, the way they are presented just brings a feel to me that is almost mystical, brings out the inner Witch, takes me to a place where I wish the whole world would live by, a place of celebrations of the natural, ancient traditions, connecting to our beautiful Mother Earth's energies.”



Linda said, “AgeMate is the product I’ve recommended the most to everyone this year. I’ve been taking it daily for 7 months and really do feel the benefit. It has eased my general aches, improved how I feel day-to-day and boosted my energy levels. Although my sleep still isn’t the best, it has made me feel ready for bed and I fall asleep faster. It has 18 longevity supplements to help slow the effects of ageing, take a look: agemate.com

Wildly worth it!



**An autumn forest
walk refreshes the
spirit and soothes
the mind with every
step**

There comes a time in life when the rhythm changes. We carry decades of experiences, some treasured, some buried, and some we would rather not revisit. Yet there is a quiet call to tend to them. It starts in our upper years, maybe in our 40s, 50s, 60s or later. The timing is as individual as you are.

This inner harvesting is the act of sifting through the fields of your own life, gathering what is worth keeping, and gently clearing the overgrown corners that have been left untended. It is less about chasing new horizons, and more about noticing the ground beneath your feet.

To begin, try sitting with these simple questions. You may wish to write them in a journal, reflect on them during a walk, or share them with a trusted friend:

- 1. What am I most grateful for in this past year?**
- 2. What feels complete and ready to be released?**
- 3. What seeds of possibility am I carrying into the next season?**
- 4. What part of myself most needs tending right now?**

Your answers don't need to be neat or conclusive. Think of them as the first leaves in your basket, a quiet start to your harvest.

This is not about digging up every wound or re-living every heartbreak.



It is about recognising the parts of ourselves we have abandoned or simply lost over time. It might be a talent we set aside to pursue a career, a dream we forgot, or a part of our spirit we neglected while we were busy holding the world together for everyone else. As life's rhythm shifts, these neglected spaces begin to stir again, asking softly for our attention.

When we listen, we give those parts of ourselves the chance to come in from the cold, to be reclaimed, and to belong again within us. I don't think there is ever an indication of when it will happen, it just does. For me, it was my late 50s, when I felt the pull towards another direction in life. It wasn't alien to me, it was simply an

untended area of life and by giving it attention, a time of healing began and a blossoming of my creative interests. I didn't know it at the time, but looking back it came into my life at the right time.

Tending the Wounded Places

We all carry wounds. Some are raw and obvious. Others are tucked away under layers of "I'm fine." The temptation can be to reopen them over and over, to pick at the protective skin until they weep again. Some approaches to healing do exactly that, and while there can be value in revisiting certain moments, we must be careful not to devote large areas of our lives to rehearsing past pain.

The truth is that some wounds are best left closed. They have healed enough for us to move on, and re-examining them endlessly only keeps us tethered to what hurt us. Wisdom lies in knowing which parts of our story still need our compassion, and which can simply be left in peace. Gentle attention, rather than relentless scrutiny, allows the soul to restore itself. The spirit has its own natural rhythm of repair. If we meet it with kindness, we allow that process to unfold without unnecessary disruption.

I think of it like a Highland landscape after a wild storm. Some patches will spring back quickly, green and vibrant again within weeks. Others will need time, shelter, and patience. You do not pull up the soil to check

“For many women, showing compassion to others is second nature. We listen, we soothe, we forgive. But when it comes to ourselves, we can be ruthless.”

if the roots are mending. You simply protect the ground and let it recover in its own time.

The Role of Self-Compassion

For many women, showing compassion to others is second nature. We listen, we soothe, we forgive. But when it comes to ourselves, we can be ruthless. We replay past mistakes, judge ourselves harshly, and deny our own need for grace. Self-compassion is a skill we can

develop, especially as we grow older. It begins with visiting those wounded rooms in our memory, not with blame but with understanding. We look at the younger version of ourselves who made a choice we now regret, and instead of saying “how could you?” we say, “I understand why you did.” Our mistakes often shaped us in ways we could not have anticipated. They brought us to places we might never have reached otherwise. Seen through this lens, even our missteps have value. When we forgive ourselves, something shifts. The exile of hurt gives way to the warmth of belonging and our sense of wholeness deepens.

Keep Something Beautiful in Your Heart

The years bring their challenges. Worry, anxiety and uncertainty can easily take root if we are not careful. It is vital to keep hold of something beautiful in your heart. A memory, a hope, or a vision can steady the spirit when life feels unkind.

It is so easy to get caught up in worrying about what might go wrong and not see what is already right in front of us. Life will always have its troubles, but we can choose how much space we give them in our minds. If we guard our inner space with compassion and hope, we build shelter strong enough to keep joy alive, even in hardship.

I think of this as keeping bright flowers in a vase on the windowsill during a long Scottish winter where the daylight hours are short. Outside

may be grey and wet, but that touch of colour is enough to remind you that spring will return. Colour is uplifting, and it’s therapeutic to be reminded of it throughout our homes.

The Second Innocence

Childhood innocence is born from not yet knowing the harshness of life. There is a second innocence that can emerge later. It comes after we have lived deeply, faced disappointments, weathered life’s ups and downs, and maybe seen life’s darker sides, yet still choose to look for the light. There’s magic in each day, beauty in the details should we seek them out. I don’t think of this as naïve, it is resilient. It is the ability to trust, to love, and to delight in simple things despite knowing how fragile they are.

Letting Go of Regret

Few things weigh heavier than regret. It is easy to imagine how life could have been, rewriting our history until it becomes a story that punishes us. Much of regret is misplaced. The truth is that the past was what it was. It was flawed, messy and imperfect, yet it also contained hidden gifts we may only see later.

Sometimes the very difficulties we wish we could erase turn out to have been our greatest teachers. The challenge is to find the gems in our past, the overlooked patch of beauty or meaning we missed while we were busy looking elsewhere. It’s incredible how passing times gives us this opportunity to look back and see. When we see it, we understand

that our life, exactly as it has been, contains its own treasures.

The Timeless Place Within

Time leaves its marks on our skin, in our joints, and in the way we move through the day. There is a part of us that time cannot touch. It is the eternal place within the soul that remains warm, vibrant and young.

When we connect with this part of ourselves, our age becomes less about numbers and more about spirit. You are as young as you feel.

When you nurture that inner warmth, you carry a lightness and vitality that no one can take from you. It is like standing beside a Highland loch on a still evening. The water reflects the sky without a ripple, and in that moment you feel both completely present and connected to something timeless.

Bringing It All Together

In our younger years, we tend to scatter our energy in all directions, chasing every opportunity and exploring every path, often without much reflection.

As we grow older, there is a gift in drawing those paths together, seeing how the pieces of our life connect. This is what makes the art of inner harvesting so powerful. It is a chance to gather the lessons, forgive the past, hold beauty close, and step forward with a lighter heart.

Your harvest need not be grand. A handful of honest truths, gathered with care, is enough. Keep them near.



Write them down. Let them be your quiet storehouse through the darker months.

In the end, what sustains us is not the trophies we once chased, but the inner wisdom and warmth we choose to carry forward. This autumn may your harvest be one that truly nourishes you.



The Magic of Acorns



Small but mighty, the acorn carries the spirit of the great oak tree within it, a seed of strength, wisdom, and endurance. Across cultures, it has long been treasured as a charm of luck, prosperity, and protection. At this time of year, as autumn scatters acorns across the earth, their magic is at its most potent.

Five Magical Properties of Acorns

Strength & Vitality – Carried for courage, resilience, and good health.

Prosperity & Abundance – A token of wealth and fertile harvests.

Fertility & New Beginnings – Symbol of potential, growth, and fresh starts.

Protection – Traditionally placed on windowsills to guard against storms and misfortune.

Wisdom & Longevity – A charm for clarity, knowledge, and a long life.

Ways to Work with Acorns

Carry one in your pocket or bag as a personal charm.

Place acorns in a prosperity bowl with coins and herbs to invite abundance.

Keep one on your desk or altar to inspire wisdom and focus.

Bury an acorn while visualising your goal to plant the seed of intention.

Place an acorn on a windowsill during storms for traditional protection.

No Acorn? No Problem!

Symbolism is as powerful as the object itself. Acorn-shaped charms, pendants, beads, or even images of acorns can serve just as well. To attune a substitute:

Hold the charm in your hands.

Close your eyes and picture the strength of a great oak flowing into it.

Whisper your intention (strength, luck, protection, or growth).

Keep it with you as you would a real acorn.

The acorn reminds us that from the smallest seed, mighty things can grow.

Autumn Shades and Rustic Tones Through the Lens Photo Diary

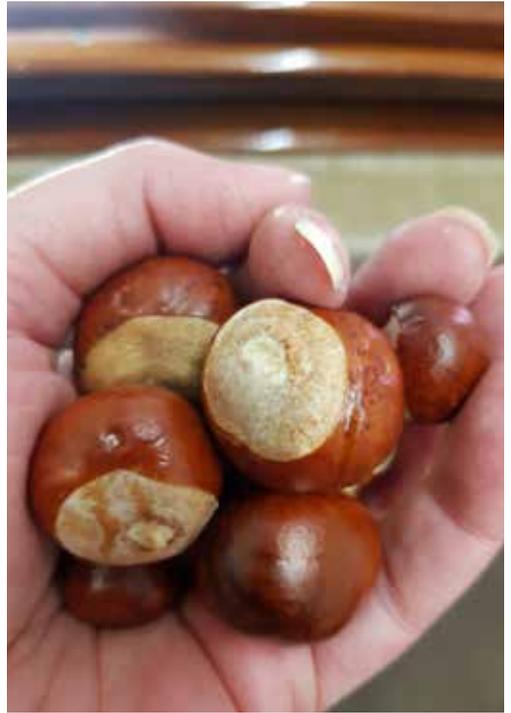
Words and Images by Linda Mellor

Autumn is a glorious time to be outdoors. It's a season to treat the senses to cooler mornings, lingering misty landscapes and a beautiful, changing palette of warming hues. Sunrises and sunsets are colourful reminders of the new day and of

fresh opportunities. Wildlife is present, and nature is busy offering her bountiful harvest for us to enjoy. Steaming hot cups of coffee or your morning Cacao are perfect invitations to embrace the season of Autumn.









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The Garden Path

By Joanne Dovesi



As we slowly move into Autumn, the changing of season makes me reflect on the feelings of loss and change. The vibrant and

vivid colours of summer are slowly fading and going to sleep for another year. Their petals and leaves falling like confetti on the ground. Helping to nourish the earth, contributing to the never ending cycle of life.

For me, my favourite times of year are definitely Spring and Autumn. Both seasons signify change and new beginnings. Cutting back and preparing the garden for winter is extremely

rewarding. Wondering what my future will hold when these plants and flowers bloom again the following year. And then in the Spring seeing the first signs of life poking through the earth, awaiting the warmth of the sun. Reaching for the light. I

suppose in a way we are similar, always reaching, always pushing to find our light. The light that will show us the way in the darkness.

Losing my mum eight years ago had a huge effect on my life. Not only did I lose my mum but I also lost my best friend. Not having her here can sometimes feel all consuming. Her laughter, her bright blue sparkling eyes and her words of

wisdom I miss so much. I would turn to her for all my ups and downs and not having her here hurts very deeply. Her love of gardening, she passed to me and I like to think that she would have been proud of what I have achieved. I often feel her presence with me while I'm gardening. A little Robin that will sit by me or a white feather that floats slowly to the ground remind me that she's near. Not having her around has definitely made me a stronger person.

It's so easy in life to fall into another person's rhythm. Neglecting yourself and your own values and needs. People can take advantage of your vulnerabilities, especially when you have experienced loss, this in itself can make you more vulnerable. After ending a toxic and consuming relationship, it has opened a

whole new world for me. I feel liberated, myself again after such a long time. It took a lot of strength and will power but I got through it. Connecting with friends again without the feelings of pressure and having time in the garden every day gives me that peace I need. My children are a great strength to me and I am proud of the

people they are becoming. Although mum is not here, feeling connected to the earth and nature is so comforting.

The days are slowly getting shorter and soon the nights will be longer. It's time for hunkering down for Autumn and Winter. Enjoying cosy nights in with flicking candles and warm flames from

"After ending a toxic and consuming relationship, it has opened a whole new world for me."

fires. Cuddled in blankets as the leaves fall slowly outside, forming a carpet of oranges and browns. It's time for reflection and hope for the future. I will soon be fishing out my thermal gardening gloves and fleecy lined trousers as the Autumn approaches. There will be lots to do in the garden as

always and as I work I look forward to another season and all that it will bring. Bags of leaves and withering plants and flowers. But they are not gone, just asleep for another year, ready to give us joy and hope again. Hope is a good thing, probably the best of things because hope never dies.



The Seasons of You

Women's Health After 40

Words and Images by Linda Mellor

A woman's body undergoes changes throughout her life. It is only in recent years that these conversations have grown louder, become more widely accepted, and been shared more openly with the public.

Of course, it's different for every woman but, quite often, it begins somewhere in your forties, when the body softens, sleep changes, emotions deepen and maybe you start to notice more or seek out different experiences, and, of course, there's the menopause. Suddenly, health isn't just about ticking boxes or chasing numbers. It becomes something else entirely: a kind of inner ecology. A partnership with your changing self.

We're often told to "look after our health" as if it's a single thing, tidy and manageable. But women's health is layered, complex, and constantly shifting. In many cases, the women I know have experienced health challenges combined with lots of misunderstood and often poor advice from male and female health professionals. What matters in one decade may evolve in the next. It's not a decline, it's a recalibration. And if we pay attention, these shifts can become invitations: to tune in more closely, to live more fully, and to take nothing for granted. Here's what that journey might look like, not as a prescription, but as a conversation. A woman-to-woman



reflection on the seasons of our bodies, and the wisdom each one brings.

In Your 40s: The Awakening

For many women, the forties are a bit of a paradox. On one hand, we may feel stronger than ever: wiser, bolder, more grounded. On the other, we begin to notice the flickers of hormonal change: heavier periods or erratic moods, headaches that weren't there before, and a new relationship with sleep (which sometimes goes AWOL at 3 a.m.). This is often the perimenopausal decade, though no one seems to talk about it until you're knee-deep in the experience. But forewarned is forearmed. This is the time to tune in to your cycles, your stress, your bones, your gut, your mental clarity. What's shifting? What's asking for more attention? The 40s are not a signal to panic. They're a call to presence. Now is the time to build strength, muscle, resilience, boundaries. To nourish your body with better food, not less food. To move not for punishment, but for pleasure and vitality and to begin protecting your future self.

In Your 50s: The Turning Point

By your fifties, the hormonal shifts that began as whispers often arrive with more drama. Menopause may hit like a crashing wave, or pass with a gentle sigh, no two experiences are alike. Hot flashes, sleep disruption, anxiety, thinning hair, changing skin, weight gain and redistribution, these aren't failures of the body. Your body isn't breaking down. It's breaking through. The fifties ask us to stop postponing ourselves. Many women experience a kind of rebirth: freed from fertility, sharper

in their convictions, less tolerant of nonsense (and there's plenty of that in life, particularly online). But the physical side must be supported too, heart health, bone density, intimate health and pelvic floor integrity, and emotional well-being all need our care. It's also a decade of fierce truth-telling. What kind of life are you living and who are you sharing it with? What kind of health are you accepting? Who are you becoming? Where do you feel the changes occurring? There's still time to rewrite your habits and your story, but the time is now, not later.

In Your 60s: The Integration

The sixties, for those who reach them in good health, can be deeply satisfying. You've weathered storms and beaten the health challenges. You've likely stopped trying to fix yourself at various points, and perhaps you're ready to move from optimisation to integration, to live from wisdom rather than urgency. That doesn't mean becoming passive, it's quite the opposite. Many women in their sixties become powerfully protective of their health, because they understand what's at stake. They book the screenings. They prioritise joy. They stay strong not to "look good" but to stay upright, mobile, strong and independent. They know a daily walk matters. So does companionship. So does meaning. It's a good time to check in with your heart, emotionally and physically. Has grief been tended to? Are there places still calling for healing? The mind and body are in conversation, always. It's never too late to listen in.

In Your 70s and Beyond: The Deepening

This is the decade, we are often told this where visibility often fades. It's not because women are less valuable, but because society and the media hasn't yet caught up. But make no mistake: the women in their seventies and beyond are the fierce keepers of culture, memory, and continuity. At this stage, health becomes less about perfection and more about presence. Energy may change, but vitality, that glowing inner fire, can remain - and why the hell shouldn't it! Mobility, balance, cognitive sharpness, and social connection are more important than ever. And so is purpose. Whether it's tending a garden, writing your story, creative projects or simply being the wise, wild anchor in a community, your health is inseparable from your sense of belonging. Loneliness is as dangerous as high blood pressure. Connection is a vital medicine (see my note at the end of this article).

The Theme: Your Voice

Across every decade, one truth remains: you are the expert on your own body. Not your doctor, not your partner, not the latest article claiming to "fix" you. You. Your body has carried you through everything: birth, loss, health challenges, love, heartbreak, reinvention. It deserves reverence, not ridicule. Health, in the end, is not about chasing youth. It's about building a relationship with your self and making sure you support yourself each day: sometimes with big decisions and sometimes with tiny small ones. You know what you need to feel good, and how to truly nurture yourself - from reading to relax to choosing a colourful meal. The choice is endless and it is yours.

Over the page we have 4 stories from 4 women....

“Across every decade, one truth remains: you are the expert on your own body. Not your doctor, not your partner, not the latest article claiming to ‘fix’ you.”

Sharing Women's Journeys

Your reflections on the decade that shaped you

Four questions to four women

Which decade of your life has felt the most dynamic so far, and why? How have changes in your body influenced how you see yourself or your health? What strength, lesson, or perspective did you gain during that time? What advice would you share with other women entering that stage of life?



Editor Linda, *hopeful. I feel like a warrior woman (most days!), deeply grateful to still be the first year of my here. I faced cancer in my 30s, 40s, 60s, this already feels and, again, in my 50th year. My 50s like my most dynamic decade (this magazine stock, letting go of the unwanted, is testament to that!).*

I have much more acknowledging my stress levels. Only clarity, and I'm more decisive about through asking for help and working what I want to be part of.

"I feel like a warrior woman (most days!)..."

with a therapist, was I able to see how much of an impact stress had and how I'd functioned for years in its grip. In doing the work, many past events unravelled, and their departure was nothing short of euphoric. Finally, I feel able to breathe freely.

Body Changes

My body changed dramatically after a hysterectomy at 30, my first experience of cancer. It also changed me emotionally, I'd never felt so vulnerable. I'm blessed with a wonderfully supportive family but, back then, it was rare, there was no medical or cancer support. I slowly learned to nurture myself. That became vital to my long-term healing.

Advice

Now, in my 60s, self-nurturing, health, creativity, and happiness are my priorities. The message I'd pass on to other women is, whatever stage of life they are in, is to identify what makes you happy and alive and nurture it."

Strength and Lessons

Fighting cancer made me stronger and



Helen from Hayloft Healing, “As I’ve only just hit the 50 mark, I have to say my 40s but more so my late 40s. It wasn’t a great time dealing with a divorce and adapting

to a single mum life after 19 years, it all felt a bit overwhelming, but now I realise it actually pushed me and I learnt a lot about myself.

In those late 40s I got a new job, made some new friends, retrained, started a second income business and actually started to feel alive again. This decade of my life I feel has shaped me for the next incoming decade of my 50s. I think I am the most positive and confident I have been since my late teens. I actually feel that I can face and take on anything now, so as I am looking forward to this next decade of my 50’s because of the shaping in my 40’s.

Body Influences

The odd joint pain, and the realisation that my mind is not always correct when

it says I can still show my daughter how to do a forward roll has given me a nudge to take care of my body as well as trying to keep my mind young. For somebody who is not really into sports, I like to at least manage a good walk daily. I do think it’s important to keep ourselves moving.

Changing Perspective

The reflection in the mirror has probably influenced me the most and I wouldn’t say I’m vain at all but all of a sudden, I was very aware of these things called marionette lines! I didn’t like them at all and for a good while I felt very aware of them and I’ll admit, they made me feel quite down. I eventually came to recognise this was really down to my low self-esteem and being down about myself and feeling unattractive. As mentioned above, finding confidence and positivity has, I think helped with this little gripe. Also

“I actually feel that I can face and take on anything now”

recognising the need for hydration and taking more notice of the amount of water I take in daily and how that effects my skin and the elasticity of it. I’m a big lemon water drinker now. I think with each step of confidence, acceptance comes for those changes we start to notice

and there is very often something we

can do about it if it's not a pleasant change.

Advice

My advice would be to learn to love yourself, don't focus too much energy into the fact that you are approaching things like the menopause or you seem to have more grey hairs or wrinkles than before. I think the focus should be on embracing all the things that have made us grow, made us strong, made us present. All the laughs and smiles that created an eye or mouth wrinkle. Each moment of life is beautiful and to me life is too beautiful for me to waste time picking myself to bits in front of a mirror.

As long as we are doing what we can to look after our bodies and nourish ourselves with good food, movement and hydration, I do believe it's also important to be kind to ourselves and to live happy and enjoy every day as much as we can."

*"life is too beautiful
for me to waste
time picking myself
to bits in front of a
mirror."*



Joanne, the Edinburgh Gardener, "I would definitely say the last ten years have been the most dynamic. Having two children, watching them grow into young adults and all

that it brings has certainly been fulfilling. I am 54 now and over the last ten years my life has changed in so many ways.

Looking after two children on my own, starting my own business and losing my mum has all had a huge impact on my life. It can be challenging but very rewarding and as I get older, I can see just how

strong and resilient I am. I am certainly not blowing my own trumpet here but pointing out that when faced with certain challenges, you'd be surprised what you can achieve.

I've met many people, especially in the last ten years. Some have remained good friends and some have drifted away. The few that have remained are very dear to me and I know that they will be there for me and vice versa as time goes on. Moving into your 50s does make you start to think about your past more. The people who you once knew and are no longer in your life,

childhood memories and how things are now moving into a different phase which I am looking forward to.

Not invincible

There have been quite a few changes in my body. When you are young, you don't really think too much about your health, you are invincible! Not anymore. I am very conscious now of my changing body shape but I embrace it and it tells a tale of my journey. I definitely get enough exercise when I am working but am more conscious of the food I eat and have started taking different vitamins and supplements to help. There are a few more lines on my face and my hair is definitely starting to grey but I feel healthy and ready for the next phase of my life.

Learn from Experience

What strength, lesson, or perspective did you gain during that time?

I think the lesson I have learned and it was a hard one, was always go with your gut instinct. Never just go along with things that deep down you know are not right, just to please others. I am a people pleaser and that can sometimes be my downfall. I have now learnt to always stand up for what I believe in and I don't let myself be bullied into things, just to keep the

peace. This applies to friendships and relationships. For me, this relates to relationships. I have learnt to see the red flags, which are apparent very early on and act on it straight away. Don't settle for second best. I deserve a good, kind and caring person who is happy with the

person I am and who doesn't try to manipulate and bully for their own gain. They say you learn from experience and that is definitely true. But what an experience to have learnt from. Onwards and upwards!

“when faced with certain challenges, you'd be surprised what you can achieve”

Advice

My advice would be to hang on in there. It's a shaky start but keep calm and know that things will soon even out. Take all the experience you have gained so far and put it to good use. There is nothing you can't do and if you have children that have flown the nest, making their own way in life, use this time to focus on yourself. It's important in our stage of life to concentrate on relaxation, remaining grounded and getting our sleep patterns back to how they were. Just take that little bit of extra time yourself. After all, you definitely deserve it and you will be ready to face the next phase with positively and energy.”



Charlotte from Cosmically Conscious, said, "Moving from my thirties into my forties has felt quite dramatic- I've embraced new beginnings in my career and ridden the waves of changes in

relationships. Emotionally, I've set much needed boundaries and physically I'm learning how to work with fluctuating hormone levels. It all feels like it's been part of an awakening that I am still going through as I turn 44 - and I expect it will continue!

My Body, My Priority

After a breast health scare earlier this year, I am committed to listening to my body. Thankfully my results were clear but the changes that I had investigated were to do with aging. I now pay careful attention to what my body needs and really respect how my body is trying to support me everyday. Listening to my body's messages has always been important, but now it's a priority.

Energy Management

To cut out anything that is draining my energy, do more of what boosts it, and definitely not to sweat the small stuff.

Sharing advice

Be prepared to start tapping into your wisest self - she is ready and waiting!"

"I've set much needed boundaries and physically I'm learning how to work with fluctuating hormone levels."

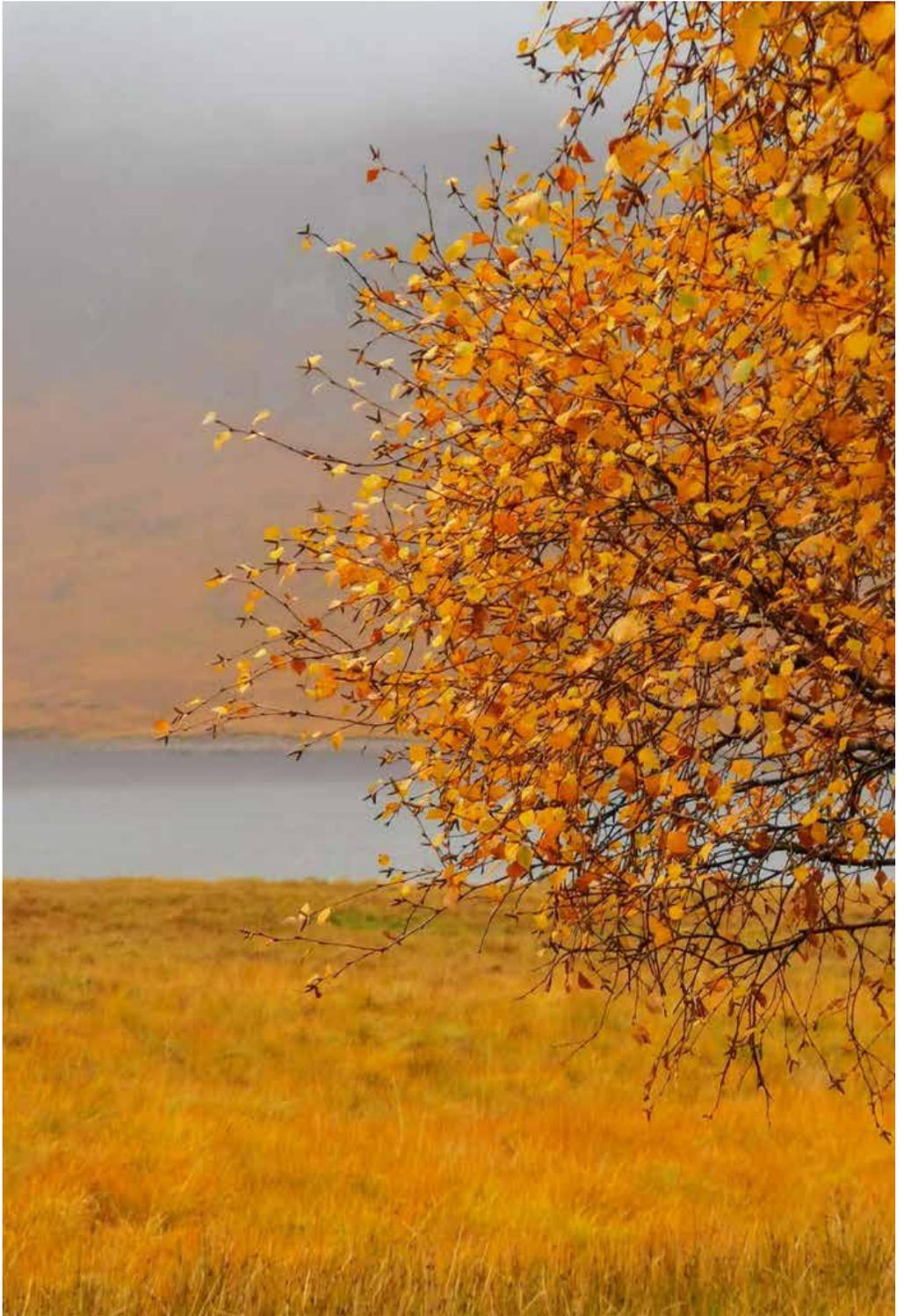
Reflection

Each decade brings its own rhythm of change: moments of loss, lessons in strength, and opportunities to grow. As these women remind us, the journey isn't about resisting time but about embracing what makes us feel alive, grounded, and wise.

Your Turn

Which decade has shaped you the most? What strength or lesson has carried you forward?

We'd love to hear your reflections — share them with us at Facebook: [facebook.com/agewisdomwellness](https://www.facebook.com/agewisdomwellness)
Instagram: @agewisdomwellness





Autumn

by Emily Elizabeth Dickinson

The morns are meeker than
they were,
The nuts are getting brown;
The berry's cheek is plumper,
The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf,
The field a scarlet gown.
Lest I should be old-fashioned,
I'll put a trinket on.

Curated Lives and Filtered Faces

What's Really Going On With Smartphones and the Seduction Illusion?

Words and Images by Linda Mellor

In cafés, at bus stops, on remote Highland paths, we see people staring at screens, curating lives instead of living them. I'm frequently staggered by the people doing this and being totally oblivious to their surroundings. Scroll and you'll notice a pattern: pouty selfies, tight clothes, seductive poses, and the unmistakable desperation of needing to be seen.

But what exactly are we witnessing? Is it self-expression, or is it something sadder, a collective anxiety wrapped in filters and hashtags? We're in the age of performative desirability.

Smartphones, combined with social media platforms, are the perfect delivery mechanism for it. It's almost robotic. With every swipe and scroll, a strange message is being reinforced, that our value lies not in our thoughts, actions, or relationships, but in how many hearts, likes, approving comments or flame emojis we can collect.

The Illusion of the Sexy Selfie

Behind every sultry selfie is a person, often a woman, shaped by years of cultural messaging about worth and visibility. When we see endless images of smooth, sun-kissed skin and impossibly small waists, we're not looking at reality. We're looking at illusions, carefully constructed,

digitally altered, and algorithmically rewarded. Celebrities do it. Influencers do it, and ordinary people do it too, uploading image after image, hoping to spark engagement. These days, smartphones are designed to support pouty pictures with endless filters and appearance altering apps. It's not narcissism in the traditional sense, it's conditioning. Many of these people aren't trying to be vain, they're trying to be valued.



Who's Doing It?

Anecdotally and statistically, women are more likely than men to post these sorts of images especially younger women. But the pressure is creeping upward.

Midlife women are being targeted too,

subtly urged to look younger, sexier, more desirable. Some succumb.

Others resist. But the message is there: if you're not seen, you don't exist. And being seen now means being liked, a manufactured metric designed by tech companies to keep us engaged and slightly dissatisfied. These platforms weren't built to foster self-worth or connection. They were engineered, quite literally, to hijack our dopamine systems. Likes, comments, and shares act like tiny hits of pleasure. The more you get, the more you want. It's behavioural addiction.

Engineered Insecurity

Social media didn't invent low self-esteem, but it found a way to monetise it. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok profit from our insecurities. They show us 'perfect' lives, then fill timelines with products to fix ourselves, and reward those who play the game. The filters get smoother. The waistlines get smaller. The gap between reality and representation



grows wider. It's no longer about documenting life, it's about curating a fantasy.

We know many of these so-called "perfect" women don't even look like that in real life. They're using apps to elongate legs, whiten teeth, slim faces, smooth skin and brighten eyes. It's digital body modification, available to anyone with a smartphone and a little patience. How many are scrolling



through illusions, feeling worse and worse about themselves, chasing something that isn't even real.

What's New, What's Not

It's tempting to say this is a new phenomenon, but really, it's an old story in new packaging.

Women have always been pressured to present themselves attractively, to seek approval, to be desirable. What's changed is the scale.

Smartphones have turned that pressure into a 24/7 performance.

Unlike fashion magazines of the past, which you could choose not to buy, social media comes with you everywhere, in your pocket, beside your bed, into the bathroom. There's no off-switch, and if you have signal or wi-fi, it's free and immediate access to all sorts of content.

For women, the contrast can feel jarring. Most of us didn't grow up with phones. We remember Polaroids, photos taking a week to be developed, handwritten letters (how I miss these!), and answering machines. We also remember what it felt like to have privacy, and to live life without everything being recorded.

A Different Kind of Visibility

We can choose not to play. As we grow in life experience, we know

"We know many of these so-called "perfect" women don't even look like that in real life."

the difference between confidence and performance. We've learned, sometimes the hard way, that approval isn't the same as love, and being visible isn't the same as being seen. So instead of uploading daily proof of our worth, we can show up in more meaningful ways by being present in our lives and in our friendships. We can celebrate visibility on our own terms, not as a desperate grab for attention but as a grounded, joyful expression of who we really are. That might mean writing, creating, walking in nature, cooking and sharing laughter across a table with friends. It might mean sharing a story that moved us, or a photo that makes no effort to impress because it's real.

It is so ingrained in society now, I'm not sure of any success if you challenged the myth that being sexy, slim, and filtered is the peak of success. I never imagined a career of being an influencer would be a number one choice for many young women.

When you are older you know that looking perfect doesn't bring peace, that life is better when you're not anxiously checking your phone for approval.

Smartphones are eating away at lives. We've lived in a time when it was possible to be loved for who you are, not how you appear. Real connection. Real ageing. Real, raw, unfiltered life. That includes wrinkles, bad hair days, and real laughter. It includes moments of joy that were never photographed, and moments of grief that can't be smoothed with an App.

When we show up as we are confident, messy, wise, unfinished we send a quiet but powerful message to the world: you don't have to be digitally polished to be whole. You just have to be real and live life. If we do choose to post something, let it be from a place of truth, not performance. Let it be something that uplifts, entertains or connects, not something that seeks applause. Life doesn't need a ring light or a pout. It needs presence, passion, and a refusal to shrink. The most beautiful women I know don't need to post daily updates. They are too busy living.



Three Screen-free Rituals to try this Autumn

1. Morning Cup in Silence

Make your first tea or coffee without checking your phone. Sit by a window or outside, notice the light, the air, and your breath. Give yourself 5 minutes of presence before the day begins.

2. Evening Gratitude Walk

Take a short walk at dusk — no earbuds, no screens. Notice colours, textures, sounds. When you return, write down one thing from nature you want to carry into tomorrow (See our Autumn Walk Prompts on page 92).

3. Candlelight Journal

Switch off all devices an hour before bed. Light a candle and write three sentences: something you're letting go of, something you're keeping, and something you're inviting in.

The EQ Drain

Is your smartphone dulling your senses?

Words and Images by Linda Mellor

We live in a culture that prizes quick comebacks, sharp elbows, and the ability to “win” an argument. Yet as we move through life, we begin to see that strength isn’t always loud. Sometimes it’s the calm voice in the room that changes the course of the conversation. That’s where emotional intelligence comes in. A quiet power that shapes relationships, careers, and our sense of self.

Emotional intelligence, often called EQ, is the ability to recognise, understand, and manage our own emotions while also tuning into the emotions of others. Psychologist Dr. Jeanne Segal, who dedicated much of her career to exploring this field, described it as “the single most important skill for building healthy relationships.” For women over 40, it’s a skill that often feels like an old friend. We’ve learned, sometimes the hard way, that reacting in the heat of the moment rarely leads anywhere good.

By this stage of life, many of us have weathered storms that taught us patience. We’ve seen how words can linger in

someone’s memory long after we’ve forgotten them. Emotional intelligence asks us to pause, to notice what’s going on beneath the surface, and to choose our response with intention.

There’s also a certain self-awareness that comes with experience. We know when we’re tired, when we’re craving connection, and when we’re simply not in the mood to deal with someone else’s drama. Emotional intelligence gives us permission to set boundaries without guilt. As Brené Brown says, “Clear is kind.” By being honest about our limits, we’re not shutting people out, instead we are making space for relationships that are healthier for everyone involved.

Yet one of the biggest challenges to EQ today is something many of us carry in our pockets — the smartphone. These devices are remarkable, but constant use can quietly undermine the skills emotional intelligence relies on.

When our eyes are on a screen, we miss the subtle cues that tell us how someone is really feeling. A glance at a phone mid-conversation, however brief, can signal disinterest and break trust. The habit of instant replies to messages conditions us to react without reflection, making it harder to pause and consider our words in person.

Put the phone down, pick the moment up, presence speaks louder than any notification



Too much screen-based communication can also blunt empathy. Text strips away facial expressions, pauses, and the warmth of voice, so misunderstandings creep in more easily. People skills have always been key to creating and building new relationships. However, with a phone always to hand, over time, we may lose some of our instinct for reading people accurately. We risk avoiding the quiet moments where we might notice and process our own emotions, and moments that are essential for building self-awareness.

This isn't about abandoning technology, but using it with intention. If we can give our full attention to a conversation, set aside the phone when someone needs us, and create spaces in the day without notifications, we protect the conditions EQ needs to flourish.

Empathy is another key part of emotional intelligence. It's more than just feeling sorry for someone; it's the ability to step into their shoes and see the world from their perspective. For women, empathy can be a double-edged sword. We're often encouraged to be caring to the point of self-sacrifice. Emotional intelligence reminds us that empathy works best when it's paired with self-respect. You can understand someone's struggle without taking it on as your own.

If you've ever defused an argument by staying calm, or helped a friend open up by simply listening, you've used emotional intelligence in action. And unlike some skills, it only gets better with practice and time.

For women over 40, emotional intelligence is not just a tool for managing others – it's a compass for living well. It helps us navigate friendships, love, **family**,

and work with more grace and far less exhaustion. It's the difference between being swept up in the noise and standing steady in our own truth.

It's quiet. It's strong. And it's entirely within our reach.



- Tips -

Pause before you speak. Create a breath of space between what you feel and how you respond (this is a tricky one to master for me!).

Listen for the unsaid. Pay attention to tone, expression, and pauses, not just words.

Name your emotions. Labelling what you feel helps you choose your response with precision.

Protect your presence. Put the phone away during conversations to show attention and respect.

Pair empathy with boundaries. Care deeply, but not at the expense of your own wellbeing.

The Art of Candlelight Illumination in the Life and Work of Madge Gill

A Season of Illumination

As the autumn deepens, the light shifts. The equinox has passed, and nights lengthen with steady insistence. Day by day, the sun yields ground. In these months, light becomes a treasure. We notice it more keenly in its absence, the slant of a golden hour, the flare of a match, the small persistence of a candle against dark.

Candlelight is unlike any other form of illumination. It does not flood or overpower. It flickers, it breathes. It offers enough to see by, but never more than is needed. Candlelight requires care: it must be lit, tended, shielded. Its endurance is fragile, and therein lies its strength. It embodies presence, attention, and the dignity of the small.

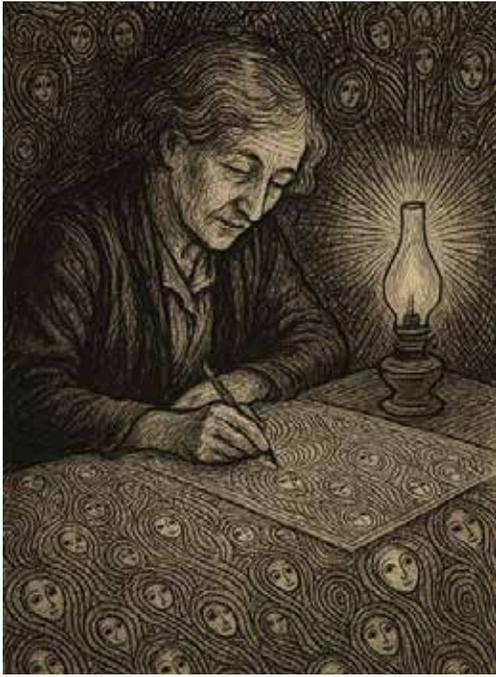
For women, candlelight has long been companion to labour, prayer, creativity, and vigil. It has been the light by which stories were read, clothes mended, children soothed, and letters written. In a season where outer brightness diminishes,



candlelight becomes symbol and practice of resilience. To sit with a candle is to acknowledge both darkness and illumination as partners.

It is in this spirit that the work of Madge Gill (1882–1961) takes on its autumnal resonance. Her drawings, produced obsessively through decades, were themselves acts of candlelight: fragile, flickering illuminations held within shadow. Though she never drew candles, her work is itself a metaphor for them, a channelled light emerging from overwhelming dark.

A Life Marked by Darkness



An artistic interpretation of Madge Gill at work, honouring her process of drawing under lamplight and vision.

Madge Gill's story is remarkable not only for the scale of her artistic output, but for the sheer difficulty of the life from which it arose. Born illegitimate in East London in 1882, she was placed in an orphanage at the age of nine. At fourteen, she was shipped to Canada as part of the "home children" scheme, a colonial programme that sent thousands of British children abroad to serve as cheap labour.

Her early years were shaped by dislocation, loss, and marginalisation. Returning to London as a young woman, she married and bore children, but

suffered repeated tragedies: one son died in the 1918 influenza pandemic, and her own health was undermined by a severe illness that left her with one eye permanently damaged.

Out of this background of grief and fracture, Gill began to create art. In the early 1920s, she entered what she described as a visionary state, guided by a spirit she called "Myrninerest" a name that seems to mean "my inner rest." Under this influence, she began to draw compulsively, producing thousands upon thousands of works over the following four decades.

She worked mostly at night, under candlelight or lamplight, filling postcard-sized sheets and rolls of paper as long as thirty feet. Her chosen medium was simple ink on card or fabric. Yet the images that emerged were anything but simple.

Illuminations on Paper

Gill's drawings are densely patterned webs of line, filled with female faces, eyes, spirals, grids, stars. At first glance they seem monochrome, black ink on white card, but linger longer and they begin to glow. The faces are luminous, pale ovals emerging from a background of obsessive detail. Lines radiate outward, like halos, veils, or rays of unseen light.

In this sense, Gill's work is profoundly candle-like. It flickers out of shadow, fragile yet insistent. Unlike the bold colours of the Pre-Raphaelites or the geometric clarity of modernists, Gill's imagery resists easy categorisation. It is visionary art in the truest sense: not designed for an audience, but compelled into being as if by necessity.

Many of the faces are anonymous, interchangeable, yet hauntingly consistent. They gaze outward with calm, otherworldly serenity. Scholars have speculated that these may be self-portraits, projections of Gill herself, or embodiments of the feminine divine. Whatever their origin, they stand like guardians, lit figures within shadowed labyrinths.

Mysticism Without Monument

Gill belongs to the tradition of outsider artists, those who create outside formal art institutions, often in conditions of poverty or marginalisation. Unlike Hilma af Klint, who painted within a spiritualist circle and left clear writings, Gill offered no manifestos. She rarely exhibited, never sold her work, and often destroyed what she made. Her art was not a career but a compulsion, an act of devotion to

the unseen.

This outsider status has sometimes been framed as marginal, but it can also be seen as integral. Gill's art was not designed for acclaim. It was, like candlelight, created for the moment: transient, unassuming, yet full of presence.

In this, she stands within a lineage of women whose creativity was practised in private, unrecognised spaces: quilts stitched in kitchens, icons painted in cloisters, poems written in notebooks never published. Gill's illuminations belong less to the gallery than to the vigil.

Candlelight as Metaphor

What makes Gill so resonant for autumn is not simply the fact that she worked at night, often literally by candlelight, but that her art itself enacts the qualities of a flame.

Candlelight does not eradicate darkness. It coexists with it, offering enough radiance to navigate, but never overpowering shadow. Gill's drawings embody this balance. The dense lines of ink create a darkness from which faces emerge. Light exists not despite darkness but through it.

In this way, Gill's work offers a



profound metaphor for resilience. Her life was shaped by loss, displacement, and grief. Yet within that context, she produced images of calm, luminous presence. They are not triumphant, but steady. Not grand, but insistent. They are small flames held against overwhelming dark.

Feminine Presences

The persistent appearance of female faces in Gill's drawings is significant. They are never decorative, but central: radiating, veiled, haloed, watchful. They might be read as Madge herself, endlessly reproduced; or as companions, guides, ancestors; or as embodiments of the feminine divine she channelled through "Myrminerest." Whatever their identity, these figures become bearers of light. They resemble icons, but made not in gold leaf but in ink and patience. They remind us of the long association between women and illumination, from the hearth-keepers and candle-makers of village life to the mystics who wrote of inner light as divine. Gill's faces are not saints, but they carry that same aura of illumination in shadow.

Autumn Resonances

Autumn is the season when candlelight becomes most symbolic. As days shorten, we begin to light candles not just for ceremony but

for daily need. The flicker of flame carries both comfort and fragility.

Gill's art mirrors this seasonal truth. It does not deny the reality of shadow, but it insists that light can be carried within it. Her drawings are autumnal in spirit: intricate, inward, flickering with the poise of balance. They invite us to sit with the small, to attend to detail, to notice what glows within what darkens.

In this sense, Gill's work is less about transcendence than about presence. Like a candle, it does not seek to banish night but to make it liveable, even beautiful.

Legacy of an Illuminator

Madge Gill never courted recognition, but in recent decades her work has been gathered, exhibited, and studied. She is now regarded as one of Britain's most important outsider artists, her drawings housed in collections such as the Museum of London. Yet even in galleries, her art retains its intimacy. To stand before her endless faces is to feel not spectacle but presence, the quiet insistence of lines drawn in the dark.

Her legacy is not monumental but luminous. She reminds us that art need not be grand to be profound, that illumination can emerge from obscurity, that creativity itself can

be a form of candlelight: fragile, flickering, yet persistent.

The art of candlelight is the art of resilience. It is the art of tending something small, steady, and luminous against the dark. Madge Gill's life and work embody this. Out of poverty, grief, and marginalisation, she produced a body of art that continues to glow decades after her death.

As we move further into autumn, with its lengthening nights, her example feels particularly resonant. Candlelight, like Gill's art, does not erase shadow. It dwells within it, making space for presence, detail, and care. To sit with her drawings is to feel what a candle teaches: that illumination does not need to be overwhelming to be transformative. It needs only to persist, tended and steady, held in the hand of one who refuses to let the flame go out.



Where to see:

Much of Madge's work is cared for by Newham Heritage Service in East London, with recent exhibitions at the William Morris Gallery, Whitechapel Gallery, and along The Line art trail.

All Madge Gill's artwork posted here is in the public domain. Photo top right, my recent purchase.



Further Reading:

Ayshea Ahmed – *The Wonderful World of Madge Gill* (Cranthorpe Millner, 2021)

A vivid and accessible introduction to Gill's life and art, richly illustrated.

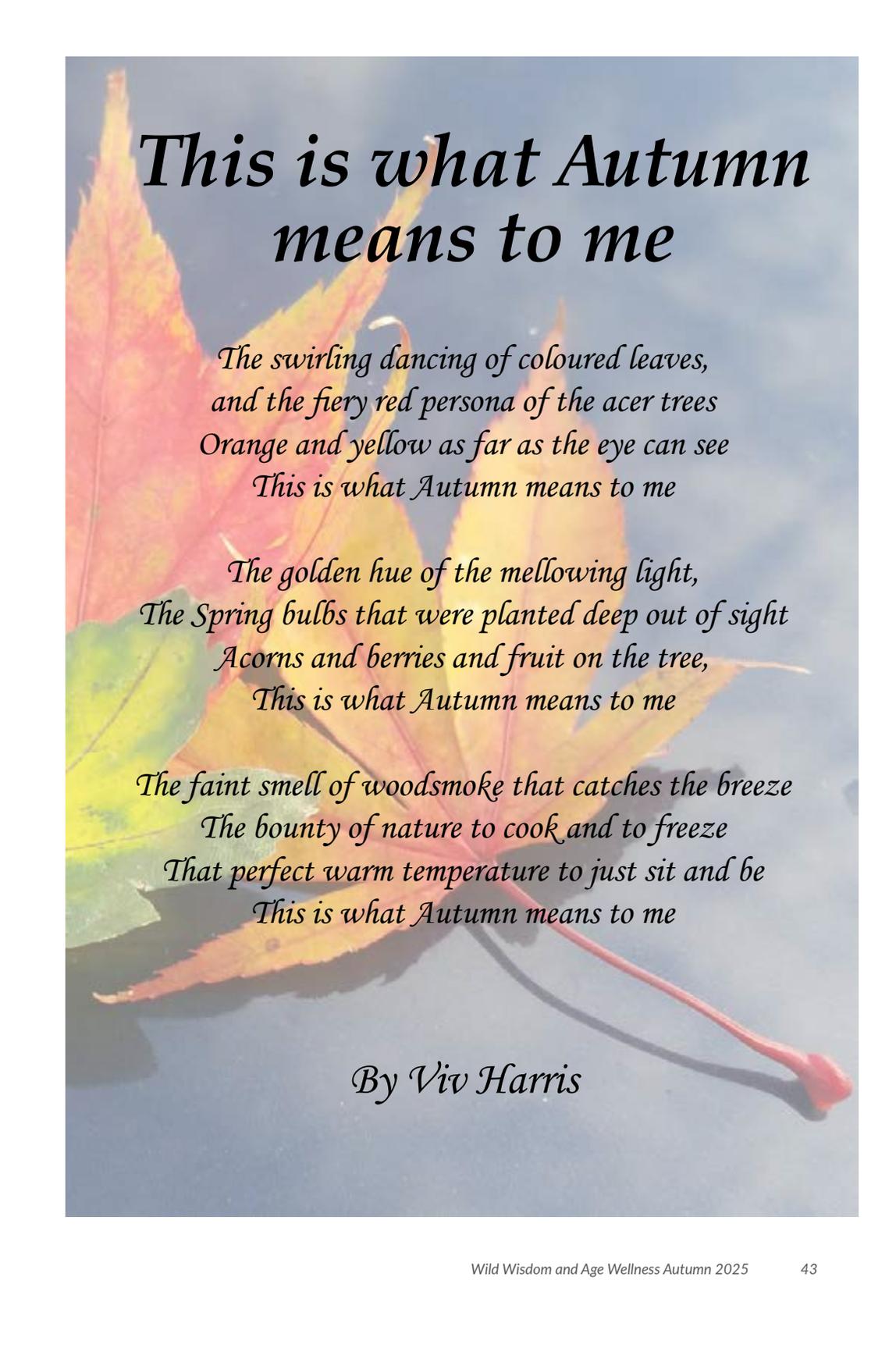
Sophie Dutton (ed.) – *Madge Gill* by Myrminerest (Revised & Updated Edition) (Rough Trade Books, 2022)

An intimate portrait through essays, interviews, rare textiles, and archival drawings, offering new insight into Gill's creative world.

Marie-Hélène Jeanneret – *Madge Gill* (Ides & Calendes, 2017)

A scholarly study in French, situating Gill's work within European art brut traditions.

Exhibition Catalogues – Madge Gill: Myrminerest (William Morris Gallery, 2019) and earlier Whitechapel/Collection de l'Art Brut catalogues remain valuable records of her extraordinary exhibitions.



This is what Autumn means to me

*The swirling dancing of coloured leaves,
and the fiery red persona of the acer trees
Orange and yellow as far as the eye can see
This is what Autumn means to me*

*The golden hue of the mellowing light,
The Spring bulbs that were planted deep out of sight
Acorns and berries and fruit on the tree,
This is what Autumn means to me*

*The faint smell of woodsmoke that catches the breeze
The bounty of nature to cook and to freeze
That perfect warm temperature to just sit and be
This is what Autumn means to me*

By Viv Harris

The Call of Autumn Skies



Words and Photos by Charlotte Lauren.



It is usually towards the end of August that I start to feel the gentle hum of autumn magic on the breeze. The temperature shifts, the

wind picks up and the rustle of leaves start to whisper that change

is coming. Don't get me wrong, the hazy days of mid-summer can be dreamy, but for me there is true beauty in the transition of summer easing into autumn when nature starts to stir with the anticipation of a new season.

In the world of astrology, it is the realm of Virgo that governs this transitional time. The sun sign (aka star sign) of Virgo is well known for qualities of careful concern, attention to detail and diligence, but lesser known is how



these qualities relate to the time of year that Virgo rules. In ancient astrology Virgo season is known as the 'dark of the light;' taking us towards shorter days and longer nights. It is from this quality of light that Virgo receives its discerning qualities, preparing us for what is to come, sorting the wheat from the chaff and grounding us in sustainable

“there is true beauty in the transition of summer easing into autumn”

routines. But Virgo season isn't just about planning ahead or cultivating a change of rhythm. There is a deep intuitive knowing that accompanies it, an inner harvesting of

what we have gained from the year so far and the chance to let go of what we no longer need. It also leads us to autumn equinox known as

'Mabon' by modern Pagans. This turning point of the year sees the sun move into the constellation of Libra and we begin our journey into the darkest stretch of the calendar in the northern hemisphere.

In Greek mythology, this dark stretch is said to be due to the goddess of agriculture and fertility, Demeter, feeling sorrowful that her daughter Persephone must live with

Hades, god of the underworld, for a portion of the year. This agreement, struck after Persephone was abducted and tricked by Hades into eating pomegranate seeds from the underworld, leads to Demeter neglecting the Earth whilst Persephone is away. Seasons turn darker, colder and crops fail to grow. When Persephone returns to her mother, springtime arrives, and Earth thrives once more.

Whilst this is a mythical tale used to explain the seasons, if we look closely nature can reflect cycles in

our own lives. I'm sure many of us can relate to a feeling of dread or reticence as the nights get longer, the thought of bad weather and

waking up in the pitch black as your alarm goes off isn't the most inspiring! But what if we need to experience a cycle where darkness is more prevalent so that we can revisit our inner world, our own underworld, and tune back into the soul, so that we can emerge refreshed and resourced? Truth, wisdom and lived

experience. It is often when we slow down and look within that we step into a rich inner knowing.

This kind of 'autumn of the soul' is an opportunity to harvest all we have learnt and acknowledge what we are here to alchemize. It is a quiet but potent time of grounding and inner transformation, a chance to add more knowledge to our cauldron of truth, wisdom and lived experience. When we move through our own personal autumn of the soul – we can experience a call back to our true, authentic self, shaped by decades of wisdom. As

"It is a quiet but potent time of grounding and inner transformation, a chance to add more knowledge to our cauldron of truth, wisdom and lived experience."



we redefine our desires, sense of self and personal needs, we shed old skin, and a slow intentional transformation takes place. This abundance lies beneath, just waiting to be discovered. Whilst this may be a potent key to cycles later in life, we also have an opportunity with each passing year to work more deeply with this energy as autumn calls us. When the nights grow darker, the invitation to travel inwards to welcome this new phase arrives. Where will your journey take you

this autumn? This year, shifts will unfold as the light changes, and harvest beckons.

A portal of transformation opens with eclipses in September, initiating the move towards the darker part of the year. Mabon arrives on 22nd September and then Samhain on 31st October, when the veil between the two worlds is said to be at its thinnest.

I shall look forward to long walks, leaves crunching underfoot,

accompanied by a sharpening wind and the hope of bright blue skies. Moonbathing, (taking in the moonlight) lighting candles and quiet time will be part of my everyday routine as I welcome the opportunity to ground. My intention will be to weave intuition and ritual so that when Samhain arrives, I will be ready to welcome

the wisdom of my ancestors. For you, dear reader, I hope that your inner autumn spirit is awoken, whether naturally within or by seasonal shift, ready to welcome the magic of release and transformation. Let your autumn of the soul begin...

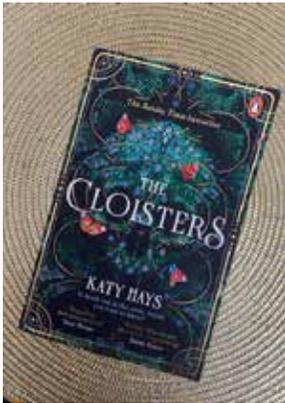
www.cosmicallyconscious.co.uk



Some of my favourite reads...

If you are ready to dive into an atmospheric tale with dark undercurrents, I'd recommend 'The Cloisters' by Katy Hays. This tangled web of tarot and toxic

relationships is set against the backdrop of a gothic museum in New York and makes for a sinister but captivating read. Perfect for a cosy



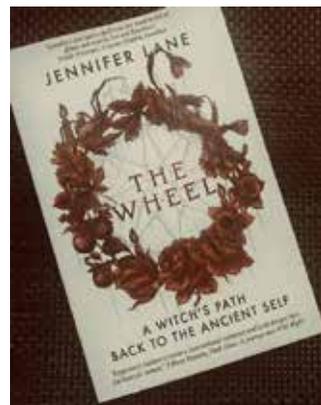
night by the fire...

Interested in finding out more about the wheel of the year?

'The Wheel' by Jennifer Lane is one of my favourite reads and instrumental to my journey on the Pagan path.

In the book, Jennifer shares her

own experience as she reconnects with the Celtic festivals over the course of a year and travels back into



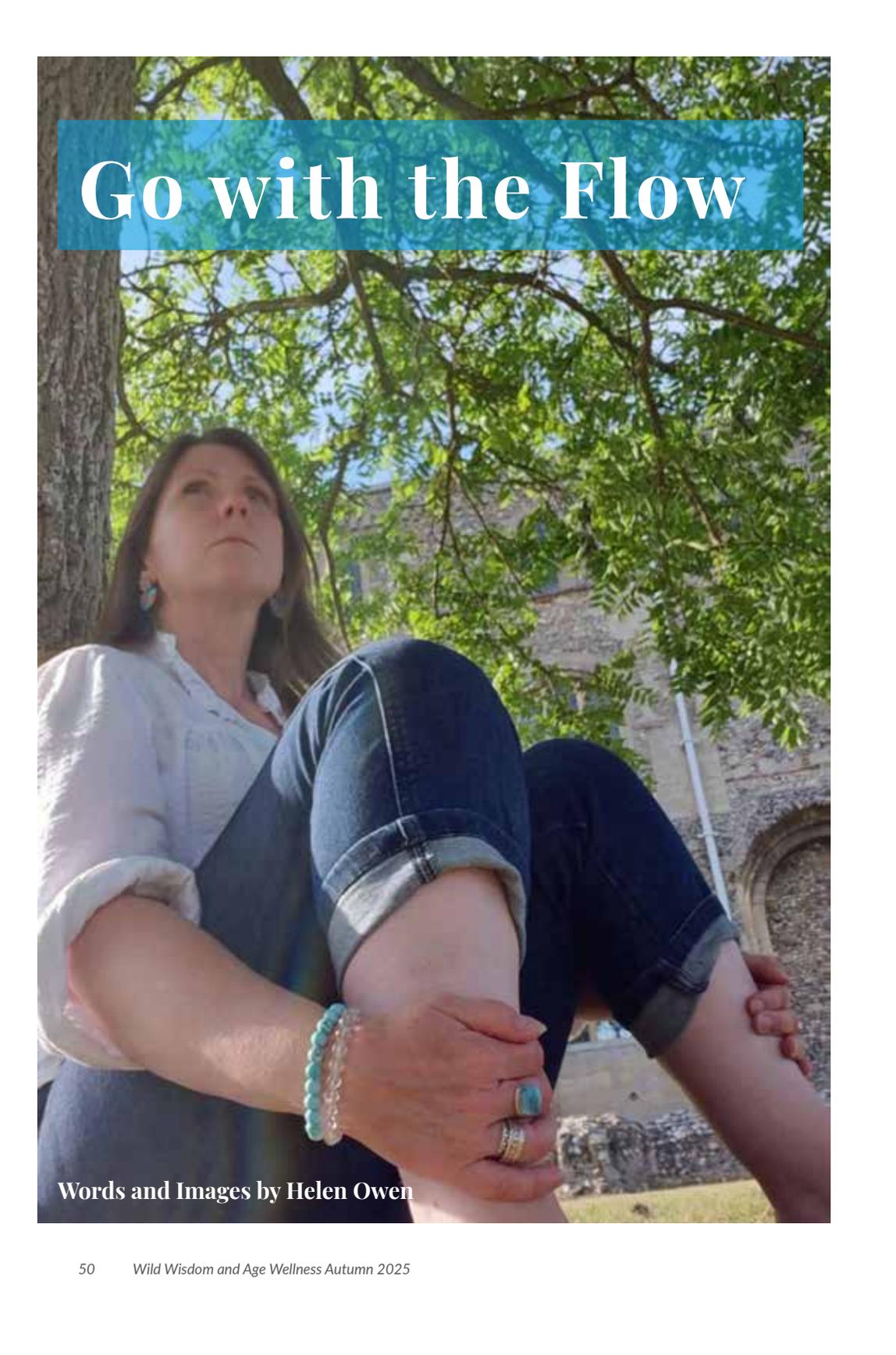
the world of witchcraft. Perfect for anyone exploring magick in a modern world.



Charlotte Lauren ~ Astrologer and Moonologer
Birth chart readings and astrology workshops
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Go with the Flow

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, sitting on the ground. She is looking upwards and to the left with a contemplative expression. She is wearing a turquoise ring and a matching bracelet. The background features a large, leafy tree and a stone building with an arched window.

Words and Images by Helen Owen

I don't know about you but I seem to find myself being more and more busy of late. I work the standard hours and luckily have weekends off but feel they go by in a flash and before I know it, it's Monday again! This got me thinking about time and all the little things we can do in our day to raise our vibration, lift ourselves up and accelerate our wellness when we just can't fit in a treatment with our trusted therapist.

In the Hayloft I have chosen to train in treatments that are really focused on changing our energies, finding a relaxed state, getting the energies flowing, releasing negativities and generally just bringing a state of calm and balance to our mind, body, spirit and soul. An hour's session just for the client, a time for them to just be them.

But, what do we do though if we haven't made time for ourselves or can't find that time? How can we keep ourselves balanced and continue in our work, parent life, home life, whilst not being overtaken by technology, by demands of family or work? It is not always easy but there are tools that we can help ourselves with and that only take a few minutes to do. I recommend these following little practises daily to help lift up

our vibration, set us up for the day and keep us balanced and focused.

Grounding - my biggest go to and something that I bang on about constantly is grounding. A few moments to ground ourselves through the day is so important. When ungrounded we can feel not present, have anxious thoughts, feel overwhelmed and over-think, be restless and discontent with ourselves or those around us.

“...all the little things we can do in our day to raise our vibration...”

The best ways to ground are bare feet on the ground, our hands on a tree or putting our back to the tree and swimming in natural bodies of water. The benefits of grounding ourselves happen in

the first 5 minutes of connection to the earth, tree or water but 20 to 30 minutes a day will really get the health benefits into your body.

If you can manage 5 to 15 minutes in your day, you will definitely feel better for it. Also we have the luxuries of grounding mats and shoes in this modern world too, so there really is no excuse for having a bit of time in our day to ground and connect to the earth's energies and ourselves and disperse the electrons collected by all the modern world around us. Scientific study has proven that grounding ourselves daily is beneficial for health and well-being and can

reduce inflammation in our bodies. Actually the list goes on for the benefits of grounding.

Breathwork – breathing is the most natural thing in the world to do. We do it about 22,000 times a day without even thinking about it but hardly ever take the time to focus on it and really concentrate on deep breaths, expanding our lungs and diaphragm. Concentrating on our breath and putting in a short daily exercise of conscious breathwork can benefit our well-being in many different ways and can be done anywhere. Sitting at a desk whilst you're working, whilst you're waiting for the kettle to boil, even just before closing your eyes for sleep.

Our breath is regulated by the autonomic nervous system, a part of our bodies mechanism that is governed by two branches, being the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system which work together to create a state of balance. The sympathetic nervous system is responsible for that fight or flight response and the parasympathetic is responsible for our rest and digest response, helping us feel relaxed and calm. Both are essential for our well-being. Practising a bit of breathwork helps keep these nervous systems balanced.

A great form of breathwork to do anywhere, when you feel you have anxiety, feel not in control,





panicked, stressed, can't fall asleep or need a bit of help improving your mood or focus is a technique called Box Breathing. You may well have heard of it. A well known method and regularly used by front-line forces.

You can do this anywhere, you may not be in an environment where you can close your eyes and that doesn't matter, you may be in a crowd of people and feel overwhelmed but you can simply just do this practise without anyone noticing. Just inhale through your nose slowly and deeply for the count of four. Hold the breath for the same count of four. Exhale slowly through the mouth for the count of four and hold your breath again for the count of four. You can repeat the cycle for as long as you feel necessary.

Like grounding there are so many benefits from breathwork, so taking a few moments a day to do some definitely helps us reset and is good for our overall well-being.

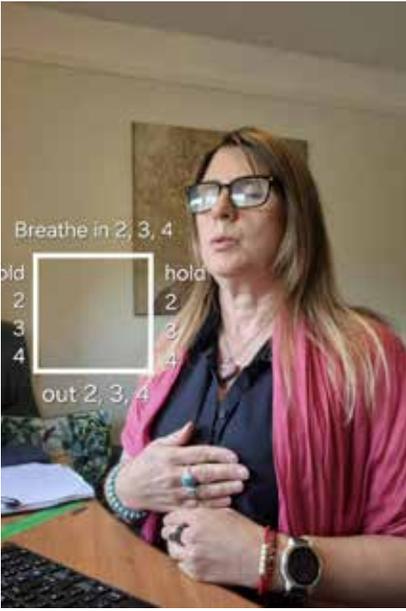
A last tip for daily well-being practise for me is always gratitude. **Gratitude** – starting the day by writing, journalling, saying aloud or just thinking of at least three things that you are grateful for in your life really helps to set the tone for your day. Putting our concentration to the positive things in life can help increase happiness, reduce anxiety, improve self-esteem and can even help lower your blood pressure.

It's not always easy to find at least three things to be grateful for in life and you know what, that's OK. We are only human after all! but if we

“where focus goes, energy flows”

can rewire our brain to look for those positive things, even if it's looking back to an event that happened in the past. Something that you can still feel the feelings you had from that time. Whether it be a feeling of love, a moment of laugh out loud fun, a moment you were proud of yourself or another person close to you. Just feel into that moment and be grateful that it happened, hold it in your heart and let it fill you up with gratitude and positivity. Change and shift the focus from any negativities in your life and start your day with the good feels, the good vibrations. Remember the saying, “where focus goes, energy flows”. Make that focus positive.

These are just a few little tips that can help our well-being when we don't have much time in our day, when we may be stuck at a desk, stuck indoors navigating family demands or just rushing about doing everyday chores. Fitting these 3 little practises into our day can really help us to stay balanced, lift our mood and raise our vibrations until you can fit a very well deserved treatment in with your chosen practitioner. Its not selfish to make a little time for yourself. A bit of self care and self love is important for our wellbeing and you most certainly deserve it.





HAYLOFT HEALING

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balance and clarity”

Slowing Down with the Season



Words and Images by Linda Mellor

It takes a lot of courage to refuse to keep pace with a world that is always in a hurry. Autumn teaches us this. The leaves surrender their green without fuss, the daylight folds in earlier each evening, and nature seems to give a collective sigh. Yet so many of us push against the season's call to slow down, carrying on at the same relentless speed we have been conditioned to keep. What if slowing down was not laziness? What if it was strength?

The Myth of Endless Energy

We grew up in a culture that prized productivity over presence, the longer the hours at work, the better.

Many of us were told to "keep busy" as if rest were suspicious, a luxury or a weakness. Early starts and late finishes were highly prized in the workplace. The truth is, our energy reserves are precious. Hormonal changes, shifts in muscle mass, and the natural effects of years lived mean we cannot, and could not, run ourselves into the ground.

Rest is not a retreat from life. It is an investment in living it well, a way of slowing down to enjoy, absorb and notice.

With Smartphones and connected gadgets part of everyday life, rest is more illusive than ever.

Why Rest is Revolutionary?

Rest is more than recovery. It is a switch off from the frenetic world. It is a culture that undervalues stillness. It is quiet, it is peace. We choose to protect ourselves and let ourselves be still. It is restoration. our energy for what matters most, whether that is conversation, reading, Sleep benefits are very well documented these days, sleep not only supports brain health, overall wellbeing and emotional health, it also helps to protect memory. Downtime reduces inflammation, eases joint pain, and strengthens the immune system. The older we get the more rest. Allowing time to switch off can lower stress hormones, helping to balance mood and reduce anxiety.



Seasonal Rest Lessons from Autumn

Autumn is nature's invitation to slow the pace and honour the cycle of letting go. We can follow its lead, here are some suggestions.

Adjust your rhythm – Take shorter walks in softer light. Allow the body to wake naturally when possible instead of to an alarm.

Layer your rest – Rest is not only sleep. Reading by the fire, listening to music, or sitting quietly with a cup of tea all replenish energy. Wrap up, get outside and rest in a favourite spot with a travel mug of coffee.

Say no without guilt – Protect quiet evenings and personal space without apology.

Nourish wisely – Choose warming, slow-cooked foods that support digestion and vitality.

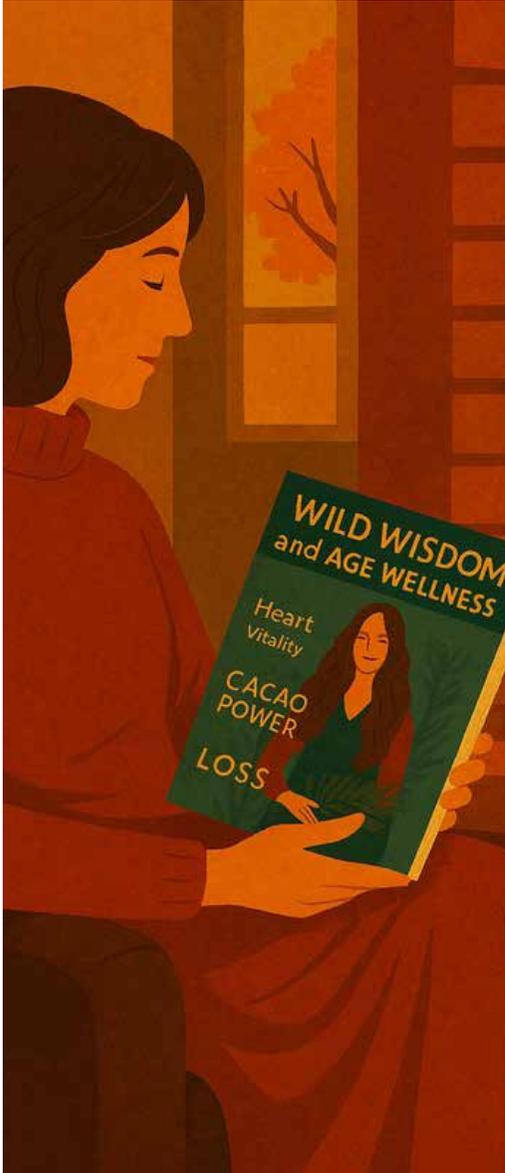
Ritualise your downtime – Light a candle at dusk to signal the end of the day. Turn off devices an hour before bed. Small, repeated cues teach the body to rest.

Breathe with awareness – A few slow, deep breaths during the day calm the nervous system and bring the body back into balance (see page 48 for Helen's tips on breathwork).

Embrace stillness – Give yourself moments without tasks or distractions; let the quiet itself become restorative.



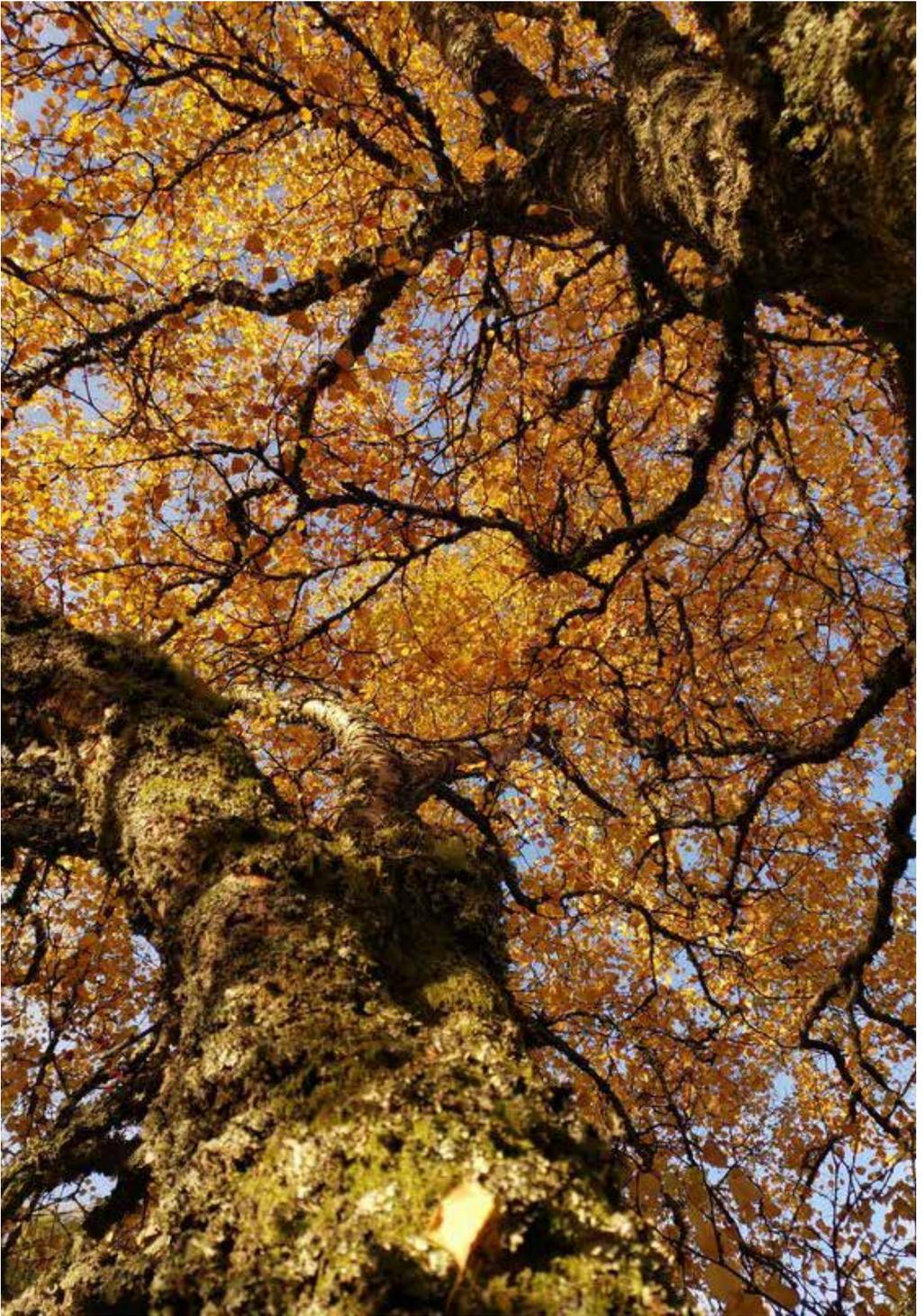
The Courage to Stop



It takes courage to slow down when the world speeds up. Rest is one of the most radical acts we can offer ourselves. It is a statement that our worth is not tied to constant motion. As the year tips into its darker months, we can lean into the slower rhythm without apology. We can recognise the wisdom of knowing when to step back, when to say enough, and when to simply be still.

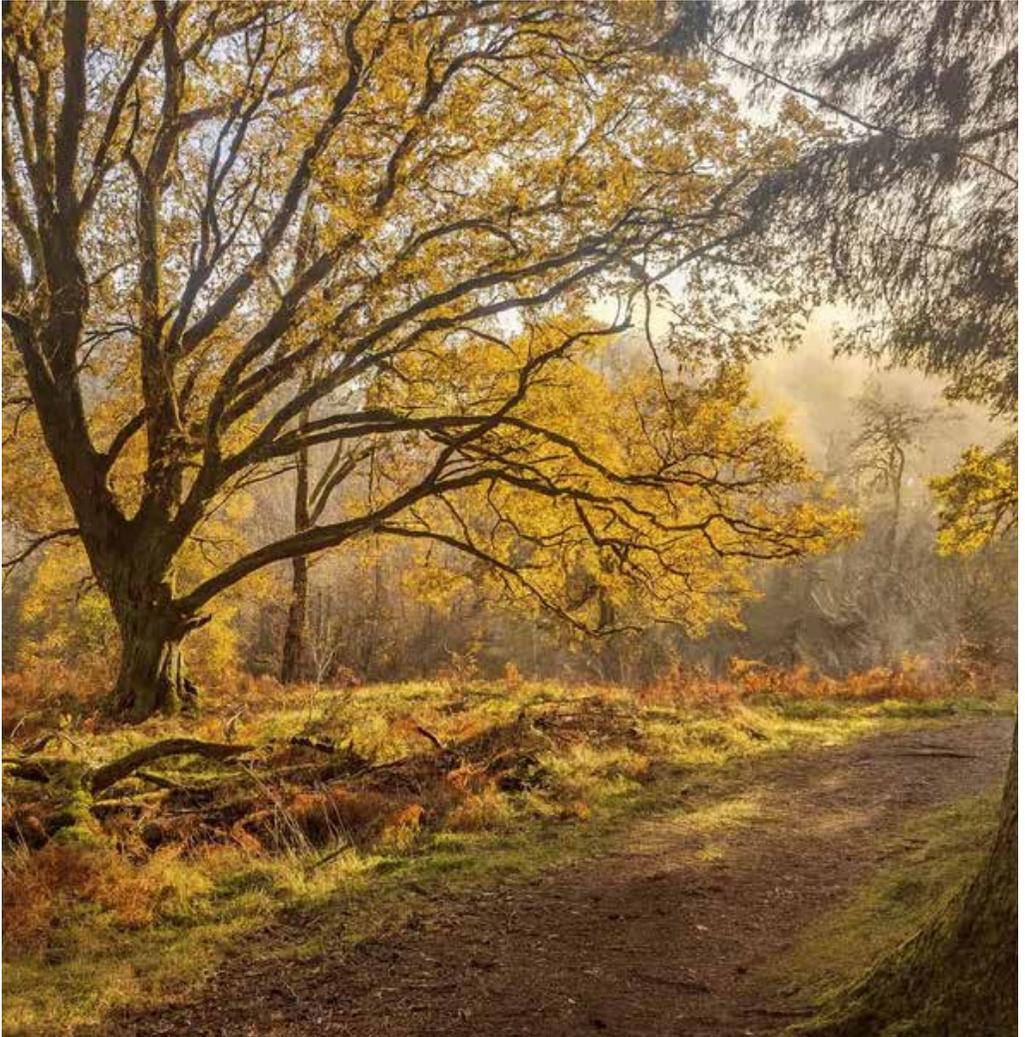
Rest is never a waste of time. It is how we gather the strength to continue in our own way, at our own pace, with the clarity that only comes from pausing.

In moments of true rest, the body repairs, the mind unknots, and the heart makes space for what really matters. Stillness allows us to listen more closely, to ourselves, to others, and to the subtle signals we often ignore in busier seasons. Choosing rest is not stepping away from life but stepping more deeply into it, with solid presence. When we dare to stop, even briefly, we return to the world replenished, steadier, and more wholly ourselves. I love this line attributed to Georgia O’Keeffe: “I have done nothing all summer but wait for myself to be myself again.” It captures so perfectly the sentiment of autumn, a season of return, of slowing down, of coming back to oneself. Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986), often called the ‘Mother of American Modernism,’ knew the power of stillness as much as she did bold colour and form.



**"Delicious autumn!
My very soul is wedded to it,
and if I were a bird I would fly
about the earth seeking the
successive autumns."**

George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans, 1819–1880)



N A O M I

A Scottish Heart in the South By Naomi Holcomb

Every year since I was a little girl, something stirs in me long before autumn arrives. Sometime in July - I can never quite pinpoint the moment but it's a knowing -when my soul starts tuning itself to the harmony of the coming season.

It's as if my heart knows before the calendar does that autumn is coming, and with it, a shift in how I feel and see the world. The light changes too. Sunsets linger , painting the skies, the wind turns crisp, and the air itself feels enchanted. Autumn isn't just a season; it's a sort of spell, an invitation. Sweaters, bonfires, dancing in the moonlight, the warmth of family, friends, and savoury meals and steeped in ancient traditions, Autumn gathers us in, to slow down and awakens the magic within.

For me, fall has also always carried the sound of whistles



Words and Photographs by Naomi Holcomb



and the glow of Friday night lights. Cherokee High School football runs through my family like a root system. My cousins, my three brothers, my three sons, and now my nephews have all played on that same field. It's like the earth there remembers and holds our memories. This October will be especially meaningful as our oldest brother Dustin (home after 30 years in the Air Force) along with his family, will stand once more in that old stadium before it closes and the new school opens. With Dustin and his family completing our circle, it feels like a true harvest of love and tradition and homecoming.

Family has always been the richest soil I know. Our children, parents, siblings, and extended family are some of our very best friends. They add layers of joy, laughter, history, and belonging that make every gathering treasured. I got to enjoy more family richness this summer on a trip to Arkansas with my oldest son, Hunter, to visit my aunts. We even stopped in Memphis to stay at Graceland -a little indulgence of my Elvis-loving heart -and made memories I'll carry forever.



Taking trips is always a sort of window to my soul and gateway for my soul to also grow. Perhaps one of the most magical chapters of my life unfolded two years ago, in the season leading to my 40th birthday. I returned to Scotland the

land of my birth, and by what felt like divine arrangement, the very house my family lived in, nestled in the Highland hills, suddenly became available to rent on Airbnb just before our trip. I had dreamt for so many years of returning to this house. I would daydream and imagine staying nearby and going to knock on the door to introduce myself and look around, and suddenly I had actually gotten in touch with the owner and booked to stay, and to spend my 40th birthday there.

Walking through that door, was like a reunion with an old friend. The place itself held so much enchantment. My mother was overcome with emotion, remembering her young motherhood within those rooms, while my father sat quietly on a bench outside, looking across the hills. I watched him take it all in, imagining the seasons that had passed in his life since then - once a young man of twenty-seven, newly married, with two little boys and another on the way.

To stand in that place, at forty, with my parents, my brothers, and now my own son beside me, was a moment of pure magic, a divine loop completed, a chapter returned to us. It's as if the land itself was holding our family story and handing it back to us whole.

In my heart, I've always been in

love with Scotland, and in many ways, I'm always finding new ways to fall in love with life itself. When I returned, I fell in love with Scotland all over again. Partly from remembering, and partly from seeing it with new eyes. Just like autumn, it was mystical in so many ways: in the little breezes that seemed to whisper, in chance conversations, new found friendships, in quiet landscapes that felt alive with memory. And as a woman who lives in a house full of deer hunters, one of the most stirring experiences of all was witnessing Scotland's own red stags.

To watch them being fed, to see those magnificent, almost mythic creatures run across the Highland hills, shaking the ground beneath their hooves, felt like something both heroic and holy. It was as if the land itself was breathing through them - fantastic beasts that connected my family's traditions at home with the wild beauty of my birthplace.

Those moments reminded me that Scotland still has surprises waiting for me, and that one of the great joys of life is returning again and again. Autumn carries that same invitation, to remember, to rekindle, to fall in love all over again. It is also a time of planting, of preparing, of sowing seeds for what's next. No wonder all the months that end in 'ber' feel like

something is brewing — September, October, November, December — each a vessel for transformation, gathering, and remembering. And so when we return from our anniversary trip this October, my husband and I will begin planning our next journey back to Scotland — back to the place that stirs my spirit and reminds me who I am.

Autumn also draws me to simple rituals: steaming coffee on the porch cuddled in a cozy chair on the porch, cinnamon brooms, simmer pots of cinnamon, orange peels and clove, and planting my favorite Fall flower chrysanthemums by the front door, and lighting candles wherever I can!

Evenings spent with my husband and boys, chatting, laughing, or curled up with a favorite movie, remind me that life is about balance, and that balance isn't about perfection, but presence. I can't forget to mention the tradition of Halloween. Here in the states it is one of the biggest and most fun holidays. It awakens the inner child in us all. Costumes, and spooky stories, movies etc reminding us that we are all in this unknown together.

This October, my husband and I will take our first real trip without the boys, an East Coast anniversary adventure. From New York City and Broadway, to Salem, Sleepy Hollow, and even Mystic just to eat pizza at Mystic Pizza (a restaurant from a childhood fall favorite movie), to Maine's rugged coast, we'll soak in lighthouses, fall foliage, and history. It feels fitting,



since we chose mid-October for our wedding day, a sacred time for us to enjoy the season we love most and to reflect on why we chose each other for this journey.

Of course, autumn in our home also means deer season. My husband Lee grew up hunting with his dad and has passed that tradition down to our boys, rooting them deeply in the land. I always joke we own enough camouflage to clothe an army. Only I'm not joking. This house is a boy house through and through, and I'm the lucky lady / queen of the castle and I bring the feminine energy to our home. Well, me and our cat, Luna. She showed up on our doorstep as a feral kitten one fall and never left. With her wild markings, we've long told tale she was a gift from Scotland's hills, and when we finally saw a photo of a Scottish wildcat, we knew it was true.

Autumn has always held the mysterious, and the magical. More and more, I see it not just as a season, but as a gift. One God wove into creation with care. And perhaps that is why returning to Scotland at forty felt like more than a homecoming; it felt like a reminder that we are always circling back to what matters most, and harvesting the seeds we've planting in life, love, hopes and dreams along the way. A favorite fall movie quote of mine is taped to my bathroom mirror so no one forgets it:

"Always throw spilled salt over your left shoulder, keep rosemary by your garden gate, plant lavender for luck, and fall in love whenever you can." -

Practical Magic-1998

For me, autumn has a way of romanticizing life-just like this, and I can't imagine a world without autumn.





“Always throw spilled salt over your left shoulder, keep rosemary by your garden gate, plant lavender for luck, and fall in love whenever you can.”

- Practical Magic, 1998

The Magic of Everyday Movements

Spells do not always need candles, crystals, or incense.

Sometimes they are as simple as the way you stir your tea.

In traditional folklore, stirring a drink clockwise is said to invite good fortune and positivity, while stirring counter-clockwise can banish negativity or worries.

Try this in the morning: as you stir your tea, coffee, or even your porridge, move the spoon clockwise and think of something you would like to invite into your day. It could be confidence before a meeting, patience with a situation, or simple calm. The act of stirring becomes a focus for your thoughts, and as you drink, you take that intention into yourself.

Cooking offers another perfect moment for everyday magic. As you stir a pot of soup or stew, let your thoughts turn to those who will share the meal. Imagine warmth, health, and happiness flowing from your hand into the food. A meal cooked with care and good wishes





nourishes the spirit as much as the body. When cooking or baking I always focus my attention on love and good health so that my shared food passes this on.

These small rituals may seem humble, but their power lies in repetition. Each time you perform them, you reinforce the idea that your actions matter, that your thoughts shape your reality. Over time, this builds not only good fortune but also confidence in your own ability to guide your life.

Autumn Symbols of Luck and Fortune

Every season brings its own set of magical symbols, and autumn is especially rich. Apples, pumpkins, fallen leaves, and warming spices all hold traditional meanings, and they can be used in spells that are simple yet profound.

Apple Star Blessing

Slice an apple across its middle and you will find a hidden star in its core. This star has long been seen as a symbol of luck and protection. Hold the apple in your hands and think of one blessing you wish to bring into your life. Eat one half, letting the star's energy become part of you. Bury the other half in the soil, planting your wish with it.

Pumpkin Prosperity Lantern

Pumpkins, with their round shapes

and golden interiors, are natural symbols of abundance. Carve a small pumpkin and place a tealight and a coin inside. As the light flickers, imagine it glowing with prosperity and warmth, filling your home with good fortune. When the pumpkin begins to fade, return it to the earth in gratitude.

Cinnamon Wish Ribbon

Cinnamon has always been prized as a spice of wealth and joy. Tie a stick of cinnamon to a ribbon, speaking a simple wish for luck as you knot it. Hang the charm by your door to welcome good fortune into your home with each step you take.

Leaf Letting-Go Ritual

Autumn trees teach us the art of letting go. Choose a fallen leaf, write on it something you are ready to release, and then cast it into the wind or place it under the soil. As the leaf returns to the earth, imagine your burden being carried away.

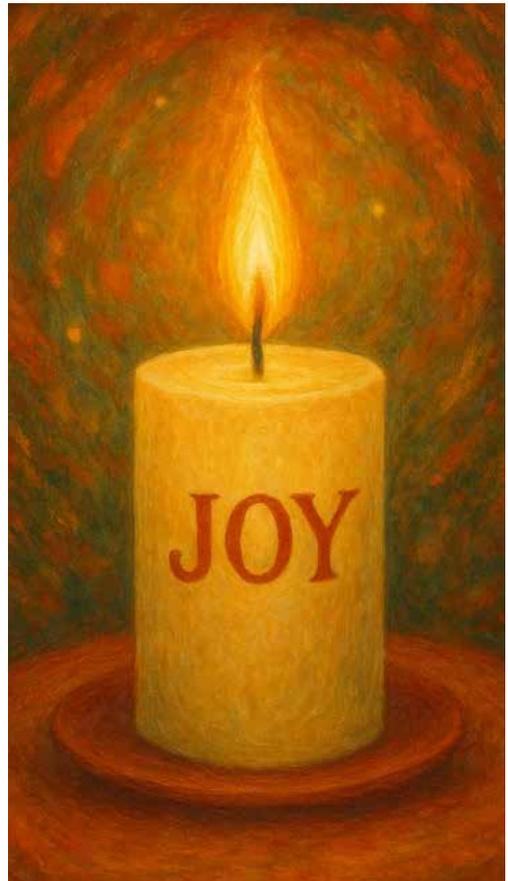
The Power of Candles and Firelight

As the evenings draw in (here in the UK), candlelight becomes a simple and beautiful way to weave magic into your routine. A single flame can represent hope, joy, and transformation.

The Candle of Joy ritual is easy to practise. Each evening, light a

candle and name one good thing from your day. It can be as small as a smile from a stranger or as large as a long-awaited success. Speak it aloud, then sit quietly for a moment in gratitude. Extinguish the candle, knowing that the joy remains alive in you.

This ritual works especially well in autumn, when the contrast between darkness and flame feels strongest. It is a reminder that even as the days shorten, light is always present.



Inviting Fortune into Daily Routines

The beauty of simple spells is that they blend into life without needing special preparation. Here are a few more easy ways to introduce good fortune into daily habits:



Morning Key Ritual: As you pick up your keys before leaving home, pause and whisper, “Open the way to luck and ease.” Imagine your path through the day opening smoothly.



Lucky Sip: Before drinking your morning tea or coffee, hold the cup close and breathe in the steam. Imagine it filling you with energy and good fortune.



Gratitude Pebble: Keep a small stone or coin in your pocket. Each time you touch it, think of one thing you are grateful for. Gratitude attracts more blessings.



Threshold Blessing: When you step into your home, pause for a heartbeat on the doorstep. Whisper a word like “Welcome” or “Peace,” inviting those energies to dwell in your space.



These are spells hidden in plain sight, woven into the fabric of everyday life. No one else may even notice, but you will feel the shift they bring.

The Intellectual Side of Simple Magic



For those new to seasonal spells, it can be reassuring to know that there is an intellectual underpinning to these practices.

Modern psychology tells us that rituals and intentional actions can reduce anxiety, increase focus, and enhance feelings of control. Anthropologists have observed similar small rituals in cultures around the world, from knocking on wood to crossing fingers.

What we call spells are often ways of setting intentions, focusing the mind, and reinforcing positive behaviour. Stirring your tea with good thoughts is not just superstition, but a mindful act that shapes your outlook. Lighting a candle and speaking gratitude is not only symbolic but also a proven way to increase happiness.

By presenting spells in this light, we see that they are not strange or mysterious, but rather human,

natural, and accessible to all. Autumn invites us to pause, to gather our harvests both physical and spiritual, and to prepare for the winter months ahead. By weaving small acts of magic into daily life, we stay connected to the rhythm of the seasons and to our own inner strength.

These spells are not about control or power, but about presence, gratitude, and the quiet joy of intention. By having little rituals you are present, it's the ultimate in mindfulness. Whether you are stirring your tea clockwise, lighting a candle of joy, or burying half an apple in the soil, you are aligning yourself with the season's flow of abundance and change.

And perhaps that is the greatest spell of all: the reminder that good fortune is not only found in charms and rituals, but also in the everyday moments we choose to live with awareness and care.

Autumn



AN ELEMENTAL REFLECTION

The Long Read by Linda Mellor

Every season carries its own atmosphere, its own texture of time. Spring rises with the lightness of air, carrying shoots upward through soil. Summer burns with fire's intensity, filling the days with light and heat. Winter belongs to water, a season of contraction and depth. Autumn, however, is the most tangible of all, and it belongs to the element of earth.

This is the season of weight, density, and presence. The air is scented with woodsmoke and rain. The ground is textured with fallen leaves and fruit rotting back into soil. Colours reach their richest saturation: reds, golds, browns, oranges, mossy greens. To walk through autumn is to walk into substance.

The element of earth is not only physical ground. In symbolic systems across the world, it stands for foundation, structure, and continuity. It is that which carries us, holds us, and grounds us in the most literal sense. Autumn, more than any other season, asks us to notice this grounding. It is not a season of speed or spectacle. It is a season

of rootedness, of presence, of what endures.

Archetypes of Earth in Astrology

Astrology has always given us metaphors through which to understand experience. It is not a set of predictions but a language of archetypes. When we speak of earth in astrology, we speak of three signs: Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. Each offers a different lens for what it means to inhabit the groundedness of the earth element.

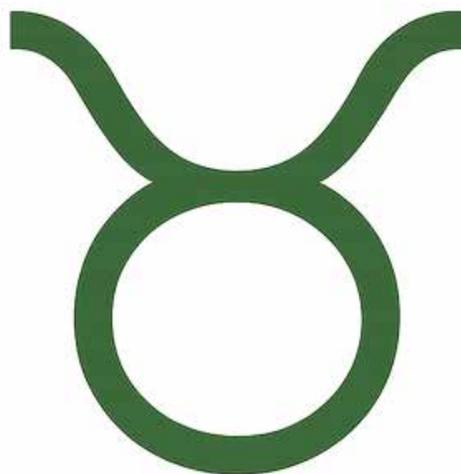
"Autumn, however, is the most tangible of all, and it belongs to the element of earth."

Taurus is fixed earth. It is steady, enduring, sensuous. The Taurean archetype reminds us that groundedness is not only about stability but also about pleasure. To take joy in the crispness of an autumn apple, in the warmth of wool against the skin, in the beauty of everyday rituals, is to recognise Taurus energy. It does not hurry. It values comfort and security, not as indulgence but as sustenance. There is something radical about this in a culture of constant acceleration. Taurus reminds us that stability and enjoyment of the body are not laziness but a philosophy of living.

Virgo is mutable earth. Its gift is attention, refinement, and discernment. Virgo brings care to what is often overlooked. In autumn, it manifests as the impulse to prepare, to order, to tend to the details that sustain. Virgo energy is not perfectionism but service: a recognition that the body and the home need rhythms and rituals that support wellbeing. The Virgo archetype is linked to the healer, the one who notices what others miss, who tends quietly but profoundly. Autumn's clarity of air and shift in rhythm mirror this impulse to purify, refine, and re-align.

Capricorn is cardinal earth. It is the mountain, the structure, the archetype of endurance. If Taurus finds joy in comfort and Virgo in refinement, Capricorn finds strength in legacy. It does not shy from ambition but transforms it into responsibility, asking: what will endure, what will I leave behind? In autumn, Capricorn is mirrored in the bare trees standing firm against approaching winter, in the sense that structure is what carries us when surface layers fall away. The Capricorn archetype often comes into its own later in life, when ambition becomes not striving but stewardship.

Together, these three signs create a trinity of earthy wisdom. Taurus roots us in pleasure, Virgo in care, Capricorn in endurance. Each offers a different way of being with autumn's element, and each reflects a facet of what it means to be grounded.



The Aesthetic of Earth

The arts have long used autumn as earth's canvas. The Pre-Raphaelite painters of the nineteenth century, often remembered for myth and romance, were also painters of earth. Their works are dense with natural detail: every leaf, flower, and fruit depicted with painstaking intensity. John Ruskin, the critic and champion of the movement, called this "truth to nature." For him, to paint with honesty was to render the smallest veins of a leaf, the exact texture of stone, the full reality of earthly detail.

John Everett Millais' *Autumn Leaves* (page 71 and opposite) captures this perfectly. Four girls gather fallen leaves at dusk, framed in a twilight heavy with atmosphere. Nothing dramatic happens in the painting, yet it is saturated with symbolism: the cycle of decay, the density of time, the transition from one state to another. It is autumn as earth, rendered in paint. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Proserpine* is another image steeped in earthiness. The myth of the woman bound to the underworld is told through a figure holding a pomegranate, the fruit of autumn, the symbol of cycles of fertility and descent. The painting is lush, sensual, heavy with shadow and fruit.

Even Evelyn De Morgan, one of the women associated with the Pre-Raphaelite circle, painted allegories that tied women to the cycles of matter. Her *Earthbound* depicts the weight of physical existence,

reminding us that spirit does not float above but moves through the material.

What makes the Pre-Raphaelites relevant here is not nostalgia but their devotion to density. They remind us that earthy does not mean plain or minimal. It means textured, layered, weighty with meaning. Their art offers an autumnal aesthetic: lush in colour, shadowed by impermanence, attentive to the smallest leaf.

Later echoes of the Pre-Raphaelite sensibility can be found in the work of the Brotherhood of Ruralists, a group of twentieth-century British painters who sought to bring myth, nature, and narrative back into contemporary art. Among them, Annie Ovenden stands out for her rich, nature-themed paintings. Her work carries forward the Pre-Raphaelite devotion to detail and allegory, yet with a modern sensitivity to landscape and the cycles of the natural world. Where Millais or Rossetti layered leaves, fruit, and symbolism into their canvases, Ovenden finds resonance in woodland, sky, and season. She reminds us that the earthy lushness of the nineteenth century did not vanish but evolved, re-rooted in the late twentieth century through a female vision attuned to nature.

Philosophies of Grounding

Women thinkers have written powerfully about earth and the elemental. The philosopher Simone Weil observed that gravity is the

most basic truth: what falls, what grounds, what holds. For Weil, attention to weight and necessity was not defeatist but profound: it was through acknowledging our rootedness that we become capable of grace.

Luce Irigaray, in her feminist philosophy, returned again and again to elemental metaphors: air, water, fire, and earth. For her, the feminine has long been aligned with nature not as a mark of weakness but as a resource of strength. To breathe with, to touch, to root: these were modes of relation that countered the abstractions of a masculine-dominated philosophy.

Donna Haraway, in our own time, has argued that to live well means to “stay with the trouble.” For her, the task is not to escape the earthly entanglements of climate, soil, and species, but to remain inside them, responsive and responsible. Her philosophy is earthy in the most literal sense: we are not apart from the ground, we are of it, bound to it.

These women remind us that the element of earth is not a backdrop but a condition. To be grounded is not to be stuck; it is to be real. To notice soil, weight, and rootedness is not a narrowing but an expansion of thought. Autumn, aligned with earth, embodies this truth.

**“It is
autumn
as earth,
rendered in
paint.”**



Earth in Poetry

Poets, too, have given voice to earth's season. Mary Oliver is perhaps the most beloved contemporary poet of earth and nature. She did not treat the natural world as symbol or scenery but as guide. In *Wild Geese*, she writes: "You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves." This is the voice of earth: permission to be embodied, to belong, to be creaturely.

Adrienne Rich, in *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, grounds her political and personal vision in the soil of actual places. Her poetry insists that land is not neutral but historical, ethical, alive. To speak of earth is also to speak of justice, memory, and care.

Alice Walker, in her essays and poems, returns often to gardens, to soil, to planting. In *Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, she reflects on women who found creativity in the earth itself when denied formal artistic spaces. For Walker, the earth is not only sustenance but heritage, a site of resilience and creativity.

Together, these poets offer an earthy poetics that complements autumn's richness. They remind us that to write of earth is not sentimentality but honesty: to attend to the ground beneath us, the cycles that carry us, the textures that root us in time.

Beyond Decline

In modern culture, autumn is too

often framed as decline. It follows summer, and so it is imagined as fading, as loss, as a descent into winter's cold. But this is a limited view. Through the lens of earth, autumn is not decline but density. Leaves do not fall in despair; they return to the soil. Trees are not stripped in defeat; they reveal their structures. The shortening of days does not mean life contracts into nothing; it deepens into rhythm. Autumn is not the end of growth but its transformation into substance.

To align with autumn is to resist a culture that measures life only in terms of speed and productivity. Autumn teaches us that density is as valuable as expansion, that standing firm is as meaningful as rushing forward. It shows us that life's richness is not measured only in bloom but also in depth.

Earth Without Prescription

There is a temptation, whenever writing about seasons or elements, to turn metaphor into prescription. To instruct readers on how they should live, or what lessons they should take. But autumn resists this kind of simplification. The season does not demand. It unfolds. Leaves turn, fruit ripens, soil dampens. These are not commands but facts. To live with autumn is not to follow rules but to notice, to participate, to attune. So too with the element of earth.

To be grounded is not a technique to be mastered but a reality to be

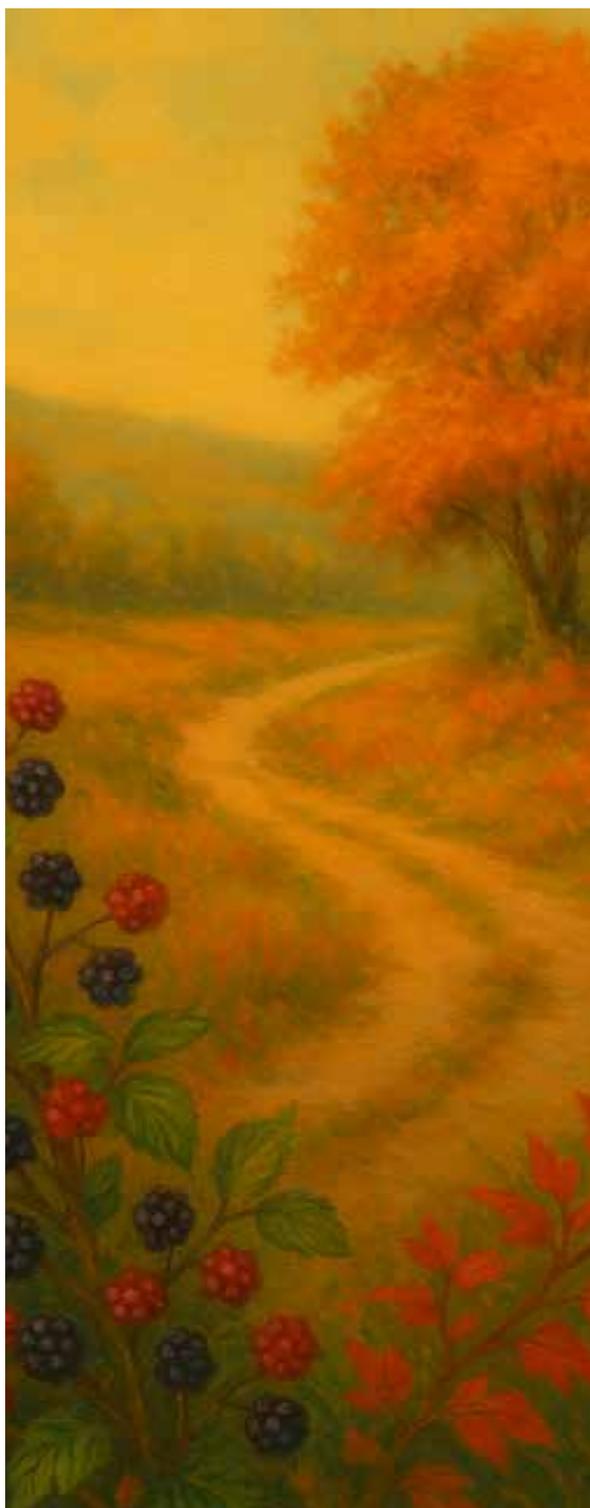
recognised. We are always already on the ground. We are always already bodies, rooted in soil and matter. To acknowledge this is not to learn a lesson but to return to what is already true.

The Season of Earth

Autumn as earth's season invites us into a different way of being. It draws us into Taurus' sensuous presence, Virgo's attentive care, Capricorn's enduring strength. It reminds us, through the Pre-Raphaelites and later women artists, that earthiness is not plainness but richness. It reminds us, through women philosophers, that rootedness is a mode of relation and a condition of thought. It reminds us, through women poets, that the ground is not a metaphor only but a lived inheritance.

This season does not simply mark decline. It marks presence. It shows us what it is to be dense, textured, grounded. It resists speed, it resists prescription, it resists triteness. Instead, it offers the quiet gift of solidity.

Autumn, in its earthy fullness, does not tell us how to live. It shows us what life already is: rooted, textured, and held by the ground beneath us.



Autumn Equinox

Balance, Grounding, and the Turning of the Year

A Threshold of Balance
Twice a year, the earth tilts so that day and night are held in equal length. These are the equinoxes: one in spring, one in autumn. The word itself comes from the Latin *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night). The Autumn Equinox in the Northern Hemisphere falls around 21–23 September, marking the pivot from light into darkness, summer into autumn.

It is a hinge in the year, a moment of equilibrium before the days tip toward shadow. Philosophically, the equinox offers a reminder that balance is not static but fleeting, a pause between opposites, a turning of one into the other. It is a season that teaches not perfection but poise.

Ancient Histories of the Equinox

The equinox was never only astronomical. Across the world, cultures aligned stones, temples, and rituals with this celestial balance. At Stonehenge in England and Newgrange in Ireland, the sun's rays at equinox cast precise patterns into stone corridors, suggesting that early peoples tracked the turnings of light with awe.

In Japan, the equinox is marked by the Buddhist festival of



Higan. Families visit graves, tend to ancestors, and reflect on impermanence and continuity. In Mexico, the Mayan pyramid of Chichen Itza becomes a living calendar: on the equinox, the shadow of a serpent god ripples down the steps, fusing architecture, myth, and sun.

These diverse traditions show a shared recognition: that equinox is not a casual date but a threshold moment. Human beings have always paused at this balance point, reading in it lessons about time, mortality, and the cycles of earth.

Women and Seasonal Wisdom

While monumental architecture tells one story, women's seasonal practices tell another. For centuries, the equinox was marked in households and villages not by stone but by gesture: preserving food, drying herbs, lighting hearths, weaving, preparing stores for the winter months.

Women were keepers of balance in daily life, turning cosmic rhythms into lived reality. Equinox was a time of sorting and ordering: what to keep, what to use, what to let go. In this sense, balance was not abstract philosophy but a tangible, domestic rhythm.

Contemporary feminist thinkers echo this. Luce Irigaray reminds us that to live fully is to root ourselves in the elements, to breathe with air, to touch the earth, to acknowledge embodiment. Donna Haraway speaks of "staying with the trouble,"

a call to remain grounded in the entanglements of soil, body, and species. Both point toward what the equinox makes visible: that balance is not escape but engagement, not detachment but relation.

The Equinox Table Food as Ritual

One of the most earthy ways to celebrate the equinox is through food. An equinox meal does not need to be elaborate but should be seasonal, grounding, and symbolic of balance.

Grains and bread: Traditional harvest offerings, representing the fruits of summer labour. Baking bread at equinox is a ritual of nourishment and gratitude.

Apples and pears: Fruits of September, carrying sweetness and crispness in equal measure.

Root vegetables: Carrots, beets, parsnips, and squash: grounding foods that anchor us as days shorten.

Dark greens: Kale, chard, cabbage: balancing the sweetness of fruits with earthy depth.

Wine or spiced cider: To mark abundance and the warmth carried into colder months.

To eat seasonally at the equinox is to align body with earth's cycle: light and dark held in the same meal, sweetness balanced by earthiness, freshness paired with preservation.

How to Celebrate the Equinox

Celebrating the equinox need not mean elaborate ritual, it's more mindful than anything else. It can be a simple, intentional pause, a way of aligning with balance. Some thoughtful practices include: Light two candles: one for light, one for dark. Sit with both, acknowledging that each has its place, each is necessary.

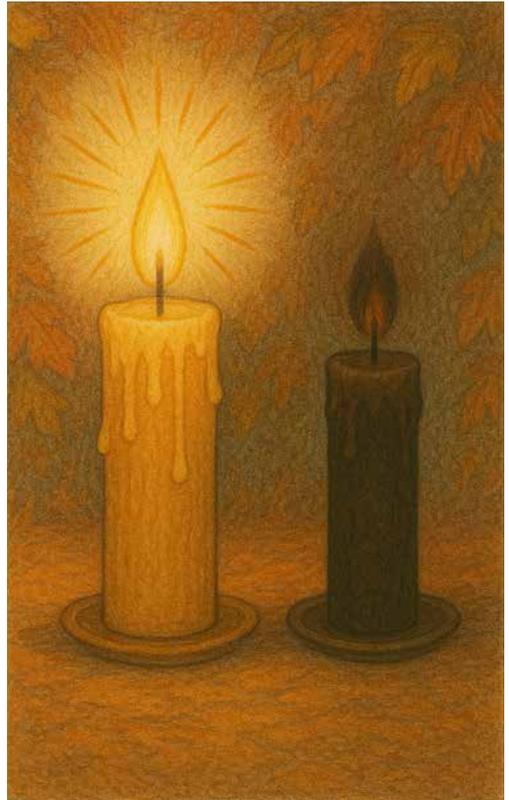
Name two intentions: one to release with the waning light, one to carry forward into the dark months. Write them, speak them on your own, or share them on in circle with trusted women.

Take a walk at dawn or dusk: the liminal hours when day and night meet. Notice the quality of the light, the temperature of the air, the turning of leaves. Take a camera to capture your observations.

Prepare a balanced meal: share food that pairs opposites, sweet and earthy, light and grounding, as a living metaphor for balance.

Gather: for centuries women gathered to cook, weave, or preserve together. Today, this can be as simple as inviting friends to share a meal, naming gratitudes, and marking the turn.

“The equinox is not about spectacle but about consciousness. It asks us to notice the shift, to acknowledge the balance, to mark the transition and the celebrate.”





A Seasonal Philosophy

The equinox is more than an event; it is a philosophy in miniature. It teaches that balance is not permanent but transitional. It insists that light and dark, gain and loss, growth and rest, are partners rather than enemies.

The poet Mary Oliver wrote often of this cyclical truth. In *Lines Written in the Days of Growing Darkness*, she observed: “Every year we have been witness to it: how the world descends into a rich mash, in order that it may grow again.” Her words remind us that descent is not the opposite of life but its condition.

Adrienne Rich and Alice Walker, too, remind us through poetry and prose that earth’s cycles are not mere scenery but inheritance. To notice soil, fruit, and decay is to notice ourselves.

The equinox, seen this way, is not about perfection. It is about poise, a momentary steadiness that teaches resilience. It is about relation, not control.

The Autumn Equinox is a pause in the year’s turning. It is a reminder that balance exists, but fleetingly, and that its value lies precisely in its impermanence. Across cultures, across centuries, women have marked it in gesture, food, and reflection, through hearth and harvest, through care and community.

Today, to celebrate equinox need not mean reviving old myths but creating conscious moments: a meal of balance, a candle for light and dark, a walk in the changing air. The equinox offers not instruction but invitation: to live with awareness of cycles, to honour both brightness and shadow, to claim groundedness as wisdom.

It is, finally, a season of earth. Not an abstraction, but the ground itself: holding us, carrying us, reminding us that we belong to the turning of the year.



The Equinox Reading Shelf



Eight books for the eighth turning of the year. Reflections to steady and inspire at the Autumn Equinox.

1. Anna Franklin – *The Wheel of the Year*
A grounded guide to the seasonal festivals, including the equinox. Practical yet poetic, it connects history, ritual, and earth-based wisdom.
2. Caitlín Matthews – *The Celtic Spirit*
Daily reflections on myth, nature, and spirit through the turning year. Matthews' voice is scholarly yet nurturing.
3. Glennie Kindred – *Sacred Earth Celebrations*
Gentle and creative practices for solstices and equinoxes, encouraging women to root themselves in land and season.
4. Rebecca Beattie – *Wheel of the Year*
Written by a modern Druid and Wiccan priestess, this book reimagines seasonal festivals for contemporary life.
5. Luce Irigaray – *Elemental Passions*
A philosophical meditation on women's relationship with the elements – earth, air, fire, water – in poetic language.
6. Donna Haraway – *Staying with the Trouble*
An intellectually demanding but rewarding call to live well in earthly entanglements, resisting escapism.
7. Mary Oliver – *Devotions (Selected Poems)*
Oliver's luminous poems on nature, cycles, and autumnal ripening embody the equinox in verse.
8. Alice Walker – *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*
Powerful essays exploring creativity, ancestry, and women's connection to earth and heritage.



Plum Jam Recipe

A seasonal favourite



2 lbs Victoria plums, or another plump variety, ripe and juicy – stoned and roughly chopped
2 lbs sugar
200 ml water
1 lemon, juiced
2 teaspoons of ground cinnamon
Knob of butter

Step 1

Sterilise the jars and any other equipment before you start (see tip below). Put a couple of saucers in the

freezer, as you'll need these for testing whether the jam is ready later (or use a sugar thermometer). Put the plums in a preserving pan and add 200ml water. Bring to a simmer, and cook for about 10 mins until the plums are tender but not falling apart. Add the sugar, ground cinnamon and lemon juice, then let the sugar dissolve slowly, without boiling. This will take about 10 mins.

Step 2

Increase the heat and bring the jam to a full rolling boil. After about 5 mins, spoon a little jam onto a cold saucer. Wait a few seconds, then push the jam with your fingertip. If it wrinkles, the jam is ready. If not, cook for a few mins more and test again, with another cold saucer. If you have a sugar thermometer, it will read 105C when ready.

Step 3

Take the jam off the heat and add a knob of butter (will disperse any scum). Let the jam cool for 15 mins. This will prevent the lumps of fruit sinking to the bottom of your jars. Ladle into hot jars, seal and leave to cool.

Sterilising Jars and Equipment

Wash jars and lids in hot, soapy water, rinse, then place on a baking tray and put in a low oven for 10 mins or until completely dry. If you want to use rubber seals, remove the seals and cover in just-boiled water. Make sure you sterilise any funnels, ladles or spoons you're going to be using too.

Making More

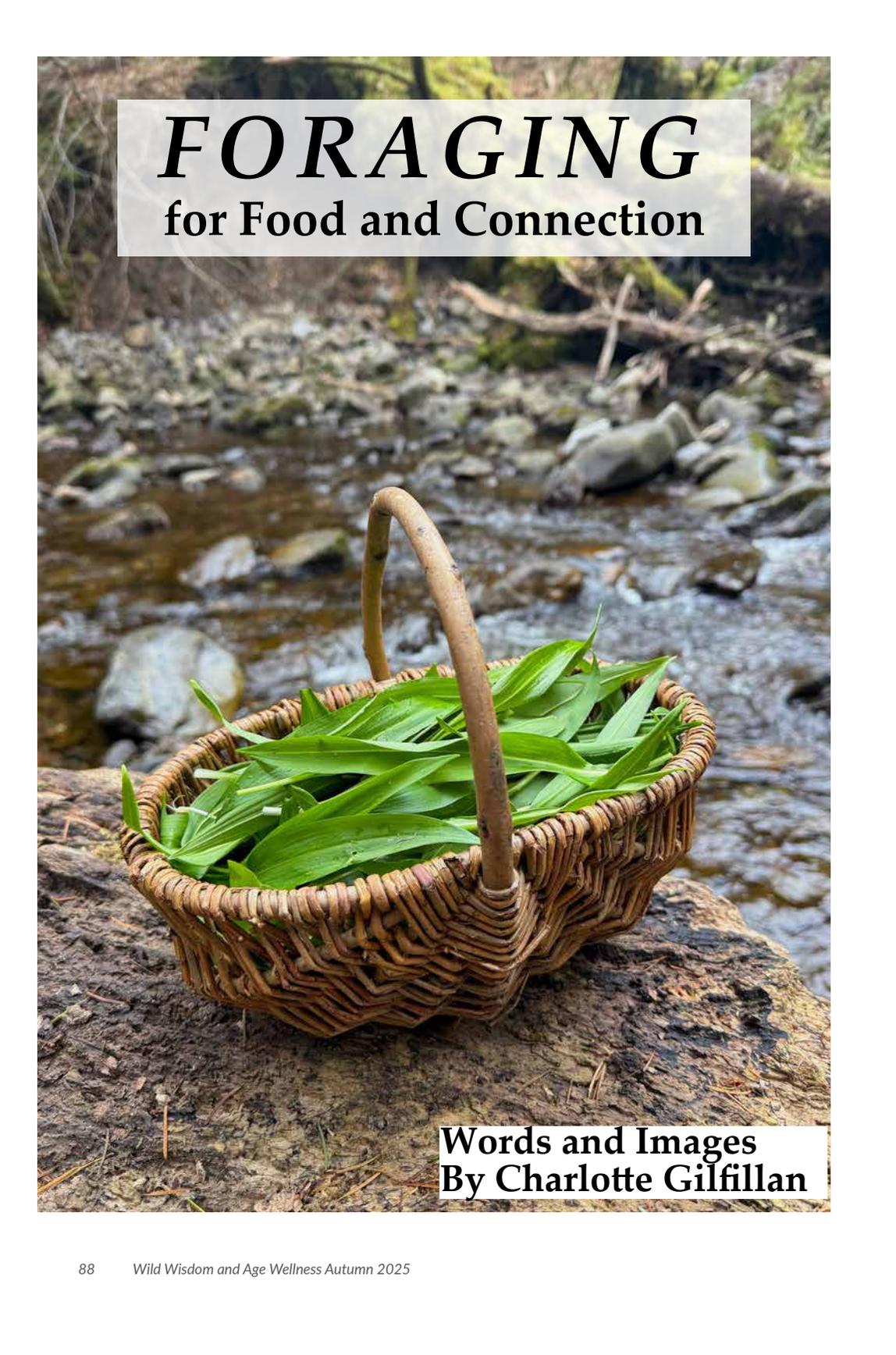
It's easier to make two batches rather than doubling up the quantities. It will take too long, and you would need a huge pan, to bring more than 2kg fruit to the right temperature, and the jam won't taste as good. Keep it to smaller batches.

Jam can be stored in a cool, dark cupboard for up to a year, store in fridge once opened

Suggestion

Homemade plum jam with fresh scones!



A photograph of a wicker basket filled with green leafy plants, likely ramps, sitting on a rock by a stream. The basket is made of woven wicker and has a wooden handle. The background shows a rocky stream with water flowing over the stones, surrounded by moss and forest vegetation.

FORAGING

for Food and Connection

**Words and Images
By Charlotte Gilfillan**



It is early spring, and the air is still cold enough to catch my breath, misting it in front of my face.

The leaves underfoot stir with a quiet, comforting rustle as I make my way through the forest, a reminder that winter still lingers. My path leads me a little off the beaten track to a small clearing beside the burn, where the sun reaches first, warming the earth sooner than elsewhere.

There, I am hoping to find the first wild garlic of the season. I smell it before I see it. The unmistakable earthy, heady scent immediately awakens my senses, and I am greeted by a carpet of fresh green leaves. I move carefully through the patch, selecting one or two leaves from each plant and taking only what I need. There is such abundance that it doesn't take long to fill my small basket.

Once I am finished, I lift one of the leaves, gently crushing it between my fingers and inhaling its aroma. It conjures images of homemade pesto on pasta, flavoured butter on sourdough bread, and warming bowls of bright green soup, all the things I plan to make once I am home. Foraging is something I am still relatively new to. A few years ago, I passed through the world the way many people do, in a hurry and



preoccupied by whatever demanded my attention at the time. Even when I was outside, I missed so much, too focused on hitting my step count target and capturing everything on my phone to share later. I had become a true reflection of our society, disconnected from nature and blind to how it can nurture and sustain us.

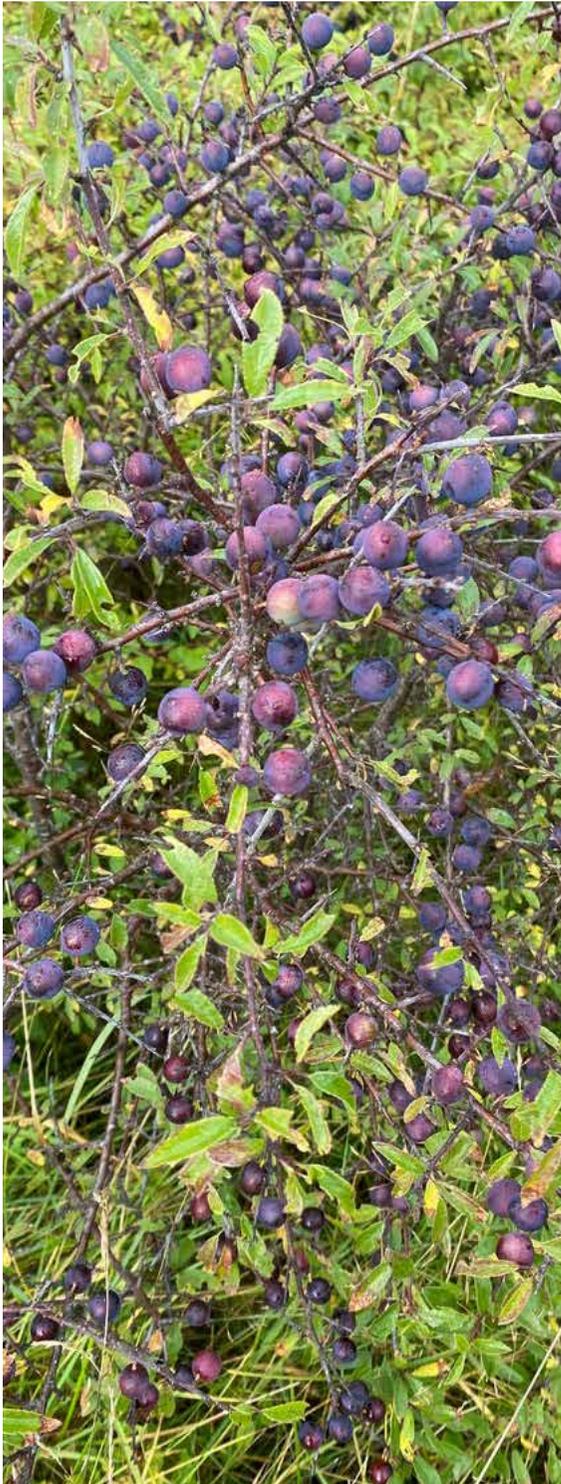
As a society, we have lost the ability and knowledge to identify the wild plants that can feed us, instead relying largely on what can predictably be purchased from a supermarket. Previous generations could tell you which greens to gather in spring, where the best berries grew, and which mushrooms were safe, but that knowledge and understanding, formed over thousands of years, has frayed to almost nothing.

Increasingly conscious of my own disconnect from the food I was eating, I began to explore what the landscape offers, responding in a small way to the gap our modern lives have created.

Over the course of the year, I now find something to forage in every season: hazel catkins glowing in the low February light like tiny lanterns, the coconut sweetness of gorse flowers in April, blaeberries ripening in June with their purple juices staining my fingers, chanterelles under birch in August after a shower

“I had become a true reflection of our society, disconnected from nature and blind to how it can nurture and sustain us.”





of late summer rain, sloes from the blackthorn ready to pick after the first frosts in October, and the warm, nutty sweetness of chestnuts in December.

I am captivated. The food I forage is richer, wilder, and more complex. It is filled with flavour and life beyond what we are used to buying. But there is more to it than taste and nutrition. It gives me back my connection to nature and I feel part of the landscape instead of just passing through it. I become more attuned to the subtle seasonal shifts, slowing down to really take in my surroundings.

From noticing the smallest fungi clinging delicately to a log to the smells of different edible plants

emanating around me, the world feels more in focus. In those moments, my physical response is tangible. My shoulders drop, I relax, and I find that I can breathe.

When I eat what I've foraged, I get to relive the experience that led to it. I remember the people and wildlife I encounter, the sun on my face or the rain dripping down the back of my neck, the feeling of earth under my fingers or the gentle sting of nettles.

Every meal becomes a story of connection. There is also a quiet satisfaction in knowing I can feed myself, even in small ways. It is not about survivalism or self-sufficiency,

but rather the ability to head out with an empty basket and return home with something the earth has freely offered. It is a grounding experience that serves as a reminder that food is not a commodity first, but a relationship.

Sometimes, when I'm crouched in the undergrowth looking for an earthly delight, I think about the people who foraged here before me, gathering food to feed themselves and their communities, and passing knowledge from one generation to the next. I find comfort in this connection to the past, especially as so much around us changes so quickly.

We might never fully regain the plant knowledge we've lost, but we can begin again, learning from the land and what it offers.

We can walk more slowly, pay more attention, and taste what's available. In doing so, we can foster our connection with ourselves and nature, until we are no longer strangers.

Top: Collecting hazel catkins and gorse flowers, roasted catkins and gorse syrup.

Opposite Page, Top: Wood Sorrel. Below, a basketful of chanterelles.









Autumn Walk

A mindful walk with sensory prompts



Autumn Wild Writing Prompts for a Walk

Head outdoors on a fine autumn day. Sunrise, morning, noon, dusk, or early evening, the choice is yours. Carry a small notebook, pen, pencil, or paints. If you wish, take a camera, but you must leave your smartphone at home, to capture the highlights of your trip.

Listen to the Leaves

Pause beneath a tree and close your eyes. What do the falling leaves sound like? Does the autumn air carry them far from their tree? Did you catch any? Write a few lines as if the leaves are speaking to you.

The Colour You Carry

Choose one autumn colour you see on your walk (gold, crimson, russet, bronze). Describe it without using its name. Then, write about a memory or feeling that colour stirs in you.

A Fallen Gift

Pick up something from the ground: a leaf, acorn, pinecone, feather or a piece of bark. Hold it in your hand and write as if it were leaving you a message or blessing.

Threshold of Change

Autumn is a season of endings and beginnings. While walking, stop at a gate, stile, or path crossing. Write about what you are leaving behind and what you are stepping toward.

Breath and Mist

If you can see your breath in the chill air, imagine your thoughts are carried with it. Write down what you'd like the season to take from you, and what you'd like it to bring back.

A Story in the Bark

Find an old tree and look closely at its bark, moss, or knots. Write a short piece imagining what stories that tree has witnessed.

Walking with Ancestors

As you crunch through leaves, imagine who walked this land long before you. Write a short dialogue between yourself and one of those figures.

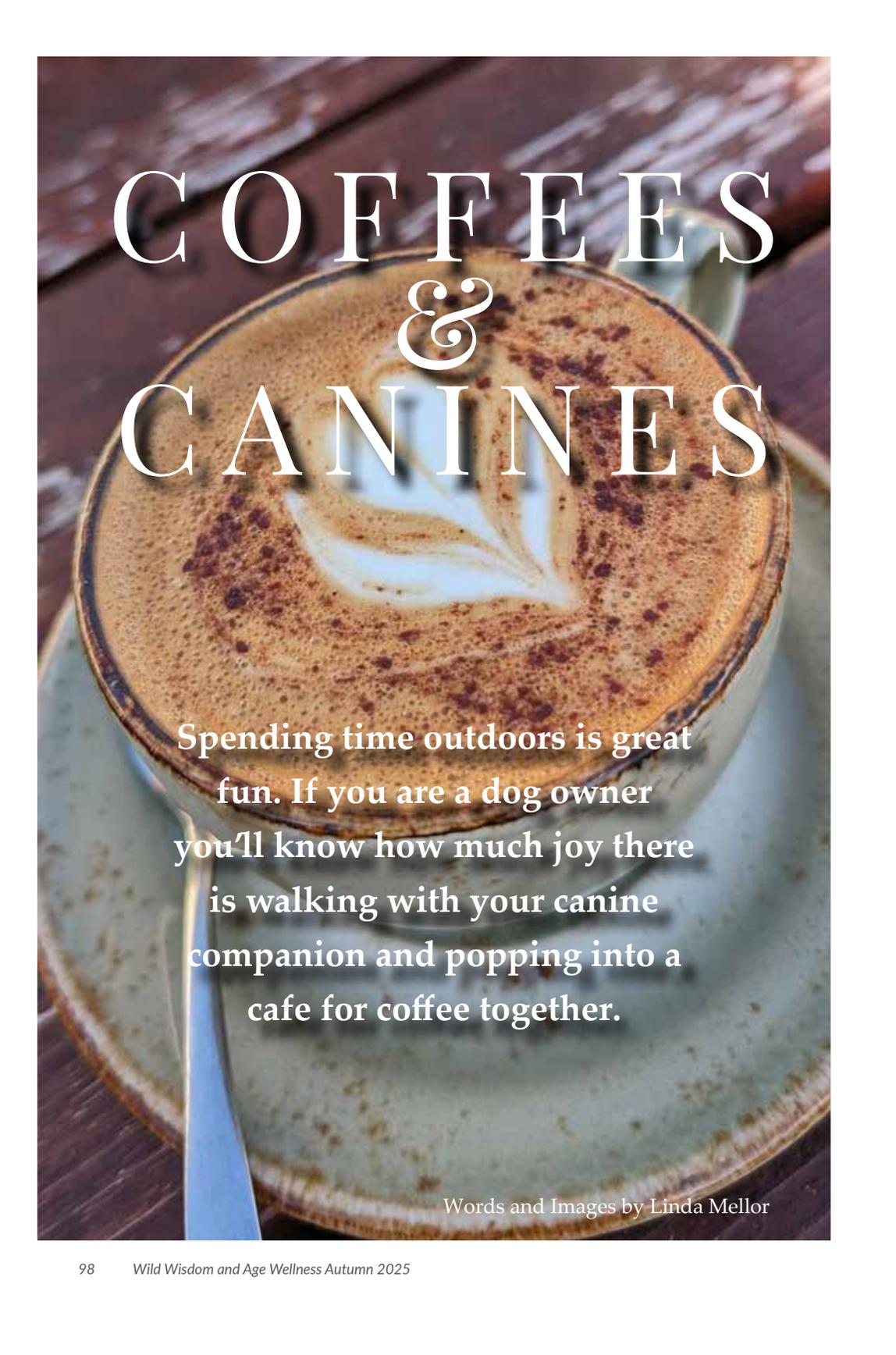
The Last Flower

If you see a late-blooming flower or bright berry, write a piece of gratitude from the perspective of that plant, still offering beauty in the waning season.



Afterwards embrace a deep sense of gratitude in being outdoors in Autumn.





COFFEES & CANINES

Spending time outdoors is great fun. If you are a dog owner you'll know how much joy there is walking with your canine companion and popping into a cafe for coffee together.

Words and Images by Linda Mellor

Coffees and Canines

Your seasonal guide to dog-friendly places



Karelia House Yarn and Fabric,
Comrie Bridge, By, Aberfeldy
PH15 2LS



Karelia House is a craft showroom and coffee shop. It has a big car park, surrounded by the countryside. Lovely staff, tasty homemade food, including delicious soup and sandwiches are always on the menu. Water bowls and biscuits for pooches.



The Cornerstone, Allt Mor Pl,
Kinloch Rannoch, Pitlochry
PH16 5PQ



The Cornerstone in Kinloch Rannoch has recently opened with much applause. It's a big hit with tourists and locals with a bar and a food menu (check online for hours and table bookings). This dog-friendly venue has bowls of water and biscuits, and there's plenty space to get comfy, indoors and out. Surrounded by scenery and walks, it's a 'Must Do' for dog lovers.





Aberfeldy Bookshop & Cafe
Mill St, Aberfeldy PH15 2BG



An interesting space for humans and dogs alike. A dog-friendly cafe, with indoor and outdoor spaces. A well-stocked bookshop upstairs with some stationery, cards and gifts. In the cafe, glass tables were confusing for a young Spaniel!



The Boat Inn, Charlestown Rd,
Aboyne AB34 5EL



The Boat Inn in Aboyne, Royal Deeside is dog friendly, if you are spending the night in one of their 16 rooms, dogs receive their very own pack: towel, treats and poo bags. There's also a lovely riverside walk only yards from the door. Less than 10 minutes drive, there's the Tomnaverie stone circle and it's definitely worth a visit.





Highland farm
Café, Mountgerald,
Dingwall IV15 9TT

Charlotte Gilfillan (see page 88) Recommends: "They have a big outside space with lots of seating and a dedicated inside space for dog friendly dining too. Very welcoming (all the staff love the dogs), water bowls available, etc."



Send us your pictures! If you are out and about with your dog and have a favourite coffee shop, restaurant, hotel or pub you'd like to share please get in touch. We'll need a short description of the venue, address and a few photos with your pooch on location.

Send to: Linda@agewisdomwellness.co.uk



Coming up in the Winter Edition



Winter Solstice celebrations - join us for candles, feasts and firelight as we'll explore rest, ritual, and the light within the dark.

The return of the light

Wintry Wanders

Art through the darker months

Rituals for Winter

Seasonal Reflections

The Colour Code - what's yours?

Women and their Wisdom

On sale mid-December. You can purchase the magazine in paperback and digital formats from Amazon, "Wild Wisdom and Age Wellness" or from our website at www.agewisdomwellness.co.uk or scan the barcode

