



Holidays: Summer Solstice is June 21



The sunsets over the ocean. DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI/STAFF

By DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI

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The summer solstice occurred at 6:07 a.m. on Thursday, June 21. It also sometimes falls on June 20 or 22. The sabbat is known by many names such as the summer solstice, Midsummer, in Druidry its Alban Hefin—light of the summer, and is known as Litha to many Pagans. Here are some facts about the sabbat.

1. The summer solstice is when the North Pole is closest to the sun. It's directly over the Tropic of Cancer.

It's the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere (shortest in the south), with the sun at its highest and at its max. And it's the first day of summer.

2. Solar God is crowned by the Goddess as the King of Summer.

Druids usually acknowledge the sabbat with a bonfire and celebrations the night before. All Celtic Druid holidays begin at dusk the day before.

3. Alban Hefin also means light of the shore.

Druids have a great adoration for places that are in between. The seashore is one of those places where the earth, sea and sky join.

4. St John's Wort is known as the herb of the sun.

It's bright yellow and in the shape of a star symbolizing the sun. St. John's Day follows closely to the solstice on June 24.

5. When the full moon falls on the solstice its called the honey moon.

The last time this occurred was June 20, 2016. The time before that was 1948; a span of 68 years for the rare occasion. It's called a honey moon because the moon seems very low and radiates an amber color.

6. Solstice is the Latin word for sol, which means sun and sister — to stand still.

The sun gives the illusion that it's standing still.

7. It also was a time of some sadness for Druids.

From now until the winter solstice, Alban Arthan the sun's strength begins to decline. Its the waning part of the wheel of the year.



The sun rises over the ocean. DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI/STAFF

Want to celebrate the Solstice?

On June 22, the Sanctuary Community Garden will hold a ribbon cutting ceremony at First Congregational Church, 40 S. Fullerton Ave., from 6 to 7 p.m. Then join for Summer Solstice ArtBar Fundraiser. Proceeds from the tickets for ArtBar will go toward breaking ground for yet another Community Garden. The produce of this garden will be donated to local soup kitchens and food programs. The garden was funded by Partners for Health Foundation and the Northeast Earth Coalition. Email revkarmacloud@sowisdom.com for tickets priced at \$40.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair, 67 Church St., is holding a Summer solstice celebration Friday, June 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Rotunda at UUCM. For more information, call 973-744-6276.



The sun rises over the ocean in Virginia Beach, Virginia. DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI/STAFF



Alban Hefin: The light of the summer



Partners Joe Longo and Craig Sloan of Blu Lotus, arrange the fairy statues under their tree for the Summer Solstice— June 21. The blue lit tree is the altar for their shop on Church Street. DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI/STAFF

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The longest day of the year — and no, it's not a Monday or Black Friday — falls on Wednesday, June 21.

Summer begins that day at exactly 12:24 a.m. EDT.

The first day of summer for the Northern Hemisphere is known by many names: the summer solstice, Midsummer, Alban Hefin (or “light of the summer”) to the Druids, or Litha to most pagans. It is one of eight sabbats, which mark the turning of the Wheel of the Year. They are seasonal festivals celebrating the cycles of nature.

Montclair resident Craig Sloan, co-owner of Blu Lotus on Church Street, said that wherever he and his partner, Joe Longo, may be on the summer solstice, they make sure to watch the sun set.

Sloan is an eclectic pagan, or as he puts it, “an explorer.” “The roots are all feeding to the same tree,” he said. Longo considers himself spiritual.

Midsummer is one of the two solstices. Directly opposite on the Wheel of the Year is the winter solstice, also known as Yule or Alban Arthan which usually falls on Dec. 21. The Celts and many other cultures celebrate the summer solstice with bonfires.

The word “solstice” means sun stopping: the sun appears to stop and then reverse direction as the days grow shorter or longer, depending on time of year. “When we use to have a large property we held a bonfire on the solstice,” said Sloan.

For those who observe the solstice, traditional colors to mark the holiday are blue, green and yellow. Some items presented on the pagan altar would be strawberries, oranges and tangerines, and flowers such as the sunflower, as well as anything associated with the sun or fire. Altars are usually in homes or created by a group. “I always light a white candle for clarity [on the Summer Solstice],” said Sloan. “I’m a nature lover and pick flowers to place on our altar in the bay window at home for the solstice.” “There are candles, sand and shells in there right now,” added Longo.

It is the most powerful day of the year for Bel, the Celtic God of the sun, who is associated with light, health and healing.

The day is the highest point of energy: “Energy is everything. Whatever the reason is, if we are not feeling it, we won’t force just because a calendar says when it has to be done. We wait until the time feels right,” he said. “Our ancestors went by the seasons changing, not a calendar.”

“In essence we live our lives seasonally,” said Sloan.

Sloan and Longo say they enjoy being outside, at Verona Park or the beach, for the solstice. “We honor the seasonal festivals,” said Longo.

Blu Lotus has a tall ornamental tree that Sloan decorates for each season with lights. It serves as the store’s altar. Currently the tree is lit in blue lights and surrounded by figurines of fairies. Sloan noted that his shop has a lot of fairy statues for Litha. “We have a fairy promotion especially for the solstice. There is a belief that the line between the world of fairy and ours is the thinnest at this time,” he said.

Herbalist Kim Sisco of Montclair, an employee at Blu Lotus, will be in upstate New York for the solstice. “Fifty-five acres of positive land to celebrate with other herbalists during the Green Wisdom Weekend,” she said. “We will gather plants and herbs, make herbal medicine and build a bonfire at the end of the day. We will share and do a releasement to the universe; write it on a piece of birch or paper and toss that to the fire. We sit still and converse with Mother Earth and within ourselves.”

Like Sisco, Longo does a lot of reflecting during this sabbat. “We write down our good and bad, compare them and place under a shell or a crystal and leave it until the next new moon. Then we ... burn the bad ones,” he said.

For Longo it’s about “respecting the earth and taking care of what we have.”

Blu Lotus, 20 Church St., will hold a Healing Circle open to the public on Wednesday, June 21, from 8 to 9 p.m. Judie Hurtado, intuitive, Reiki master and spiritual teacher, will lead the circle, which will involve a “Welcoming the Light” meditation.