

The Yew Tree

Taxus baccata Linnaeus

Celtic name: Idho

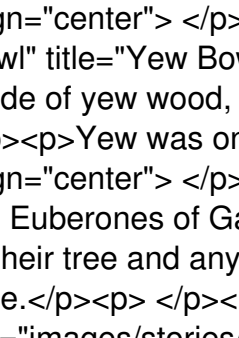
Symbol of death and rebirth. A graveyard tree.

MEDICINAL: Anti-Cancer, stops cell mutation. A new drug Taxol is extracted from the leaves of cultivated species. The tree is toxic and any use must be under medical supervision.

LONGEVITY: The oldest tree in Europe is said to be the Fortingall Yew of Fortingall, Scotland, near Loch Tay. It is 3,000 years old and presently lives surrounded by a cast iron fence in a churchyard. It is 56 1/2 feet in circumference, the heartwood is missing.

They are considered sacred trees and were protected in the past. In graveyards there are still some very old examples of yew trees living today.

Our modern population of yews especially in Ireland is verging on extinction.

 **HISTORY:** The oldest known wooden implement is a spear made of yew wood, about 50,000 years old, from Clacton-on-Sea, England.

Yew was one of the "nine sacred woods" used in the ritual fires of the Celts.

Many Celtic tribes had a 'totem' tree which was associated with them, the Euberones of Gaul had the yew as their sacred tree. The strength of the tribe was bound to their tree and anyone harming the tree was committing a warlike act against the tribe.

