

PRACTICAL EXERCISES • NUTRITION • MINDFULNESS • LIFESTYLE & WELLNESS

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HEARTFUL YOGA BLISS

BEING PRESENT
for Your
LOVER

BIRDS &
chakras

DISCOVER YOUR

dharma

AYURVEDA
AND
Yoga

BLOSSOMING
SPRING SEQUENCE

HARMONIC HEALING



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Celebrating THE AWAKENING OF SPRING

THE GODDESS WHEEL – IMBOLC

Words: Dawn Wesselby, British Wheel of Yoga Tutor, Teacher Trainer and Shamanic Healer



BLOSSOM INTO SPRING: SEED TO FLOWER SEQUENCE (VIDEO LINK (763) BLOSSOM INTO SPRING - YOUTUBE)

As Imbolc is about the increasing heat in the sun and emerging back into the light, sequences involving forward bends and back bends mirror the dynamic ebb and flow of energy, akin to the gradual emergence of Spring life.

1. Balasana (child's pose)

Starting sequences in child pose can be a useful way of experiencing the expansion and stillness of movement of the season's energy.

If you are open to visualisation, it is nice to imagine yourself as a seed in the ground, warmed by the sun.

2. Padma (lotus) mudra in kneeling

Lotus *mudra* is a wonderful way to experience the emerging energies of spring. As you raise up to kneeling from child's pose, bring palms together at your heart with hands cupped in closed lotus *mudra*. Imagine the potential being held in the space between the hands and meditate on this.

Inhale and come to high-kneeling. Take a gentle backbend with the hands in closed lotus *mudra* turning fingertips to the sky if comfortable.

You can imagine yourself like a seed rising up through the soil, pushing up towards the light. As you open your heart in a gentle backbend, feel the warmth of the sun at your heart.

3. Uttanasana (forward bend)

Bring your hands down to the ground either side of your feet, or slightly in front, and turn your toes under. From here you can push up through the legs, keeping hands on the ground, into *uttanasana*. Keep your knees softly bent if you have lower back issues, hypermobility or hamstring tension.

Think of the seedling forcing its way through the surface. As you push through the soil, notice any resistance, is the path easy for you or do you find yourself weaving around rocks and blockages?

Imbolc is a Celtic festival that marks the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, typically celebrated on 1 February. It is associated with the emergence of new life when the first blooms of Spring begin to appear.

Yoga brings us closer to nature and aligning our practice with the dynamic rhythms of the seasons can add a more meaningful dimension to our journey. Yogis may choose to celebrate Imbolc as a symbolic representation of personal growth, renewal, and the potential for positive change.

Spring resolutions are much more likely to be successful than those made at New Year as Spring holds a unique energy. As days grow longer and the weather warms, synching with this natural surge of energy creates a more supportive environment for change.

We sometimes resist change, not feeling quite ready for it or at ease with it, or we take on too much and feel our energies are scattered. The call is to stay rooted like the wood and trees and to draw energy from our roots.

Here are some ideas of how you can connect your yoga practice to the energy of February and the season of Spring.





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4. Utkatasana (deep squat in chair pose)

Bend your knees back down into a deep squat and bring your hands back to closed lotus *mudra*. Go as far as is comfortable for you. You can squat with your heels on some blocks if this feels easier.

5. Tadasana (mountain pose)

Press through the feet to come to stand. Set roots through your feet and raise your arms overhead, opening your lotus *mudra* by spreading the index, middle and ring fingers wide and keeping the thumbs and little fingers touching. Take a slight back bend looking up to your hands if it is comfortable to do so.

Visualise yourself moving out from the soil into the air and notice if the air is warmer or cooler than the earth. Feel the warming spring sunshine on your hands as you raise them overhead.

6. Uttanasana (forward bend)

Bring your hands and the spring energy back down to the heart. Imagine taking that energy down to the earth and your roots as you move back into *uttanasana*, hands resting on the floor.

7. Eka pada Uttanasana (Standing split pose)

Using your hands to steady yourself, gently raise one of your legs behind you as high as is comfortable.

Imagine the leg as a root moving out to support the plant or as an additional shoot if you can raise it towards the ceiling.

8. Tadasana

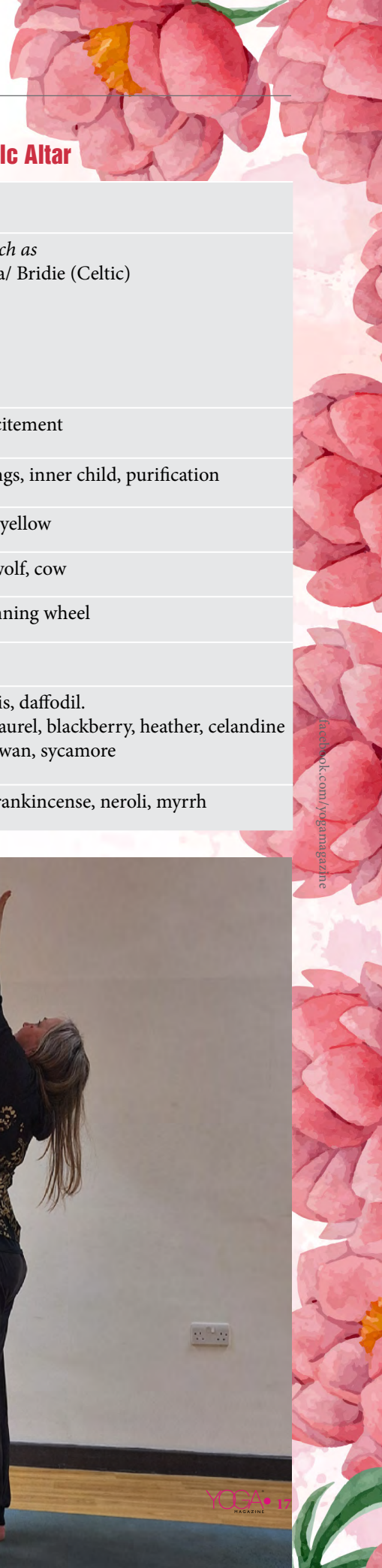
Gently return to standing and repeat steps 5-7, raising the opposite leg. You can repeat these steps a few times to create a sense of growth and stability.

Imagine your stem growing longer and stronger, what kind of plant are you? A snowdrop, a crocus, a sapling? See your leaves opening out and notice any flowers appearing on your stems. As your leaves and stem grow upwards, also feel your roots growing down, deeper into the earth so you feel nourished and grounded.

Once you have completed an even number of repetitions on each side, end in *Tadasana*, holding the lotus *mudra* at your heart.

Let the breath warm you

Surya Bhedana Pranayama (Sun-activating breath) is an alternate nostril breathing practice that focuses on breathing in through the right nostril and breathing out through the left. Connected to the sun, the right nostril is said to stimulate the *Pingala Nadi*.



Interestingly in his book - 'Breath' - James Nestor offers scientific evidence to show that breathing in this way does increase circulation, body temperature, blood pressure and heart rate, as it stimulates the sympathetic nervous system. It is therefore particularly useful for boosting motivation and for awakening energy.

You can start gradually with just a few rounds to begin with and it is a practice best suited to morning due to its stimulating effect.

Other activities to celebrate Imbolc

Imbolc is often associated with the Goddess Brigid. Sometimes also called Brig or Bride, she represents the youthful element of spring. She has fire in her belly and is often seen as a playful and strong maiden. She is connected to fire and seen as a patron of blacksmiths and wordsmiths alike inspiring creativity in all its forms.

She is also connected to wells and rivers which makes her interesting as water and fire don't usually mix. However, a blacksmith will tell you that water is essential for their craft.

She is considered a healer and historically people would take offerings to her wells to ask for her blessing and good health. This activity sometimes also happens at Beltane and creates an overlap between her as the maiden and moving into the lover phase before becoming a mother herself. She is seen as a fertility goddess and connected to agriculture showing that her protection extends to animals as well as mothers and their children.

Create an altar

To honour Brigid, you can either create an altar with the symbols of Brigid, like white flowers. I have suggested some correspondences for inclusion below, but you could simply light a small candle on a shelf as your reminder of the season. Please note, never leave a burning candle unattended. If you are lucky enough to have an open fire or log burner, tend to your hearth.

FIG 1 - Correspondences for an Imbolc Altar

Direction	North East
Goddesses	<i>Maiden Goddesses such as</i> Brigid/ Brigit/ Breeda/ Bridie (Celtic) Diana (Roman) Vesta (Roman) Selene (Greek) Athena (Greek)
Emotion	Childlike delight, excitement
Goddess energy	Awakening, beginnings, inner child, purification
Colour	White, spring green, yellow
Animals	White swan, snake, wolf, cow
Objects	Chalice, spindle, spinning wheel
Element	Fire
Flowers and plants	Snowdrop, crocus, iris, daffodil. Angelica, basil, bay, laurel, blackberry, heather, celandine Birch, blackthorn, rowan, sycamore
Essential oils	Jasmine, rosemary, frankincense, neroli, myrrh



Make a Brigid's cross

You can also make a Brigid's cross for your altar, spring clearing with smoke/incense, drums, bells or clapping around all corners of your home – remember to Have windows and doors open so stale energy can escape and fresh energy can come in.

Get outdoors

Visit a stream, river or well. If safe to do so, splash water on yourself with the intention of cleansing and purifying.

You can also take a ritual bath in diluted essential oils of the season (see Fig 1). Please check suitability if you are pregnant.

Decorate some plant pots with symbols for the season and plant some seeds or bulbs in pots as you state your intentions and nurture them to grow together with your plans for the year.

Suggested seasonal foods

Fig 2 lists some things you may like to eat, drink and experience in honour of the season.

FIG 2 - Imbolc foods

Drinks

Green tea, plant milks, Blackberry juice, ale,

Food

Pickled food, creamy soups, olives, leeks, shallots, dairy/dairy substitutes, blackberry crumble, braided bread

I hope this inspires you to tap into your personal connection with spring and do create your own celebration

of Imbolc, if you prefer. Reflect on the significance of this season for you, identifying symbols or plants that resonate with the emerging energy. Infuse your yoga practice with backbends and forward bends, invoking the graceful unfolding of spring as you embark on your own journey of renewal and growth.

We would love to invite you to share your feedback on the Blossoming for Spring sequence or your photos of your Imbolc celebration by tagging @britishwheelofyoga.

Please find the link to the Blossoming into Spring sequence here (763 Blossom into spring - YouTube]



Dawn is a certified British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) tutor and teacher trainer. She also has additional training in Yoga Philosophy, Pranayama, Yoga Nidra and Yoga for Mental Health.

Dawn is hosting a BWY Teaching Certificate/Diploma (300 hour/500 hour) course in Lutterworth starting in

April 2024 jointly with Perry Lewis. Further information can be found here: <https://portal.bwy.org.uk/user/trainings/288>.

She will also be running a BWY Teaching Diploma Progression course for BWY Teaching Certificate Holders starting in June 2024.

Details of both courses can be found at: <https://www.newdawniyoga.co.uk/bwy-teacher-training>

Or please contact Dawn by email: atamjeetyoga@gmail.com

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