

# Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

(THE EPISTOLE)

a newsletter for Hellenic polytheists

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**THE NEOKOROI\*** are a group of Hellenic polytheists who feel called to a path of service and devotion to the gods. We support mysticism, hard polytheism, and tend to favor reconstructionism as an approach to developing Hellenismos, while also recognizing the importance of personal experience and local cultus. We are especially dedicated to fostering communities, festivals, and public shrines, and providing guidance and information on religious matters – all to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

**HE EPISTOLE** (a “message” or “letter”) is published four times a year. We offer articles, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, rituals, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic polytheist community. We welcome feedback, and submissions from guest writers. He Epistole is a free publication and can be found in many locations nationwide. Please contact us if you would like to distribute copies in your area – in return you receive the issues in electronic format for free. Back issues can also be downloaded in PDF form from the website for free.

To contact the editor, email: **heepistolesubmissions@gmail.com** - or visit the Neokoroi website: **neokoroi.org**. (We have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!)

\*The word *neokoros* is derived from the Greek words *naos* (temple) and *koreo* (to sweep) and originally meant “the one who sweeps the temple” or “the temple keeper.” It was a humble position, but an important one, for it was the neokoros’ responsibility to make sure that the temple was kept clean and free of any pollution, and also to tend to the daily service of the god in whose temple he or she served.

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# MAKING A SPIRAL GARDEN

By Allyson Szabo

It's summertime, and the front yard is begging for something beautiful. Creating a spiral garden is a great way to spend a breezy summer day, and provides you with many micro-climates that allow a great variety of plants in a small space.

The basic premise of a spiral garden is to provide you with a maximum amount of planting space that accommodates different styles of plants. The center of your spiral should not be more than an arm's length away from the outer edge, or weeding and planting will be very difficult. Keep that in mind when setting up the outline of it.

To prepare a spot for your garden, you do not have to dig up a single piece of sod. Put down a layer of newspaper or opened and flattened paper bags over the area you're about to work on. This will retard weeds, help retain water, and aid in the creation of healthy, vibrant soil.



Once your bags are down, you can then put down a layer of whatever you are using to create the walls of your spiral. I have an herb spiral made of field stone, and a flower spiral made with recycled (freecycled, via craigslist) bricks. Any building media would be fine, really, provided you can stack it well and it is sturdy enough to hold the dirt once it's inside.

One way to create a "perfect" spiral is to put a bucket in the center of the area and tape a long string to it. As you walk around the bucket, the spiral will slowly work its way inward, leaving you with a very even pathway. That was the start of the above spiral, in fact, although we opted to smooth it out a bit, as we felt it was more aesthetic to have evenly spaced areas for the plants.



Once your first layer of media is down and you've figured out your exact pattern, you can begin to build up your walls. I started with a single layer of bricks to show my pattern, and then laid down a second layer. The third layer was a bit shorter, as I moved several bricks closer to the center on the outer wall, so that the spiral would get taller as it went toward the center. This is an important feature, and helps maintain the micro-climates provided by the spiral. Keep going until you feel that your spiral is complete. Some people like a very tall center and others like it closer to the ground. My herb spiral (made with field stones) is much lower than the brick one showed here, because the stones don't stack as well and therefore didn't stand up to tall piling. Because of the placement of my spiral, I didn't add my paper bottom until after the spiral was built, but if at all possible it should be your very first step.

The bags here (see picture #3) are ones we collected over the winter months when we went shopping. While we do often use our own bags, if we're just grabbing something quick, we will ask for paper over plastic, because it becomes excellent mulch. As a side note, you can even take bags like this, open them flat, and put them in your garden over the soil. Cut a hole and plant your tomato or pepper plant where the hole is, and it will help





keep your weeding to a minimum. It also helps the soil to hold water, and heats the soil slightly during the cooler months.

The next item of business is to put down a thick layer of straw. You specifically need straw and not hay, because hay contains seeds which will grow into tall weeds that choke out your herbs or flowers. Since straw makes such great mulch for veggie gardens and for flower beds too, I suggest purchasing a bale or two for even a small garden. It will be worth your time when you aren't spending those hot summer weeks weeding on your knees.



Lay the straw fairly thickly. You should not be able to see your paper bags when you're done. The straw should easily cover all the paper. Once it does, you want to soak the whole thing down with a hose. The idea is to totally saturate the straw and paper, making them quite soggy and heavy.

On top of the straw, you will begin to layer manure. This is the point at which you begin actually creating soil! If you're in a rush, you can simply fill the spiral with good quality organic soil, but if you create the soil yourself, your plants will be lush and colorful. The first layer of manure should completely cover the straw, followed by another layer of straw, then more manure. You



continue this layering pattern until your entire spiral is full to the brim. Make sure you soak each layer thoroughly with your hose, as it helps to break down the manure and paper and straw. You may see big, fat red worms in your mud at this point, and that's an excellent sign. Those worms will turn your compost, straw, and animal manure into top quality soil that is richer than anything you could buy at a store.

Your finished product should look something like this (see picture #6). Your bricks might be close together; I chose to space mine because I liked the idea of the little holes in it. I find it nice to look at, but you may not. Remember that it's your project, and you should do it your way! If you do go with holes, as I did, you may want to use some of the larger, more stubborn clods of manure to plug up stubborn holes that appear to be leaking manure or soil, or to hold ornery bricks in place so they don't wiggle.

The end result is a beautiful, eye-catching garden display that will wow your neighbors and your family. We chose to use traditional pink and blue petunias, surrounded by a bit of phlox and some other green/silver leafy plants. The central piece, though, is the tall sunflower. We planted four, and all four came up. Their deep roots have enough space to grow down and out, gripping the earth and stones to hold themselves upright. When their showy yellow heads begin to open, our garden will be a sight to behold!

The spiral garden is suitable for flowers, but herbs do very well in it as well. For detailed instruction on the building of an excellent herbal spiral, I highly suggest a YouTube video, *How To Build Soil and an Herb Spiral*<sup>1</sup>, by HooDaBabba, which is a part of the Potato House Permaculture Pension series of videos.

Remember that your herb or flower spiral should be a reflection of yourself. I currently have plans for two more spirals, one of which will be created up at our small Nymphae shrine and dedicated to them. The plants will be perennials, so that I don't have to replant each year, and will be designed in a very organic way to provide flowered offerings to our Nymphs and land spirits. With a bit of planning, you could plan an altar around your spiral. Another thought is to create two spirals side by side, but instead of flowers or herbs in the very center, put two support beams, and then lay an altar stone or wood shelf over it to create a unique and personal altar to the gods. The ideas are endless, and are limited only by your imagination!

<sup>1</sup>The video can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcODj6vcles> and their website is well worth looking at as well: <http://permaculture-tokyo.blogspot.com/>

All photos ©2010 Allyson Szabo







# BOOK OF APOLLON

By Lykeia

## Author's Note:

*This first segment is part of a work in progress of a long poem devoted to the mythos of Apollon. Apollon is a god with a great many myths with many undertones and meanings that are so important to understanding his worship. However, so many of these myths are scattered in so many resources that it is at times difficult to acquire an overall view of the progression of the god in his place among mortals and immortals. This project was imagined as a way to bridge together the different myths in a creative poetic retelling in the style of the old epic poems. The god travels, he loves, and endures through his own trials. It is part of what makes him so relatable and so close to us as human beings. **All Hail Apollon!***

O I sing to you star-faced muses born of fair memory,  
Sweet daughters of Zeus, you who breathe your airy  
Song; ever radiant, nine maidens beloved of the Lord Sun,  
There spinning your troop and chorus in shade  
of Mount Helion.  
Your voices are carried like the humming of honey-laden bees  
An undercurrent, a whisper flying sweetly upon the breeze  
That you may gently stir the foreign airs of distant places,  
And whisper with perfumed breath into the heart's recesses  
Mingling with the air in men and arise divine inspiration.  
Drawing up a melody that lends to each poet her immortality,  
That her words live on beyond the stroke of death's fatality.  
You fly upon rippling songs, those tendrils of your wind  
Dancing by the measure strummed by Apollon's golden hand,  
You, who are crowned in his light, send upon the poet's lips  
A song born to be aloft on a nightingale's burnished wing-tips  
Carried close to her breast, rising to the unblemished sky  
And the honey-nursed poet finds her wings to freely fly.  
I sing first to you that you may lend your voice to my own  
And sing among the fairest in honor of great Apollon.

Here I open up my song to sing of golden Apollon  
He, who holds out his hand across the expanses of land,  
Bids the blushing seasons by his holy meter to attend.  
First spring, that cherry-lipped maid, oh joyous Bacchic one  
To be followed by her sister next, daughter of the high sun  
Enchantress summer, combing out her perfumed locks  
Rose petals, jasmine and myrtle in every place she walks.  
He strikes a low note, and autumn comes with her parade  
The mystics following in earnest along the sacred way  
The shown has been seen, all revealed by sight and sound  
There the wheat ear is harvested and laid upon the ground.  
Before him all darkness turns away its poisoned head,  
As his lips part with pure song, driving it to its end,  
The pestilence struck by the flaming serpent's tongue



Leaping from the golden bow, as the orb of the sun  
Consumes eagerly with its hot rays death's crude remains  
To the will of the bright King, the pure and unstained,  
Laurel-crowned, adorned in the blossoms of five points  
Gold-flowered Apollon, God of the sun's searing light.  
There he dwells before the centre-stone cloaked in flame,  
The white fire dances by his utterance, owned by his name.  
O God of the righteous word, seer and poet, your lyric you send  
Breathing in your father's wind to let the words gently descend  
And stir so lovingly with its meter the nine rising chords  
Where the measured music refrains on the corporal earth  
That the tremble of its rhythm turning the spinning universe.  
The seasons are drawing up their vibrant veils to dance  
Among the fair company of the Muses beneath his governance  
For good order that Apollon nine times strums upon his lyre,  
Within the halls of time: that lofty peak of Olympus' spire.

## Birth of Apollon

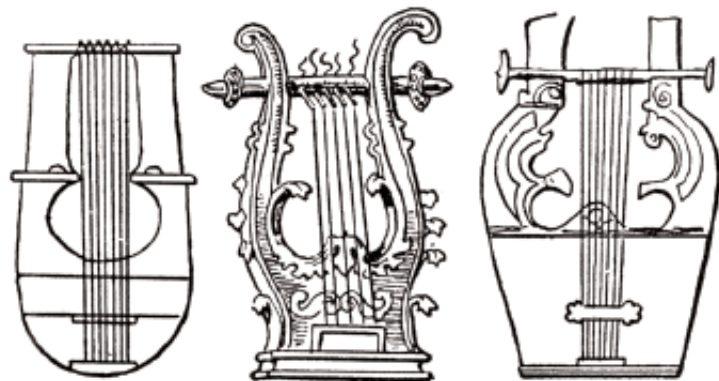
I sing of a moment, a most propitious gift upon the earth  
The heir of Koios conceived, a child, a king, of starry birth  
When Leto lay in the wide arms of Zeus beneath her veil  
And twin sparks of life flowered within, a girl-child and male,  
Beneath an eclipse of light, a new day reborn from utter night.  
There she was often spied beneath the sky, open to Helios' sight  
As he made his rounds his great eye upon the earth below  
Wherever he passed above, in his chariot of white and gold.  
A beloved wife of Zeus, freely she shared her kisses and sighs  
In a time of gold, an age of spring, beneath Hyperborean skies;  
And he adored her sweeping brow, bright as the North Star,  
Placing heavenly jewels into the weave of her braided hair.  
Drawn up by Zeus, she knelt by his knee and lived  
in his embrace

There she did with grace adorn the martial throne in its place  
By his side for Hera, the queen, the equal councilor to reside  
As ether and stone, as the earth and sky lay side by side  
With a kiss she greeted Hera as one greeter than her own  
Beneath the blooming boughs, adorned with a flowering crown,  
Kindest among the titans, Leto, beloved by all,  
barely swollen round

Yielded to the road, to the way, with naught but a gentle sound  
To be chased by the measured time, the sequence of the day  
As the fruit ripened heavily on the bough, never could she lay,  
By the road's ordinance, anywhere revealed by the sun's rays  
So without comfort she wandered through the passage of days.

From town to town she beseeched and sought a goodly stone  
That her children could by their illustrious heritage  
call their own

This holy pair who would bear the two torches by their right,  
To illuminate the way and serve as humanity's fair light.  
Wherever she was driven upon destiny's road so she ran  
In the end Leto departed the northern land of the Hyperborean,  
From time to time on the hidden wings of the quail, noble fowl  
As Helios crowned by five rays of light upon his noble brow,  
Drove his white mares through the sky with his company  
On a shining course that never fell beyond the horizon's sea.  
But no land would welcome Leto when Helios sat  
upon his throne  
No place where his eye shone down upon the earthly stone;



Every place turned away its head sighing in its dread,  
They secured from her the green valleys and rocky beds  
All comfort to her denied, all but a whispered word in night  
A word of truth dispelling the dark, conjured in piercing light  
From her son's tempered voice rising from beneath her belt  
A resonance, a promise, echoing from deep within she felt.  
Even then he was as the morning lark trilling to the sun  
As his heavenly voice came from afar, like the first rays of dawn  
That stretches rosy fingers into the high vaulted skies,  
Such brilliance was his utterance that it silenced her cries  
She would bear his light, even as the night draws her gown  
And yields to the day-born sun shining light upon the ground.  
"Mother walk to the edge of the sea, where the swan dips  
Her feathers low and sings, a land that is no land shall eclipse  
Your view to the east and the rising sun. There you shall receive  
To your arms the golden liquor, the glad singer of the bees,  
From your womb I shall come wreathed by the rising sun  
The darkest space, the hardest place, from that bed I come."  
So she traveled, spurred by Hera and pursued like a doe,  
A foreshadowing of her daughter's hunting train for the roe,  
A yoked lioness at the gates, with the first tremors as she sped,  
She loosened her girdle at Zoster to prepare for her  
birthing bed.

In her flight, in the Ortygian grove Leto found a brief respite  
Surrounded by a hundred shields and voices filled with might  
Such a clamor like a war-cry rose; as if Ares had been delayed  
To linger but an hour longer, in the weary march  
through his day.

In that holy grotto, far beyond, by the Lycian mountainside,  
Where Hera lingered in her pursuit, and by the end declined  
To remain, there a fair nymph, a Naiad, Ortygia by name  
Welcomed Leto as her guest, in a wooded nest forever famed  
To drop her fruit beside the silt beach of the river Kenkhrios  
To release from her womb birthing the Koure and Kouroi.  
With the nurse by her side, Leto loosened her silvery gown  
And rested in the hallow, a birthing bed of swan's down,  
The soft white feathers that one day would enrapture Leda so,  
Provided her a gentle place to lie to let the birthing river flow.  
There on the sixth day a spring burst from deep inside  
A torrent river of soft light delivered a maiden of demeanor kind  
A girl of proud countenance to whom all the wood paid respect  
The beauty of her face shone as a polished mirror and did reflect  
The bounties of light, that grows night by night before  
it is spent,

When she lit from her mother's belly like a spark  
on night's flint,

With ease leaping from Leto's thighs with clamorous greeting  
Bellowing as a bull, wild hound among the nymphs  
at first meeting,

With a tawny pup beneath her arm and small light on her palm  
She raced with the dogs, breaking up the waters sleeping calm.  
All the Naiad maids, and Okeanids, raised their laughing shout  
In celebration of a Goddess who all gentle things did flout



The huntress born to likewise pursue the living, and to save  
 Soteira, Agrotera, Phoebe who by the night's light gave  
 Guidance to the way. The pride of her lovely-haired mother,  
 Artemis nurtures the young and to her the eggs gather,  
 Even as she sharpens her silver dart for her holy sport  
 To lay low male and doe, driver of the kerynitian-drawn cart.  
 The infant goddess to her mother's hand clutched in love  
 As Leto prepared to produce the final fruit of the dove,  
 Thus they walked across the sea to find the Cynthian mount  
 Where would arise from Zeus' seed the holy oracular fount.

Asteria, wind born Delos, once plunged into the yawning sea  
 When she flew from the eagles grasp in her pursuit to be free  
 For how Zeus desired the bright-faced daughter of Phoebe,  
 Leto's sister, the far-seeing mother of bright-coifed Hekate.  
 As his grasp reached for the star speckled quail of night,  
 Asteria slipped away into the blue current's rushing arms,  
 There the changeable sea ascribed to her a new form,  
 Poseidon too as lover she scorned, she would not be caught,  
 By her craggy face she so achieved for which she fought  
 Asteria carried endlessly within the embrace she had sought  
 A rootless island cast upon the waves to fortunes lot.  
 For days and years she drifted without anchor on the tide  
 Her face worn by the sun, she who spurned to be Zeus' bride,  
 The fallen star, still her grey stone shined fairer than all  
 An empty boat on the sea until she heard her sister's call.  
 Dearly loved by Asteria, Leto, heavy in maternal grace,  
 Lifted arms to the desert, wind-born from space to space,  
 Called out her prayer at the edge of the broad-skirted sea  
 A propitious gift and offering toward Asteria's misery.  
 She cajoled her sister with sweet words from her breast,  
 To the daughter of Koios riding the waves that foaming crest,  
 She greeted kindly as suppliant beneath night's wide arbor  
 To the barren stone, where no men sought a gentle harbor  
 Asteria would shine in prosperity from heaven's great gift  
 A lauded nurse enduring without timidity to gather swift  
 The propitious prayers of men, perfumed with frankincense  
 As they give tribute's sacrifice upon the curve of her breast  
 Where the traveling bright eye of day would first behold  
 The shining brow among men and kings: the Golden Lord.

In gladness Delos cried, "Come swiftly to the line of my shore  
 For in my arms you shall rest, to not wander a day more.  
 Hera's pursuit, her falcon eyes, drove you to the road's end.  
 You danced like a bee about the sun, with the blossom to tend  
 Flowery star gatherer, you drew forth the nectar from the stamen  
 You stirred the sweetest honey, to libate like a river for all men.  
 To this end Hyperkheiria drove you over Ge's jagged bones  
 So you may lay out your unbound khiton upon these stones  
 For a land that is no land, laying barren, without its anchor,  
 To the ocean floor; only my windswept arms to give succor  
 Where no plow has touched, nor has a man, woman or child  
 Set out the foundations upon the lay, nor my soil to style  
 Into fields to grow the myriad families of fruits and grain

I have been planted only by the rocking tides and cutting rain.  
 I shall be instead nurse to your fruit, daughter and your son  
 That all the nations of men now and tomorrow shall come  
 Bringing long draughts of wine, milk and honey in great streams  
 And rise up by their love the sacrifice's perfumed steams;  
 For the wretched to be once again ennobled to her heredity  
 I shall endeavor with all of my strength to hold this cradle steady  
 As I gladly draw you within the circle of my arms. Hold tight  
 My sister, to the sparse boughs, and I shall receive his light.  
 I who the harbor that by no lowly roads you have reached  
 Your walnut boat has arrived safely and upon my shore beached.  
 I only pray that my sea-beaten brow and poor measure of soil  
 Would not be an ignoble end of the long road of your toil  
 That it would not be so fair when seen by the splendor  
 of the sun  
 Who'd reveal by his winged chair coarseness unfit for your son.  
 For a word could not more truthfully be spoken --  
 I lack magnificence,  
 I have not an art to recommend, nor a blossom to please  
 the sense  
 Nevertheless I set myself up to be toppled by my lack of grace  
 To have been one that outreached her place to embrace  
 That glory beheld by one risen and beloved among men,  
 A pallid cradle for the greatness of your golden son, Apollon."

But Leto of great mean cajoled and spoke in soft-spun words  
 To Asteria, the tempered nurse of Apollon of the golden sword  
 "Daughter of Phoebe, earth dwelling illustrious star of the night  
 None other would be fairer in grace to welcome the  
 Lord of light  
 The smooth flank of your windblown stone is testimony  
 Of your temperance born of conflict and love;  
 land of harmony.  
 I call you for you are the result of nature's greatest science,  
 You are the gold revealed within the heart of  
 humble substance."  
 Palm-shaded Delos nodded her ashen head in acquiescence  
 As upon the current she widened her oft rocking stance  
 Turning her pale face toward the eastern rising point of the sun.  
 Her earth, the lion's pride, issued out the quaking  
 palm of Apollon  
 Upon a peerless hill of virgin stone unclaimed by God or man  
 A pillar for Leto's arms to cling upon her perch  
 of stone and sand.  
 Zephyr, the eastern wind blew his sweet breath as a soothing fan  
 For Leto's brow. But as pale Asteria stretched out her briny hand  
 To draw broad-belted Leto securely upon the stretch of her land  
 Poseidon, earth shaker, drew up four roots for the mighty tree  
 By pillars of indestructible gold, secured in the embrace  
 of the sea,  
 Never-more a vagabond carried by the wanderlust of tides.  
 The earth groaned and the wide coiled serpent hid  
 away to abide  
 His time. Pytho, the hound of Hera, slipped back into the earth

Those vaporous spaces of the cavernous labyrinth filled  
by his girth  
Waiting with gleaming eyes for the test of unconquerable  
Apollon.

Heavily laden Leto climbed to the high ridge of pale stone  
Her groan escaping between the stained flower of her lips  
As labor shook her again in the bands of its steely grip  
No sooner than the brush of her step touched upon Delos.  
That cry resounded, born upon the waves of the ivory coast  
A nature's messenger, the wind carried it in directions of seven  
Where it carried to all the halls of the Gods of earth  
and heaven.  
Nor did it go unmarked that all goddesses sped to the  
Delian shore.  
All save two---queenly Hera enthroned before the  
Olympian door  
And radiant Eileithyia--gathered by the ivory bed of shady palms  
Which bowed their leafy heads to her cries to comfort and calm,  
All the while Asteria listened and captured by the wind  
each sigh,  
As the great household of heaven, for nine days eased by her side  
But never did Eileithyia in all that time spring like  
cooling water down  
Touching her noble foot upon that stretch of anticipatory  
ground  
To give ease to the burden; nor to unleash the gates of the birth,  
So that all the goddess murmured in collected voice and stirred  
Electing iridescent Iris to take her brilliant path to  
the mountain  
Where Eileithyia during day gathered birth water from  
a fountain  
Among the sun-dyed clouds gathered about Olympos'  
lofty peak,  
Iris of the many hues was cajoled for Leto's favor to speak  
By way of a promise for a present, a gold braid of nine lengths  
To rest upon her throat. These words carried such strength  
That swift Iris leapt upon the points of her feet to take flight  
And with her ribbon-wings of many hues, she departed  
with light  
From the foot of Hera's throne to bright Eileithyia of cool winds  
To the fountain where the eternal water in a spiral ever spins  
There Iris bent to her ear, messenger unparallel, a charmed verse  
To coax the birth goddess from her routine at her  
heavenly perch  
And relieve the groaning mother of the golden fruit of heaven  
Time had come on the day of the seventh to release her burden  
Two golden apples far surpassing those the Hesperides guarded  
Twin treasures of freedom never to be concealed nor hoarded.  
There silver-tongued Iris Eileithyia's gentle heart effortlessly  
swayed

That swiftly she prepared her way to speed there straight away  
To deliver a gift to the timeless halls of heaven and mortal earth,

Non sweeter given than new beginnings of a blessed birth.  
Neither detained nor molested they arrived in all due haste  
Those myriad floral ribbons upon Iris' brow clearly spread news  
Of their presence, touching the ground from where they flew  
They landed where the bridge of the rainbow rests in its end.

At the first touch of Eileithyia's foot, an echo through land  
it sends  
Good fortune to be found, a golden reward, for true labor  
By her blessed want, bore down on Leto in her safe harbor  
In the arms of Delos. Quickly the door burst open and  
the river rose  
To meet the day dwelling beyond, ushering in Noumenios  
That first light of the month, forever guiding the new  
sprung days  
Of heavens course as the moon dies and grows, but eternal stays  
Reflecting the light of the sun as the calendar speeds away.  
All the while Artemis, great from birth, Eileithyia's  
young helpmate  
Bright goddess savior, mother's and babe's kindly nursemaid  
Sought to welcome Apollon from the dark nest they had shared  
Entwined together for so long, her heart to his forever endeared.  
With her coaxing cry she called to him like a bird to the dawn  
A she placed her milky hands and chanted to her brother  
Apollon.  
Such was his response to her song that he leapt  
like a stag within  
Shuddering the great house, as he reached his hand to his twin,  
Leto's womb trembling as a premonition of the earth beneath  
his feet.  
All the world held its breath and prepared for him his  
divine seat  
As Leto gasped in surprise and took into her arms the palm tree  
There crested the dawn, the golden egg from the eagle's seed  
With the flare of the sun upon his brow—a golden  
etheric crown  
Apollon arrived in a sea of light, resting his two feet  
on the ground.  
Within an instant joyous Delos in all her pride released  
flowers abound  
Gold blossoms for the joy of Leto, a boy who in the image  
like the sun  
Was born and full running before the measure of day was  
half done,  
Blessed is land and mother, the arms that received  
bright Apollon.

# THE THRICE-PLOUGHED FIELD

By Suzanne Thackston

I move through my fields of undulating grain, fingertips trailing through bearded grasses, hair unbound, sun warming my skin. He is there. His back is bent as he works over his plough, the oxen's shoulders moving placid and slow, the plough cutting deep into my rich, dark earth. Sweat gleams on his broad back, his hair cornsilk under the sun. I stop at the edge of the field, half-concealed amid the whispering stalks of grain, mesmerized, entranced as he urges his beasts on, working the soil, the plough turning the earth into good straight furrows, long and inviting, awaiting the seed.

My sister watched me as I left, eyeing me sidelong under her lashes, one white hand sliding along her gemmed girdle, laces loosened, proffering. I smiled at her and shook my head. No need for that, not now, not for him. We are of one mind, she and I.

He turns the oxen and they return, slow and inexorable as the seasons. The surface of the earth is dry and crumbly, but underneath it is damp and dark, fecund. Its rich scent mingles with that of the sweet grass that tickles my ankles and sets me to dreaming. I see the curve of his upper arm as he manhandles the plough into the turn, the lines of his thigh muscles as he strains forward with his beasts, his teeth flashing white as he calls encouragement to them, wiping the sweat from his brow. He is golden-brown, sweet as roasted barley, and his eyes are blue as the shallows of the Aegean.

Three times he drives his oxen the length and breadth of the field, three times the soil is raised, turned, combed, silkened, until it is soft, moist, pliable as coarse flour. He brings the team to a halt, speaks softly to them, scratches their thick necks, laughs like a boy when they rub their broad heads against him, unharnesses them, hobbles them to graze. He looks over his handiwork, stretches, sighs, smiles.

I step forth out of the tall grass.

He sees the movement, straightens, stands motionless, staring. I move toward him, my wheaten hair swirling around my knees, my green gown rippling. As I move toward him, my fingers play in the ties to my golden girdle, loosen them, drawing his eyes, where they widen and fix, blue and shocked. I drift to a stop before him, my gown parting slightly, and those eyes lift to my face and meet mine, and the impact startles us both. I move swiftly forward and his warm strong arms catch me up and pull me desperately to him, his sweet sweet mouth on mine. And we fall to the receptive earth.

The ploughing is strong, the furrow deep, the seed vigorous.

As my lover nears the third sowing, I see over his straining shoulders, his bright hair, the thunderheads piling up in the heavens. My heart leaps. He is coming, my brother, my lover, my lord, He who will bless this planting with fruitfulness and immortality. A few drops of rain patter down, cool drops sliding on my love's hot sweet salty skin and I taste it, exquisite. Thunder mutters softly, a gentle threat, then builds to a bellow like a great bull, even as my man rears over me and roars back at the sky, eyes closed, face contorted with divine ecstasy. And as his seed spurts forth yet again, we are blinded by the God's shaft, the bolt stabbing down from the roiling chaos of clouds, impaling my love. The blue eyes fly open, stare aghast into my face, freezing my heart with the unspoken cry of terror and betrayal. I scream aloud in love and loss, and in the instant before my love is vaporized, I see those beautiful eyes light with comprehension, and his final whisper is of love and acceptance.

The thunder rolls, is muted, wanders away over the sea, lightning flashing spasmodically. I lie in the ploughed furrow, naked under the driving rain, drenched, spent, weeping, exultant.

The seed lies deep within the earth. In the turning of the seasons it sprouts, pushes forth, emerges, thrusts eagerly upward. Thousands, millions, countless polished perfect grains, replicating themselves in the endless miracle of growth. Their mortality is essential to the immortal cycle. There are so many, so very many, mortals cannot comprehend how even a goddess can know and love them all. But each beloved seed is unique, incredible, wondrous, and is utterly known by me and held in my divine love. A love and bounty I can share with humankind because of my lost, yet eternal, immortal, infinitely precious lover, Iasion.



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# TWINS

By Thista Minai

Turn to the moon at midnight  
and face your dark.  
Turn to the sun at noon  
and face your light.  
The forest thick with foliage  
beckons to your beast.  
The shining city lights  
evoke your art.

Fling your limbs about in frenzied dance  
While measured rhythm guides a lovely tune.  
Two arrows fly to meet their mark,  
But which one flies to where, and which from Whom?  
Who sent the plague and Who relief?  
Who cast the curse and Who the cure?  
Who sheds blood and Who is always pure?

Moonlight glistens on the blood of fallen prey.  
Sunlight glows green in summer leaves.  
The Twins together guard the night and day.  
So different; so the same.



# SUMMER SOLSTICE SPECIALS

By Allyson Szabo

Food is such an integral part of our celebrations in life. Whether it's a birthday party (cake anyone?), a wedding (that special dish), a family reunion (grandma's potato salad) or any number of other events, food takes a central place in each and every one. It behooves us to learn healthy, delicious recipes that we can showcase at our own festivals and events!

For our Fourth of July celebrations, I created a summer salad based on an old Italian recipe. The original called for a bit of crisp lettuce, shredded, some cannellini beans, a diced tomato, and some drizzled olive oil and vinegar. I took this to a whole new level and created a delicious, refreshing salad that disappeared as fast as I could get it on the table.

## Cannellini Salad

### Ingredients:

one crisp romaine heart  
one bag or bunch of fresh, washed spinach leaves  
one can of cannellini beans, rinsed well OR  
one cup of well-soaked and cooked dried  
cannellini beans, rinsed well  
six medium hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced  
garlic-olive oil salad dressing

### Method:

Finely shred the romaine heart. I cleaned it well under running water, let it dry for a bit, then simply sliced it like a cucumber, with the shreds being about half an inch in width. Put the shredded lettuce in your salad bowl. Hand rip the spinach leaves and add to the lettuce. Make sure there aren't any huge pieces of spinach. Add the beans and eggs to the greens, and mix with salad tongs. Drizzle the whole salad with your salad dressing (I used a Market Basket low calorie and low carb store brand, and was very pleased with the results) and toss once more.

This recipe was so easy to put together that I decided to serve it with dinner several nights this week. Everyone loves it! If you want a more traditional spinach salad flavor, you could add crumbled bacon, and use good quality olive oil drizzled with wine vinegar instead of the salad dressing.



As the heat index went up, so did my intolerance for cooking anything on our stove. When it's over 100°F in the house, the last thing you want to do is add heat to your living space! That's where this delicious Gazpacho Soup comes in.

## Chilled Gazpacho Soup

### *Ingredients:*

3 cups chopped tomatoes  
1 medium green bell pepper, finely chopped  
1 small cucumber, finely chopped  
1 small onion, minced  
2 tablespoons vegetable or chicken broth  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon rice vinegar  
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro  
2 tablespoons fresh mint  
1 tablespoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon sea salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
4 tablespoons plain yogurt, for garnish  
Fresh cilantro and mint, for garnish

### *Method:*

In a blender or a food processor, combine the tomatoes, half the bell pepper, half the cucumber, half the onion, and the next eight ingredients (broth through pepper). Cover and blend on medium speed until it's smooth, about 2 minutes. Stir in the remaining bell pepper, cucumber, and onion. Cover and refrigerate for about an hour. Garnish each serving with a tablespoon of plain yogurt and sprigs of cilantro and mint.

The refreshing chill of this soup can be enhanced by serving it in a fun way: pour the soup into a small soup bowl, and then fill a larger bowl with crushed ice and nestle the soup into that. It'll keep it cool, and look fantastic, too. This soup is chock full of antioxidants and will help keep you in vitamins and minerals. If you're lucky enough to have your own vegetables for creating this work of art, so much the better.



The exception to the no-heat ban (in my house at least) is when we're baking bread. I have yet to find a way to replace the flavor of a freshly baked loaf of ANY kind of bread, and so some extremely late night loaves have been baked over the years (during the cooler hours of the night or early morning). This incredible Summer Solstice Bread recipe was sent to me by a friend in the South, and has flavors that just pop.

## Summer Solstice Bread

### *Ingredients:*

3 tablespoons olive oil  
1/4 cup chopped onion  
1 cup all purpose flour  
1 cup whole wheat flour  
1/2 cup shredded Romano or Parmesan cheese  
1/4 cup fresh basil chopped  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 eggs

1/2 cup buttermilk<sup>1</sup>

1 tablespoon water

2 or 3 roma tomatoes, very thinly sliced

### *Method:*

In a skillet, heat a tablespoon of the olive oil over medium heat. Cook and stir the onion in the oil for a few minutes until it is golden brown, then set it aside. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, combine the all purpose flour, wheat flour, cheese, basil, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Make a well or dent in the center of dry ingredients.

Slightly beat one egg, and then stir in the remaining oil and buttermilk. Stir in onion mixture once the wet ingredients are well mixed. Add the buttermilk mixture to the flour mixture, stirring until the flour mixture is just moistened.

With floured hands, knead gently until the dough is nearly smooth. This might take a few minutes, or may work very quickly. Shape the dough into two 4 inch rounds or one 6 inch round loaf. Place the loaves on a lightly greased baking sheet. Slightly beat the remaining egg with 1 tablespoon water and brush the top of the loaf with egg mixture. You may want to use a very sharp knife to slice the top of the dough, allowing it to spread open as you see on some artisan loaves. Arrange the tomato slices on top, and press into the dough very gently.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until the bread is golden brown. You'll know it is ready when you can knock on it and it sounds hollow!

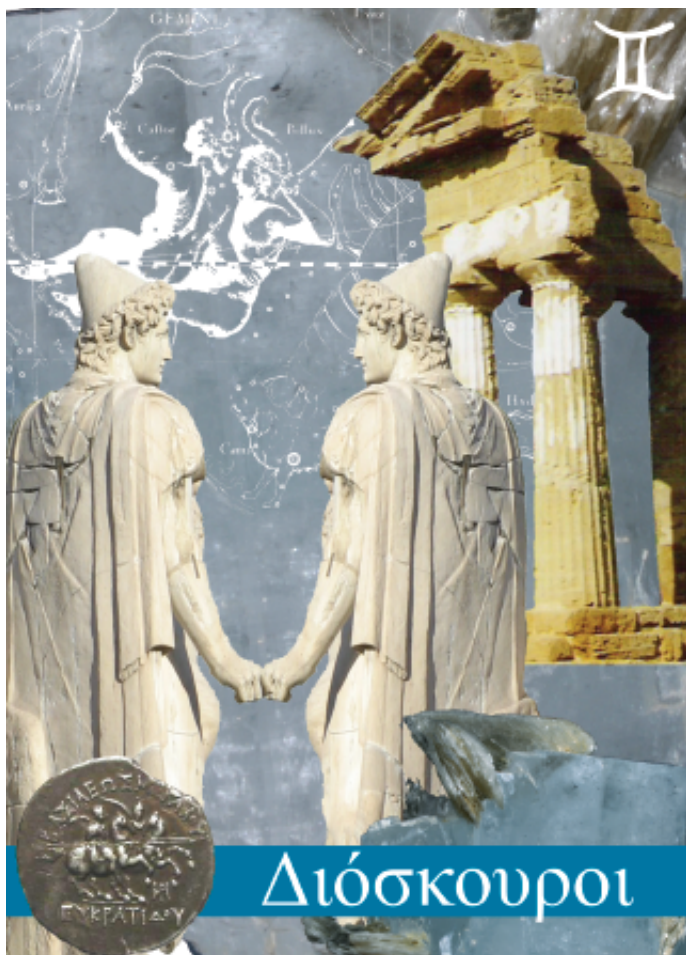
Enjoy your summer. Stay cool, eat well, exercise often, and soak up that summer sunshine!

<sup>1</sup>If you don't have buttermilk on hand, you can make a substitute with very little effort! Simply place a tablespoon of white vinegar or lemon juice in a liquid measuring cup. Add enough milk to bring the liquid up to the one-cup line. Let stand for five minutes, and then use as much as your recipe calls for.



# DIOSKOUROI

By Khryseis Astra



## COMMUNITY NEWS

Collected By Khryseis Astra

• **Bibliotheca Alexandrina** is seeking submissions for the following devotionals...

### Pan Devotional

Please send all submissions to diotimasph@googlemail.com. All submissions should be in MS Word or compatible format (.txt or .rtf). With your entry please submit a 2-5 sentence author biography. **DEADLINE EXTENDED TO AUGUST 1, 2010.**

For more information:

[http://www.neosalexandria.org/pan\\_devotional.htm](http://www.neosalexandria.org/pan_devotional.htm)

### Megaloi Theoi, A Dioskouroi Devotional.

Please send all submissions to dioscuridevotional@gmail.com. The editor will acknowledge all submissions, but does not guarantee any inclusion in the devotional. **DEADLINE EXTENDED TO AUGUST 15, 2010.**

For more information:

[http://www.neosalexandria.org/dioskouroi\\_devotional.htm](http://www.neosalexandria.org/dioskouroi_devotional.htm)



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• **Eternal Haunted Summer** is seeking ongoing submissions.

Eternal Haunted Summer is an ezine dedicated to Pagan poetry, short fiction, reviews and interviews. We are seeking poems and stories celebrating the Deities and heroes of the many different Pagan traditions (Celtic, Norse, Germanic, Roman, Etruscan, Greek, Phoenician, Canaanite, Sumerian, Kemetic and many, many others). We pay a flat rate of \$5 for original pieces. We look forward to hearing from you!

For more information: <http://www.eternalhauntedsummer.com/>

• **The Hellenistai.com Forum** ([forum.hellenistai.com](http://forum.hellenistai.com)) and its members have started a Hellenic Wiki.

Want to help? Go to the Hellenistai Wiki ([wiki.hellenistai.com](http://wiki.hellenistai.com)) and create your own account. See what pages are in demand on the Hellenistai Wiki here:

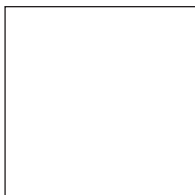
<http://wiki.hellenistai.com/index.php?title=Special:WantedPages>

If you're thinking about it and just want to see what it's all about, go here:

<http://forum.hellenistai.com/viewforum.php?f=70>

(Thanks to Kayleigh at <http://kallisti.writingkaye.com/> for this entry.)





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# Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

(HE EPISTOLE)

a newsletter for Hellenic polytheists

ISSUE #20 ~ SUMMER 2010

*In This Issue:*

*Making a Spiral Garden • Book of Apollon • Twins  
The Thrice-Ploughed Field • Recipes, Poetry & More!*

## HE EPISTOLE – CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

HE EPISTOLE (a "message" or "letter") is published four times a year. We offer articles, artwork, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic polytheist community.

We're currently seeking submissions from guest writers.

For more information, please visit our website at: [Neokoroi.org](http://Neokoroi.org)  
Submissions may be sent to: [HeEpistoleSubmissions@gmail.com](mailto:HeEpistoleSubmissions@gmail.com)

