

## **A Guide to Nature Spirituality Terms**

<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/aboutpagan/Guide2NaSpiTerms.html>

by Selena Fox

**Animism:** ancient philosophy that views everything in Nature as having an indwelling spirit/soul, including the plants, rocks, waters, winds, fires, animals, humans, and other life forms. Animism is the foundation of shamanism and has been considered the earliest form of human religion on planet Earth.

**Earth-centered Spirituality:** honoring the spiritual interconnectedness of life on planet Earth, often as Mother Earth or Gaia, but sometimes as a gender neutral Earth Spirit. Sometimes called Earth religion and Gaian (Gaeian) religion. Related EcoChristian form is Creation-Centered Spirituality.

**Ecofeminism:** feminist environmental philosophy that draws parallels between the oppression of women and the oppression of Nature by patriarchy and which advocates the spiritual and political liberation of both.

**Goddess Spirituality:** revering Nature and honoring the Great Goddess in one or more of Her many forms. Usually polytheistic and sometimes multicultural in practice. Usually incorporates feminist perspectives.

**Heathen:** Another name for Pagan. Many contemporary practitioners of Teutonic Nature religions prefer this term for themselves and their spirituality.

**Nature Religions:** religions that include an honoring of the Divine as immanent in Nature. May be pre-modern, modern, or post-modern in philosophical orientation. Usually polytheistic, animistic, and pantheistic. Include traditional ways of various native peoples of the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australia, Polynesia, Europe, and elsewhere; religions of ancient Pagan cultures, such as Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Minoan, Assyrian, Celtic, Teutonic, and others; and contemporary Paganism.

**Nature Spirituality:** honoring the spiritual interconnectedness of life not only on Planet Earth, but throughout the Universe/Cosmos; more encompassing term than Earth-centered Spirituality because it also includes Celestial religions; used by some as synonymous with contemporary Paganism and by others as also including interfaith blends, such as those that combine Paganism with EcoChristianity or EcoBuddhism.

**NeoPagan:** Contemporary Pagan.

**Pagan:** pertains to a Nature religion or a practitioner of an ancient and/or contemporary Nature religion; also used to refer to a Nature Spirituality, Earth-centered Spirituality, and/or Goddess Spirituality group or practitioner.

**Pantheism:** the Divine as immanent; the Divine is in everything and everything has a Divine aspect.

**Panentheism:** Pantheism that also includes a transcendent component conceptualized as the Sacred Whole or Divine Unity.

**Polytheism:** honoring Divinity in two or more forms. Can be belief in/worship of multiple aspects of a particular deity; of the Divine as Goddess and God; or of many Goddesses, Gods, Nature Spirits, and/or other Divine forms. Some, but not all, polytheistic Nature

religions acknowledge an all encompassing Divine Unity.

**Shaman:** an adept who serves as healer and spirit world communicator for her/his tribe or community. Sometimes known as a Medicine person. This role is tribal culture/community defined.

**Shamanic Practitioner:** someone learning and working with shamanistic healing practices for self-development, and in some cases, also for helping others. Sometimes known as a Medicine worker. This role is self-defined.

**Shamanism:** animistic spiritual healing practices usually involving ecstatic trance and spirit world journeys by adepts. Forms of shamanism include Traditional, which are rooted in specific indigenous tribal peoples cultures, and Multicultural, which are contemporary forms that integrate old and new spirit wisdom ways from more than one culture.

**Wiccan Spirituality:** contemporary paths rooted in one or more Nature folk religions of old Europe. Also known as the Old Religion, the Craft, Wicca, Wicce, Ways of the Wise, NeoPagan Witchcraft, and Benevolent Witchcraft.

**Witch:** Some Wiccan practitioners use the word "Witch" for themselves in connection with their spirituality to bring back its pre-Inquisition use in Europe as a term of honor and respect meaning "medicine person/medicine worker," "shaman/shamanic practitioner," "wise woman/man," "priestess/priest of the Old Religion." Other Wiccans refuse to use the word "Witch" because of later negative definitions of the word which led to its use as a tool of Pagan genocide and religious oppression in Europe and North America for hundreds of years. During the "Burning Times" of the Middle Ages, bigots in power changed its definition, making it a term linked with evil, and used it as a brand to mark and exterminate folk healers, those who refused to convert to state-sanctioned forms of Christianity, political rivals, and others. Contemporary usage of the word "Witch" by non-Wiccans is diverse but in recent years has been changing in academia and elsewhere to reflect the growing public awareness and understanding of Wiccan Spirituality's reclaiming of the word.

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