

Blossom
and
Stardust

The
Hedgewitch
Almanac



Welcome, Dearest Gatherer,

Somewhere outside, the hedgerows are whispering.

This month, they're telling the tale of a woman who once lived in the shadow of a great, wild hill, a woman so trusted, so wise, that people walked for miles just to knock on her door.

Hiding among the leaves this month, is a berry ripe and ready for gathering – and a strange, secretive root that's best left exactly where it's found. Some magic is for keeping. Some is for admiring from a distance.

Inside this month's pack, you'll find new cards to cut out and keep ready to add to your very own Almanac, along with anything else that catches your eye this month... a leaf, a petal, a feather.

Month by month, page by page, you're building something rather magical of your own. So pull on your boots, dear gatherer, the hedgerows are waiting for you and they've got secrets to share.

The Hedgewitch



The Hedgewitch Herald

-Meet the Witch-

The Woman of Pendle Hill: The Tale of Old Demdike

Pendle Forest, Lancashire — the late 1500s
Beneath the wide, brooding shadow of Pendle Hill, in a crumbling old house called Malkin Tower, there lived a woman the whole district knew simply as Demdike.
Her real name was Elizabeth Southern. But as time passed by, almost nobody called her that anymore.

The Woman Everyone Went to See

For decades, long before anyone thought to call her anything darker, Old Demdike was Pendle's healer.
If your cow stopped giving milk, you went to Demdike. If your baby had a fever that wouldn't break, you went to Demdike. If you needed a charm said over you, a cure whispered, a remedy mixed from whatever grew wild on the hillside, you went to Demdike.
She'd learned her craft the old way: through decades of watching, listening, and gathering knowledge of the plants and berries that grew across the moor. By the time she was in her seventies (a remarkable age for the 1500s) she was, by all accounts, the most respected charmer and healer for miles around.

"Everyone knew her," the old records say. "Everyone, at some point, needed her."



Gathering for Winter

As autumn turned toward winter each year, Demdike would have done what every wise woman of her time did: gathered whatever the hedgerows offered before the cold set in. Rosehips, ripe and red on the briar, were exactly the kind of thing she'd have collected and dried — a small store of goodness to see the village through the darker months ahead.
It's a quiet, ordinary kind of magic, really. Knowing which of nature's little offerings could help a body through winter — and knowing exactly when to go out and gather them.

The Whispers Turned

But as Demdike grew older, something shifted. The very knowledge that had made her so trusted for so long began, in the eyes of some, to look like something else entirely.

By 1612, Demdike, now in her eighties, found herself at the centre of one of the most infamous witch trials in English history: the Pendle Witch Trials. She and her family were accused of witchcraft.
Demdike never stood trial herself. She passed before the case was heard, an elderly woman, a lifelong healer, remembered by history not for the decades she spent helping her neighbours, but for the accusation that came at the very end of her life.



Still there today

Pendle Hill still stands exactly where it always has; wild, windswept, and, to this day, wrapped in more folklore than almost anywhere else in England. Every year, as October arrives, people walk its slopes remembering the story of the woman who once knew every plant on it by heart.

Old Demdike's story is an important reminder: for most of her long life, she wasn't feared at all. She was needed. Trusted. Relied upon. It was only fear, misunderstanding, and the passing of time that turned a village healer into a legend of a different kind.

This month, as the hedgerows fill with the last of the season's rosehips, we're following in her footsteps — gathering, just as she would have, before the year turns toward winter.

Rosehip

"Rosa canina"



Seeds can
cause skin
irritation

Description

Bright red-orange berries • Oval and glossy • Found on wild rose bushes

- Ripen Early-Late Autumn

Uses / ailments

Vitamin C boost • Coughs & colds •
Syrups & cordials • Traditional remedies

Rosehip

"Dream Charm"



Place your charm somewhere close to your pillow, on your bedside table, tucked under the pillowcase, or hung nearby. Then, just before you turn out the light, say quietly:

**Little charm of berry bright,
Watch over me througout the night.
Chase the shadows far away,
Bring me dreams as soft as day.**

Take a slow breath in, and a slow breath out. Close your eyes, and welcome dreams.

Rosehip Syrup

Rosehips are one of the countryside's most useful little fruits. Beneath their tough red skin sits a soft, tangy flesh, surprisingly rich in nutrients, enough that just a spoonful of syrup was once considered a proper daily tonic for growing children. Herbalists have long used rosehips to support the immune system and soothe sore throats, valuing them as a gentle, natural way to help the body cope with the changing season.

You will need

- 500g fresh rosehips
- 1 litre water
- 250g Honey (or Sugar)
- A muslin cloth or clean tea towel
- A saucepan
- A sterilised bottle for storing



Method

- Roughly chop the rosehips (with adult help. Food processor works well)
- Bring 750ml of the water to the boil, add the rosehips, and simmer for 15 minutes
- Pour the mixture through a muslin cloth into a bowl, and let it drip through without squeezing (this keeps the syrup clear)
- Return the leftover pulp to the pan with the remaining 250ml water, simmer for 10 minutes, then strain again through the muslin
- Combine both batches of liquid in a clean pan, add the sugar, and gently heat until dissolved
- Simmer for 5 minutes, then pour into a sterilised bottle while still warm

Store in the fridge and use within 4 weeks — or freeze in small portions to make it last through the winter.

LEARNING SUMMARY – OCTOBER HEDGEWITCH

A quick guide to the learning in this study, for your records, LA report or setting's planning. Adapt it to describe your own child's learning.

SUBJECTS COVERED

History · Science · English ·
Cooking & Nutrition ·
Religious Education & Culture
· Art & Design · Wellbeing



WHAT WE EXPLORED

The Pendle Witch Trials (1612): the life of Old Demdike, a healer from Pendle Forest in Lancashire, and how fear and rumour led to the trials. Myth vs fact: the Hedgewitch Herald's "We got it wrong" special, looking at how stories about witches changed over time and where the popular images came from.

The Salem Witch Trials: how the special court was dissolved in 1692 after unreliable evidence had led to wrongful convictions.

Herb of the Month, rosehip (*Rosa canina*): identifying it, why it matters to hedgerow wildlife, its vitamin C, and wartime rosehip gathering.

The Poison Cabinet, mandrake: why some plants are dangerous, the folklore around them, and how mandrake was once used as an early painkiller.

Samhain and the Wheel of the Year: the Celtic festival, how it links to All Hallows' Eve, and traditions of remembering ancestors.

Pumpkins and seeds: turnip lanterns, how seeds store next year's harvest, and seed saving.

The night sky: Orion, the constellation of the month, and its roots in Greek myth.

LEARNING SUMMARY – OCTOBER HEDGEWITCH

SCIENCE SKILLS PRACTISED

Identifying a wild plant using its key features
Understanding seed dispersal (birds eating rosehips)
Telling safe plants from toxic ones, and why we never touch or taste unknown plants
Observing how seeds develop inside a fruit, then drying and planting them
Spotting a constellation in the night sky



OTHER LEARNING

Thinking critically about rumour and fairness · empathy for people who were treated unjustly · kitchen safety and following a recipe · understanding other cultures and festivals · reflection and gratitude · respecting nature and plant safety.

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM (OPTIONAL):

- KS2 History: a local history study; an aspect of British history beyond 1066; how our knowledge of the past is built from different sources, and why accounts can differ.
- KS2 Science: plants (seeds and reproduction); living things and their habitats; Earth and space.
- D&T (Cooking & Nutrition): preparing and cooking seasonal food (rosehip syrup, Samhain soup, roasted seeds).
- English: reading poetry and a narrative tale; reading non-fiction for information.
- KS3 (ages 11–12): the same history and science themes, explored with more independence.

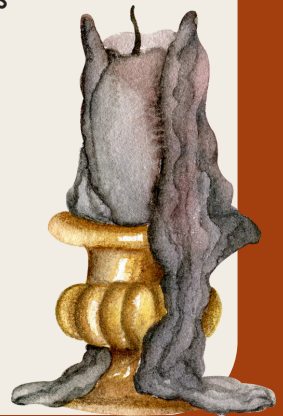
LEARNING SUMMARY – OCTOBER HEDGEWITCH

KEY WORDS

Samhain · Pendle · accusation · trial · evidence · myth · folklore · healer · rosehip · hedgerow · vitamin C · toxic · mandrake · ancestors · Wheel of the Year · constellation

IDEAS FOR EVIDENCE (SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO SHARE)

Photo of the rosehip syrup, Samhain soup or dream pouch being made
A myth vs fact chart about witches, written in their own words
A short written or spoken retelling of Old Demdike's story
A labelled drawing of a rosehip or the mandrake card
Photos of a pressed flower or the Samhain altar they created
Their completed My October Whispers reflection page
A sketch of Orion after a night-sky walk
Dried and planted pumpkin seeds, photographed as they grow



EXAMPLE FOR YOUR REPORT

"In October, [name] studied the Pendle Witch Trials of 1612, learning about the life of Old Demdike and how rumour and fear led to the accusations. [He/She/They] compared myths about witches with historical fact and discussed why accounts of the past can differ. [He/She/They] identified wild rosehips, learned how birds help spread their seeds, and made rosehip syrup. [He/She/They] also learned to recognise toxic plants such as mandrake, explored the Celtic festival of Samhain, cooked a seasonal pumpkin soup and found the constellation Orion in the night sky."