

TILLEULS À DANSER®

DANCE LIME TREES, TREES FOR DANCING LOVE AND LIFE

The dance lime tree and its symbolism

The dance lime tree is a sort of green temple. The way in which its leaves change colour as the seasons pass makes it an excellent symbol of the constantly changing nature of life. It also symbolises the revival of ancient astronomical knowledge based on the observation of the times of sunrise and sunset over the course of a year.

These points of reference allow one to understand the organisation of the Eight Nature Festivals which take place each year. Like a sundial, the dance lime tree is a “**Tree of Measurement**”, determining the various times of the year and the seasons. This aspect is more fully developed in the text on the Eight Nature Festivals (see menu).

The tree forms a vertical axis which organises the relationship between the earth and the heavens. It represents both the tree of life and the point of contact between heaven and earth, important elements in European and non-European cosmogonies.

It is related to the tree of paradise, the tree of the Kaballa, to the ash tree of Iggdrasil found in Germanic and Scandinavian mythology, to the Irminsul of the Saxons, to the Chinese “Kien-Mou” tree (a vertical pathway inhabited by spirits, souls and gods), and to the tree of the Shamans.



Yggdrasil attributed to Oluf Olufssen Bagge



An ancient dance lime tree in Birnfeld (Germany)

These ‘cosmic’ trees are often represented by species such as the lime tree, oak, maple, ash and olive, reputed for their longevity and impressive size. Surpassing even the oak tree, the lime is majestic, elegant and resistant, and is the veteran of the European trees. Lime trees frequently reach the age of 1000 years, and 2500-year old lime trees grow to this day in Lithuania.

The dance lime tree, through its longevity, brings together not only different eras but also people of the present and the past. It forges a link between history, the temporal, and festivities, and unites nature and culture. It also opens the door to the new “green humanism” that is growing today in response to increased understanding of and concern for ecology.

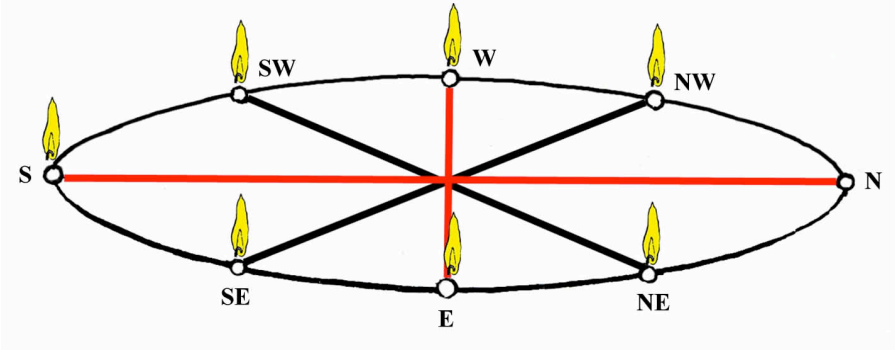
The heart-shaped lime tree leaf is associated with the heart and all its symbolism, which explains its association with the principles of Love, Fidelity and Justice. The dance lime tree is a “**Tree of Love**”.

A “**Feminine Tree**”, the lime often plays an essential role in myths, fairy tales, legends and in popular customs. Its popularity is legendary. The legend of Philemon and Baucis, for example, recounts how this couple was turned into an oak tree and a lime tree, which symbolised their great love for one another.

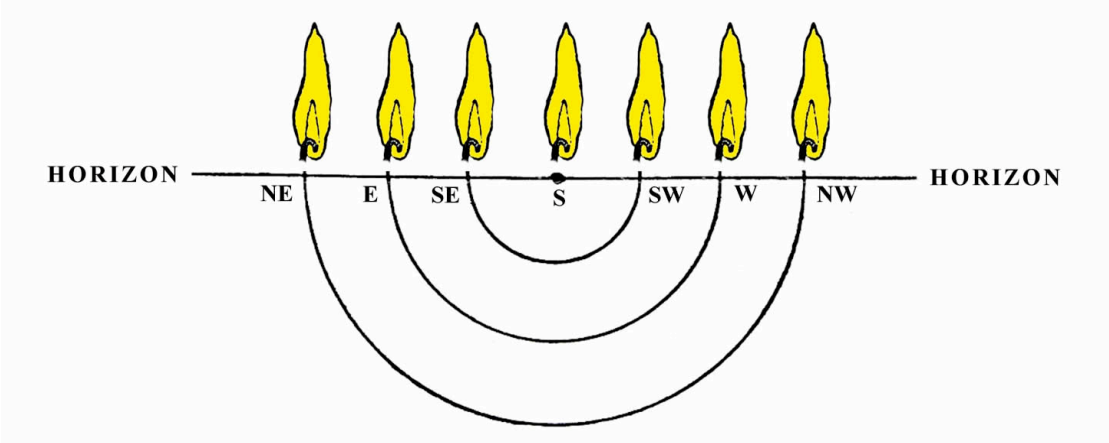
The lime tree is also associated with Freya, the Scandinavian goddess of love, and with Frigga, the goddess of medicine, who protects marriage and binds faithful lovers together. In Greek mythology, the mother of the centaur Chiron (who taught medicine to mortals) was called Philyra, which means lime tree in Greek. This tree, whose bark was used to weave textiles and make ropes, is by extension a “**Tree of Ties That Bind**”, linking together communities and individuals. The components of its bark, sapwood, leaves and flowers are used in many medicines, making the lime tree the king of the “**Medicine Trees**”.

In the epic poem the *Nibelungenlied*, the mother of the hero Siegfried is called Sieglinde. This name can be translated as “lime tree of victory”, “sweet victory”, or simply “lady of the lime tree”.

The lime tree is often called a “**Tree of Light**”. The “Knights of the Lime Tree”, a group in the Drôme region of France where lime tree blossoms are harvested in sold, give it this name.



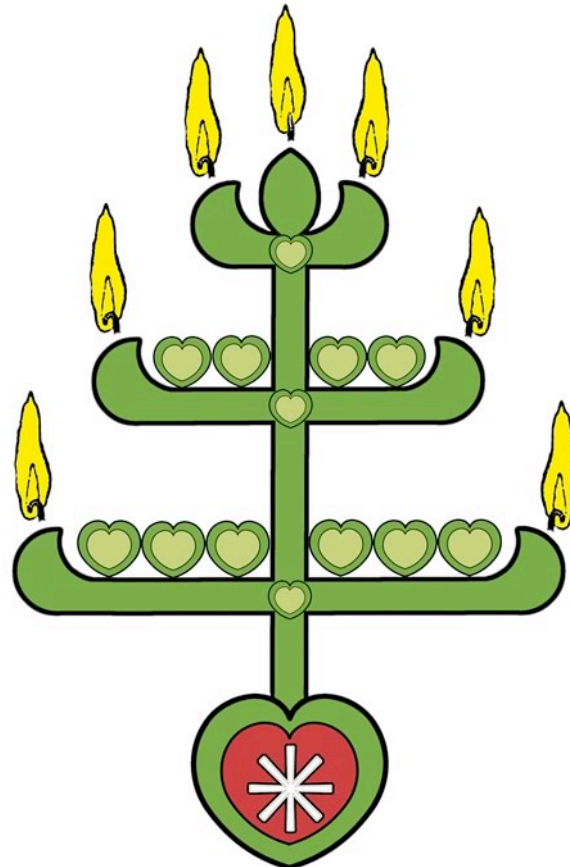
THE SEVEN LIGHTS – The sun’s course over one year



THE SUN’S COURSE ON THE HORIZON SEEN FROM THE NORTH
The north is the dark part of the year

The dance lime tree can also be defined as a “Tree of Light” because of its three-tiered structure. These tiers or circles represent the course of the sun at three important points of the year, the winter solstice (the shortest day of the year), the equinoxes (when the day and night are of equal length) and the summer solstice (the longest day of the year). The “seven lights” are the points of the sun’s passage at these important times of year. The North is the darkest part of the year.

The dance lime tree and the tree of light are one and the same.



Dance lime tree, tree of light

**The varied symbolism associated with the dance lime tree makes it
a perfect emblem of the changing face of Europe.**

Pierre ALBUISSON

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