

Fairy Folk

at Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College

Spring Water Fairies May: Hawthorn Fairy

Clues to Find the Hawthorn Fairy's Door

In sweet summer, they've leaves glossy and green.
In crisp, fiery fall, look for red haws.
In the icy new year, their thorns strike fear!
In renewal of spring, the white blossoms bring
fairies, and babies, and bees galore
persisting, they line history's garden evermore.

Folklore and Nature

There is no tree more steeped in folklore than the hawthorn. Native to North America and Europe, it is part of the rose family, which is reflected in its pink and white May blossoms. Considered an emblem of hope, Athenian brides used hawthorn flowers to decorate their true love, while they carried their own bouquet of them to the altar. In ancient Rome, hawthorn wood was used as a charm against witchcraft and sorcery, and the leaves were put into the cradle of newborn babies as protection. Historically, hawthorn trees have always been called 'Fairy Trees' because they are believed to be a portal to other worlds.

These sweet fairies are the epitome of spring. They have rosy-pink cheeks and silky white tresses that reflect their kind, mystical disposition. Agile and quick, their wings are quite delicate and glisten when the light hits them just right. Hawthorn fairies live in the trees year-round, checking in on robin babies in the spring, and flitting between this world, and the mystical realm. They have become quite adept at knowing when they are needed and appear at just the right time to help protect children and animal babies of all sorts.

Hawthorn trees bloom in May as their serrated lobed leaves appear. The branches are covered in 2-inch thorns that can be very dangerous if handled. In autumn, the leaves drop as they reveal red haws that look like rosehips and can be made into jam, or left for the birds, who adore them. Birds often nest in their thorny branches for protection from other animals. Farmers once used hawthorns to line their fields in hedgerows to corral livestock. Today, many of these hedgerows persist long after the farming has ceased since the haws drop and new trees grow. These are the perfect trees to plant for pollinators since they forage heavily on the blossoms in early spring before other flowers bloom. Hawthorn is a common medicinal treatment in Europe used for ailments of the heart such as high or low blood pressure. A tisane made of the leaves is used when a person is feeling heartbroken or sad, thus the reason the hawthorn is known as the heart herb.

You should never remove anything from the hawthorn without leaving a gift for the fairies. Doing so might invite misfortune, so we are sure to leave a little something sparkly when we collect the haws, or leaves. The fairies are most excited by tiny shiny objects and be sure to whisper a little hello as you visit!



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