



Winter's Solstice

Winter Solstice marks the time of the year when the light returns as the sun shifts and starts to move northward again. In Europe, the tradition of the Yule log is celebrated on Winter Solstice. A special log is brought in and placed on the hearth where it glows for the twelve nights of the holiday season. After that, it is kept in the house all year to protect the home and its inhabitants from illness and any adverse condition. The Yule log is the counterpart of the midsummer bonfires, which are held outdoors on Summer Solstice to celebrate the shortest night of the year. It is also customary to place mistletoe around the fire, which is the plant that grew on the oak tree, sacred to the Druids, the priests of the old Celts. Among other uses, mistletoe is thought to help women conceive. The Christmas tree also dates from old European or pagan rituals. It was the time to celebrate the renewal of the earth, and greens were used as the symbol. Branches of pine, cedar, and juniper commonly used brings wonderful fragrance into the home. Red candles are used to symbolize the fire and heat of the returning sun as the days begin to lengthen. The Winter Solstice is Thursday, December 21, 2006 in the northern hemisphere year.