

# THE WILDWOOD TAROT

BY MARK RYAN AND JOHN MATTHEWS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILL WORTHINGTON

Deck Review by Elizabeth Hazel, QJ Editor

Get out the dribble bibs and drool cups—here’s another deck featuring the scrumptious artwork of Will Worthington., artist of the *Druidcraft Tarot*. Here he creates in a slightly different style that owes more to graphic novels and less to portraiture. Okay, Will, you had me at hello.

This deck is an outgrowth of the *Greenwood Tarot* (1996), drawn by Chesca Potter, which is now out-of-print and hard to obtain. The *Wildwood Tarot* lives up to its name, as the ideas and images presented in the deck emerge from the primeval woodlands, the great forests where so many European legends and adventures take place. Most faerie tales include an eventful walk through a forest where the hero or heroine encounters any number of unusual characters and creatures. Many of these are included in the deck.

While the *Wildwood Tarot* follows the structural armature of a tarot deck, the internal organization and divinatory meanings suggest the originality of an oracle deck. It’s based on the pagan Eight-Fold Path or the Wheel of the Year. The suits relate to the seasons: the Time of the suit of Arrows (Air element) runs from Imbolc to Beltane; the Time of Bows (Fire, from Beltane to Lammas), the Time of Vessels (Water, from Lammas to Samhain), and finally the Time of Stones (Earth, from Samhain to Imbolc). The suits are rough equivalents of tarot suits, and the imagery and meanings are well-considered departures from the tradition. The characters of the trump suit have seasonal relationships on the Wheel of the Year that integrate them with specific suits.

The Court Cards are elementally-related animals. The Arrows courts are birds, the Stones are large forest animals, the Bows feature smaller forest critters, while the Vessels are

creatures of lake and stream. The tiny wren representing the Page of Arrows shows how a tiny singer can have a great song.

The pip cards are reoriented to the idiom of the forest. Each card includes a descriptor, for example, the Two of Stones is Challenge. Sometimes these are close to the equivalent tarot card, while others wander far afield in a good way.

The entire spectrum of trump characters has been reimagined and renamed. The High Priestess becomes the Seer, the Hermit is the Hooded Man (with symbolic devices that suggest the Holly King), and the Hanged Man is transformed into the Mirror, an image of a mermaid holding a crystal ball.

Let’s cut to the chase. Neo-pagans will love this deck. The book is spot-on with its Sabbat and seasonal associations, making this a superior tool for work in sacred circles. The artwork is exquisite and there isn’t a bad card in the bunch. Meditating with these cards or including them on an altar or in spell work will be a pure pleasure. This should be at the top of the list for Yule gifts this year. This deck gets a standing ovation as a glorious addition to the body of tarot.



Book by Mark Ryan and John Matthews, card illustrations by Will Worthington. 78-card deck with 160 pg paperback book in box. Sterling Ethos, 2011. \$19.95.