

WHAT IS SEASONAL YOGA?

“Nature is not a place to visit. It is home” - Gary Snyder

For me Seasonal Yoga is a way of life. A way to live as our ancestors lived. They rose with the sun and went to bed when the sun went down. They cooied in when it was winter and worked hard and enjoyed themselves in the heat of summer. They harvested in Autumn what they had sown in Spring and Summer.

Over the years we have lost touch with the seasons with our busy fast paced 24, 7 lifestyles. Everything is available at the touch of a button and what we want, we can get instantly. But nature shows us that we need to have patience and that things take time, and will happen as they are meant too, in their own time. A young sapling never rushes to become a great tree; it just happens over time.

Quote from Seasonal Yoga website *“Seasonal Yoga flow is a balanced style of Yoga that is designed to align you with the changing energies of nature and the seasons. A practice that improves physical strength and flexibility and brings balance and harmony to your life. The concept was created in 1995 by Julie Hanson and Sue Woodd as an antidote to the stress and anxiety of modern life. It combines Yoga, Tai Chi, Chi Kung and a modern understanding about body movement, with Traditional Chinese Medicine ideas about the changing nature of the seasons around us, and within.”*

This quote says to me, that what Julie and Sue created 27 years ago, is probably even more relevant today than it was back then. Life has got more stressful than anybody could have anticipated and people are now looking for ways to take back control of their health, on all levels. People are ready to look outwith the mainstream; to help them heal either from physical or mental stress or illnesses and are seeking ways of life that they want to emulate. They're seeing people move and flow with life easier than they are doing and are ready to go beyond their self-imposed boundaries and try something new and more natural.

Nature is in a constant flow of movement; gently moving from one season to the next; adapting to what is in that moment; whether it be rain, sun, hail or blowing a hoolie - and in Scotland that can be all in one day; or even in one hour! When we live and move with nature and the seasons we learn to let go of expectations and go with what is, at that moment in time. The only moment we have is now; and as we live in the moment, we learn to listen to our bodies needs and wants and to honour and respect that.

As Albert Einstein said *“Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better”*

With Seasonal Yoga we learn to crave the stillness of meditation and watch ourselves unfold and let go, just as a flower uncurls her petals to the sunlight. By letting go, allowing the flow of each season, we create space to be who we truly are; to allow ourselves to let go of internal and external baggage. To no longer be weighed down with false expectations and to absorb ourselves in mother nature and all the love that she offers us. Each moon cycle and season we get the chance to refocus on what is important and to make those changes in our lives.

When I asked Sue Woodd what Seasonal Yoga is for her she said *“it’s about going outside and seeing what nature is doing, and balance my practice to harmonise with nature’s expression”*. Moving with the seasons gives our body the respect it deserves. And the ease of movement is natural, flowing and loving to our body, as it is working with nature and not against it; as happens in lots of areas of our lives.

Each season brings with it, it’s own special energy. Most of us are aware of feeling the energy bursting forth in Spring and are so excited when we see the first Snowdrops and Crocuses peeking through the snow at us. And Spring quite often likes to tease us; with one day the glimpse of Summer; and the t-shirts, shorts and white legs come out and then the next we are back in our Winter woolies again; reminding us to ‘never cast a clout, until May is oot’. And we too can be like that with our yoga practice; determined and fired up one day and the next day wanting to go within with a restful Yoga Nidra.

Seasonal Yoga helps us to live in harmony with our surroundings. The techniques used in Seasonal Yoga of Meditation, Yoga postures, Chi Kung and Breathwork bring about body and mind awareness and how we can alter our mood, and our stress levels to bring about that harmony and balance that we crave. By flowing our movement of the body, and bringing awareness to the breath during yoga practice and during meditation, we can quickly change the physiology of the body and mind to create what it is we need in that moment. It could be a few rounds of Sun Salutation followed by Bastrika to bring heat and focus or to use Nadi Shodana to bring yourself into balance followed by a gentler practice of the season to give you what you need at that moment.

Seasonal Yoga is also about eating what’s in season. It’s about looking for locally grown food and seeing what’s on the shelves in your local veg shop. Seeing the vibrancy of the colours of the Summer offerings and then all the root vegetables of Autumn and the Brussel Sprouts in Winter. Early Summer is when the salad leaves start to become available and we know for sure that Summer is on the way. Our body craves the natural sweetness of sautéed Autumn pumpkins and the apples that are abundantly available. In Late Summer the bushes are dripping with juicy berries ripe for the picking. Our bodies naturally know what is right for us; it’s just that we have to listen.

Seasonal Yoga gives us the tools, techniques and enthusiasm to live a Seasonal Life, one full of wonder of Mother Nature and the abundance that she shares with us all.

Quote from John Muir - *“Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”*

And to sum up Seasonal Yoga in two words - ‘Life Changing’.