

# DRYAD

**Dryads (Plural) / Dryad (Singular)**  
DRY-ads / DRY-ad

According to Dryad lore, they were once the stewards of a great forest. The First Realm told them to take their rest, as their work was now done for the time being. The stewardship was then passed over to the Elves under the condition that when Spirits of the Realms felt their rest was completed, the Dryads would then start to awaken. In most Realms, Dryads have recently woken from what they now call the Great Sleep. These plantlike people are remembering more of their culture each day. As some are fond of slumber, not all Dryads are awakened yet. Some Dryads may join the awakening later than the rest.

Dryads consider all living flora and fungi descendants of the First Realm and will defend them to the last. Dryads will often claim an area to be a part of the "First Realm" and they protect it as if this is fact. It is their belief that one of their kind will find it, and since none of them can be sure, they all treat "their" forest as the true First Realm. When the Spirit of the Realms called the Dryad to wake, some were in such a deep sleep they did not hear the call. Because of this, Dryads can still be found sleeping across the Realms. As more Dryads wake and start moving across the Realms, the sleeping Dryads are woken by their presence.



They are an egalitarian folk that tend to cluster together in communities. If asked where they are from, it is not unusual to hear a newly woken Dryad refer to their community as their Home Forest. They consider one another Kith and Kin, (often referring to one another as siblings, cousin, etc) and live in remarkable balance with each other.

Dryads have a strong sense of community. Their lives center around family, festivals, and taking care of the people within their cities and villages. Because of this, Dryad communities generally do not have roles of authority outside of the Elders. With the exception of Elders, they see no need for titles outside of Friend, Cousin, Parent, Sibling etc. Before they went to sleep, Dryads rarely traded in coin - preferring to trade goods or services for the same. A good example being the Healers or Caretakers within a community. Instead of charging for their services, they are taken care of by the rest of the community with food and services in exchange for medical care for the young, sick, or elderly. Family groups can be large or small with the focus on Dryad children.

Confrontation is something to be avoided, especially among their own kind. When situations become strained, they have a tendency to walk away with an "agree to disagree" mindset. Even in conflict - such as if someone committed what would be considered a crime in another culture- there is a drive to seek understanding. If something is stolen, what can be done to help the thief? Because of their community focus and drive to understand, exile is often the harshest and most feared punishment.

Dryad communities are governed by a set of Elders. Elders are chosen by the community and that choice is bolstered by the Land. Elders help to guide a community and act as protectors. Typically, there are four Elders of varying lifespans to help make sure all are spoken for. An Elder's word is not absolute, but their wisdom is often heeded- especially in times of difficulty. Dryads are free to ignore an Elder's advice, but the Elders exist for a reason, and Dryads may find they wish

they had listened. If a disagreement arises that can not be overcome, or someone has harmed another, the Elders are often called upon to pass judgement.

Elders have longer lifespans than their cousins – for example, an Amanita Dryad may normally only live one to two decades, where an Amanita Elder may live closer to a century. Elders are bolstered by their ties to the Forest, and in addition to expanded years they find themselves to be far more powerful than their years may suggest. (NOTE: Elders are NPC/Plot control only – they can be in a PC's background, but if a PC becomes an Elder they will then retire.)

Due to their inclination towards lighthearted trickery, Dryads often do not understand why others may feel slighted or put-off by their odd behavior. They are generally enthusiastic in their happy demeanor, and slow to anger. They love playing innocent pranks and tricks on those around them so long as no one is harmed. Jokes, especially puns, are almost ingrained into a Dryad's nature.

Because of the varied lifespans, Dryads tend to view romantic relationships in the moment. Enjoying their partnership with one or more Dryad (or any other species) for as long as everyone is interested in doing so. Sometimes relationships last a lifetime, or in others they are but a short, bright moment of joy. Dryad children tend to be raised communally as all Dryads are seen as Kith and Kin. Most will stay with their family group, but all in the community are ready to step in if help is needed or if a parent passes early. It can sometimes come off as confusing when traveling dryads list their many, many relatives from their village to other species.

With their strong connection to the land, and their celebration of the changing seasons, Dryads understand and honor the cycle of life and death. Death is a natural part of life, and while it is sad, it isn't something most Dryads fear. In order to honor that cycle, most Dryad communities bury their dead with a plant of some sort – the body either burned or wrapped in cloth and placed under the planting. A name plaque, sometimes decorated with pieces reminding those they left behind of their life, is placed with the plant so that they may not be forgotten by those who come after. The act of planting and burial is also when family and friends will tell stories and celebrate the life of their loved one. An Elder will then infuse the plant with power enabling it to establish itself quickly and grow for many years as a memorial.

Dryads have an extreme distaste for the wanton destruction and wasteful use of their lands and resources. On the other hand, they hold no issue with prudent use of flora for housing, food and survival. Due to their deep veneration of the land, they have an almost ingrained sense of duty to protect it from forces that seek to destroy it. Necromancy is a force deeply despised by the Dryads due to the perceived harm it can cause to the land. Some Dryads have a near militant view against Necromancy, but most tend to have a sense of pity and disdain towards those that are known to cast it. If an alleged Necromancer was met by a Dryad, the Dryad would seek to re-educate the individual. If that attempt fails, a Dryad would not regret punishing the individual and, as a last resort, executing them.

Due to their long sleep, some Dryads wake to a deep confusion. Their memories are gone, save their name. If they awake near others of their community, they are treated with patience as they work to regain themselves. If they are far from home, they may become someone entirely different from who their families once knew.

In rare instances, a Dryad wakes with an insatiable anger. They lash-out at others around them, sometimes going as far as using Necromancy. They are especially angry with Elves and will attack any Elven species on sight; believing strongly that the Elves failed in their duty to protect the Forest. These Dryads are known as Malwoken. It is theorized that the anger is caused by Necromantic energies being used in the area while the Dryad slept, but there is no truly known answer nor is there a known cure. (NOTE: Malwoken are NPC/Plot control only – they can be in a PC's background, but they are not a playable version of a Dryad.)

## *Physiology*

It must be noted that Dryads are not physically plants, they are a mortal species of flesh and blood.

Dryads can come in a diverse range of physical appearances based on which flora or fungi they are connected to. While this physiology can be broad (Alpine plants or flowering plants or mushrooms in general) it can also be as specific as a single species (i.e. *Juncus spiralis* or *Pseudotsuga menziesii*)

While outdated, most scholars still broadly classify Dryads into four different subspecies based on region. The most common of which resemble flowers or leafy plants and live in mountains, deserts, and arid regions; those who live in the hills and forests who are most akin to trees; those which live in fields, prairies and on shores who often resemble reeds or sea-weed; and finally those who live in swamps, wetlands, and the subterranean who have more in common with fungi, lichen and slime molds. In larger, older communities, you will find many types of Dryads living together in harmony. Some even build specialized homes to make their Water Lily or Inky Cap neighbors comfortable. Depending on their terrain affinity Dryads may live only a few decades, have typical mortal lifespans, or even rival the longevity of elven species. Slow growing alpine Tree Dryads can become ancient, whereas quick and energetic Fungi Dryad may live only a fraction of that time.



### *Habitat*

It is rumored that for every place where there is life, there are Dryads. From the freezing wastes to the hottest deserts, these adaptive and friendly people have found a way to not only survive, but to flourish. As people connected to the land, Dryads often refer to themselves as the “Dryads of the Land” (i.e. A cactus dryad may be called a Dryad of the Sands, while a swampy mushroom may be Mire-Dryad and one from the savannah a Dryad of Endless Summer). Occasionally, a dryad will refer to themselves as a 'friend of the land' also.

### *Holidays*

Dryads are always looking for an excuse to celebrate. The birth of children, the joining of families, or visitors from another Realm are all cause for jubilation. Dryads also celebrate the changing seasons. As Winter melts to spring, spring warms to summer, summer cools to fall, and fall gives way to the long winter nights, Dryads celebrate the changes of their biomes.

- Spring is a time of rebirth and joy. Competitions are held, but most notably is Mirthnocht- the competition bringing together the best joke and pun weavers of the realm. Those who can make the Elders laugh loudest and longest are highly praised. Fresh nectar and juice are in high demand this time of year.
- Summer - or Ars, the festival of skill - is celebrated in many forms. Be it potions, cooking, baking, weaving, or martial, all sorts of talents are on display to be shared and revered. Chilled honey-wine is popularly served during the festival.
- Fall is the time of Lagenaria, a festival to celebrate the year's work. Harvests are shared throughout the community, everyone works together to make sure their homes are ready for winter, and there are supplies enough for all. Spiced cider can often be seen warming chilly hands.
- Winter, the time of Tidings, is a festival of songs and stories. Not all Realms experience the ice and snow associated with the season, but the longer nights make for the perfect time to sit together, tell stories and share music. Because they span the Realms, these celebrations are happening at some point year round. Any warm drink can be had during this time, but a concoction of chocolate and cinnamon is most pleasing.

- The only constant is the New Year. Held on the 12<sup>th</sup> full moon, Dryad New Year's ceremonies tend to celebrate the lives of the dead. The Sharing of Lives, where everyone is given the opportunity to tell a story about or speak to the memory of someone who has departed over the past year. This tradition may last for hours, and is an opportunity to laugh, shed tears, and truly feel the love and grief that is produced when a loved one dies. Some also take the time to tend to the memorial plantings of friends or loved ones who passed before them. The symbolism of butterflies or moths is popular, as they represent the beauty and hope that can be found in change or death.

### ***Metal Aversion***

Metal products tend to create a disharmony deep in the core of a Dryad. It's not so much the metal itself, but the processing of it to create a finished product that bothers the Dryad. It is the way a metal ore is warped, heated, shaped and processed that creates the sense of discord for the individual, so they tend to avoid products with processed metal in them. Not all Dryads feel the disharmony the same. Some are more sensitive than others and will wear no metal at all, while others will wear small pieces like a buckle on a belt or rivets on a bracer. Most will only carry a small amount of coin on them; the more sensitive ones avoid touching coin completely. The larger the metal item is, the more distracting and unbearable it will become for any Dryad to be around, especially for long periods of time. Even the most metal tolerant Dryad could not carry a metal forged weapon or armor for longer than a few moments.



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## Special Abilities

1. Herbal Lore ½ cost
2. Resist Binding
3. Armour Material Restriction - Non-metal materials must be used.
4. One-Handed Edged should be based on organic materials: Stone, Wood, Bone, etc.

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## Appearance Requirements

All Dryads must be costumed as is appropriate for the type. A prosthetic of some sort is required, such as flowers in the hair or spines, vines or bark around the body. Likewise, mushroom dryads often wear a cap or veil. Makeup can be as simple or as creative as you wish, as long as it is nature-inspired. The makeup and costuming can change with the seasons; thus a Tree-like Dryad could be primarily gray in the winter, green in the spring and summer, and orange in the fall.

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# Roleplaying a Dryad

**"No Necromancy, no problems!"** By nature, Dryads are people with a strong sense of the natural cycles. Death is an extant part of life, both the ending and continuation to a rich and beautiful story as the body returns to the earth. To extend life beyond what is intended is an affront that must be dealt with. Personally, if necessary. Likewise, any corruption or destructing of the land is to be treated as an urgent and serious threat.

**"A wholesomeness of dryads!"** Lacking the long-established societies that many other species have, many dryads tend to naturally form communities of their own. Most dryads are delighted to meet others of their own kind, and will often gravitate towards building quick relationships through puns, pranks and general camaraderie.

**"Eye for an eye!"** While every Dryad is different when it comes to morality, as a whole many of them tend to prefer fairness and balance over self-serving interests. Tolerant and forgiving as they are, once a line has been crossed the offending party will be dealt with and amends made. Dryads make upstanding community members (despite what they often consider "right" not always being "legal"). Many are drawn to community care positions (treasurer, chronicler, patrol, etc), as it allows them to balance the scales and ensure that their community thrives.