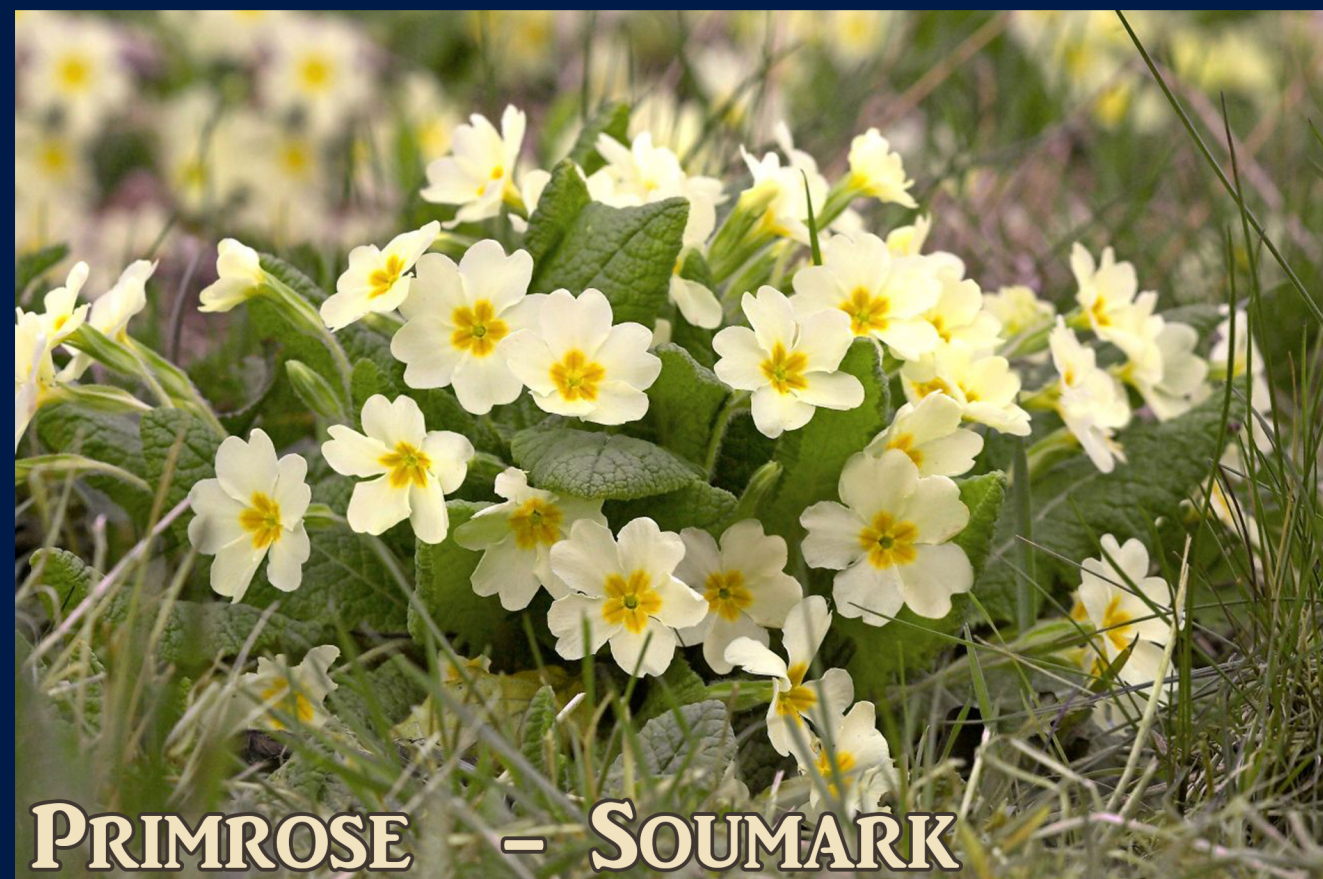


Changelings & Fairy Plants

ISLE OF MAN



PRIMROSE – SOUMARK

Primroses are common across the Isle of Man. On May Day eve, people scattered blossoms on their threshold to protect from fairies - they are known to dislike yellow flowers. Cottages were also protected with elder leaves and mountain ash crosses. Fairies could come into unguarded houses to steal babies and leave a changeling. On the same night, Manx people would burn gorse, pictured below, to drive witches and fairies out of the fields. Gorse and heather cover large swaths of the island.



Even in 1891, elder trees could be found growing by almost every cottage on the island. This tree is considered by some to be the Queen of the Forest. The leaves are protective, but cutting wood without asking the tree's permission is bad luck. Burning elder wood invites bad spirits into the house. If a baby's cradle is made of elder, it is easy for fairies to steal the child and leave a changeling.



ELDER – TRAMMAN

To prevent fairies from taking a baby, many people put salt or iron objects in the cradle. To get rid of a changeling, some people would cook with eggshells (tricking the changeling into revealing itself) or throwing it into the fire. In one Manx tale, the tailor and mother stoke a fire with turf and ferns, saying, "I'll send thee home!" The changeling hopped up and ran out the door.

