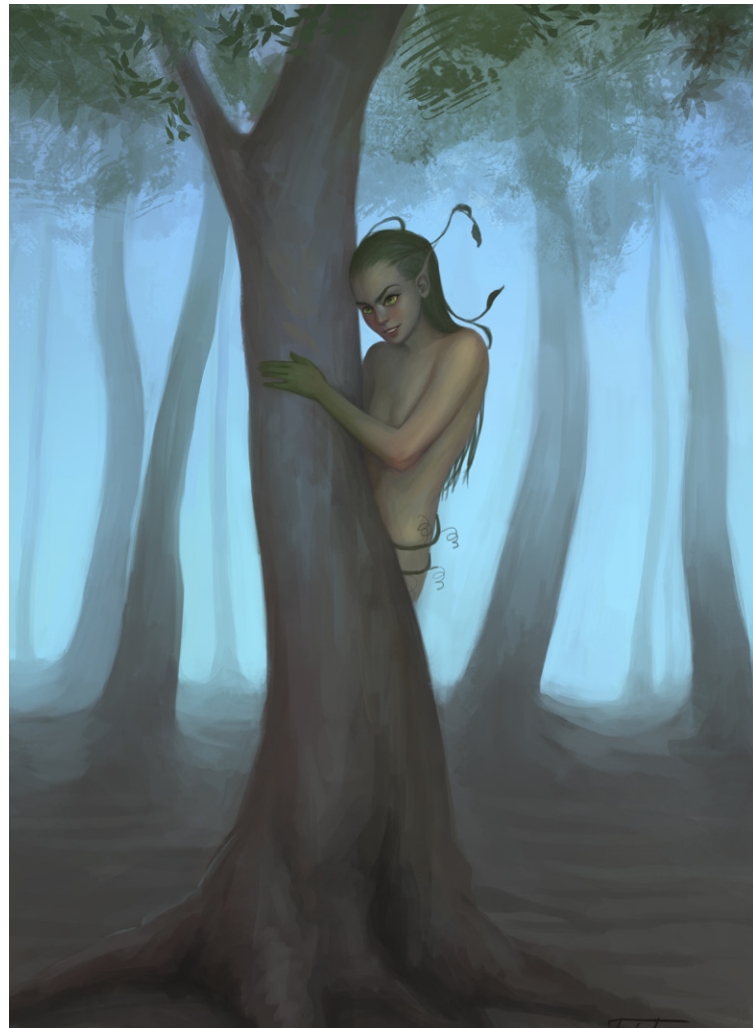


The Goddess Within

Playing Nymphs



NYMPHS ARE A RACE OF nature goddesses, the very souls of life-giving landforms in their multitude. The fey and the gods welcome nymphs into their courts, and mortals worship the nymphs for their grace and favor. Being the divine aspect of a specific landform, a nymph's beauty and health reflect that of her river, forest, or mountain. During a lifespan measured in geologic time, nymphs attend court with their divine relatives, defend and punish deserving mortals, and explore the world in physical form—perhaps even as adventurers.



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DIVINE BEAUTY

Nymphs in physical form resemble a human or elf endowed with the radiance of divinity. She can subdue her radiance to a mere glowing, or unleash it until her form and aura express her elemental affinity. All nymphs have female bodies, but as spirits of nature, they do not conform to concrete notions of gender. Even in bodies that appear female, nymphs drift from one identity to another, taking on male, female, or other identities at will. As capricious spirits, nymphs see mortal identities and emotions as curious clothes to change in and out of at will, and the choice to be reclusive, coy, fierce, or giving is practically a game. Her mode of attire may range from a sensible dress, to heavy armor, to nothing at all. She awakens with whatever hairstyle she desires.

AVATAR OF NATURE

Nymphs and their landforms are one. At her option, a nymph emerges from her landform in a magically formed physical body. She can return to spiritual form by merging once again with her landform. She can do this as many times she wishes, unless prohibited by profound planar magic. While exploring the world, anything that happens to her landform—damage, growth, and gradual variations—manifests in her appearance and health, and vice versa.

If the nymph in physical form dies, her body dissipates and her landform's vitality diminishes. Some say her spirit returns to the divine realms to recover, while others claim she goes to the Underworld like mortals. However, should her physical body fall under the curse of undeath, her landform suffers the curse in turn. And if foul magic annihilates her soul, then her landform is destroyed: her forest withers, her river evaporates, or her mountain crumbles.

Nymphs and the Gods

The nymphs presented here are modeled on Greek mythology, which works well for most campaign settings. If your world features a great distinction between the “gods of civilization” and the “gods of nature,” then perhaps your nymphs would favor the druidic option. In settings where the cosmology is agnostic or mysterious (the gods may or may not exist), then it is fine for nymphs to keep their divine secrets to themselves—or to explain the truth in a white lie mortals can understand. In campaigns where fey are the focus, then this article uses the word “god” to roughly mean “archfey.” If all else fails, perhaps a nymph can't access her divine memories while in humanoid form.

LEGACY & LOVE

As minor deities, each nymph can trace ancestry in a family tree filled with mortal heroes, horrific monsters, and the gods themselves. Whereas mortals worship gods from afar, nymphs have met divine figures face-to-face, such as during service in a major god's entourage or on a pilgrimage to Mount Olympus. Some nymphs keep their family ties quiet, while others preach and prophesy on their relative's behalf. Adventuring nymphs pass by innumerable sisters hidden in landform, but to point them out to mortals would be a breach of confidence.

In love, nymphs only fear other divine forces, but they are cautious of mortal folly. It is extraordinarily rare for a nymph to marry, but they do not hesitate to join body and heart with beings they deem worthy. Legend notes that nymphs choose individuals from the entire variety of being, but it is absurd for a mortal to judge a goddess. Pregnancy may occur from any such union, regardless of species or gender. The

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daughters of nymphs are always nymphs, but a nymph's son is the same manner of being as his father (with a divine twist, becoming akin to a tiefling or aasimar).

DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY

A nymph is first and foremost the god of her specific locale. As a god, even one so minor, she has a cosmic duty to defend herself and to form relationships with mortals. In sisterhood, nymphs work together to perpetuate their beauty and the life of their inhabitants. The theoretically infinite multitude of nymphs join in undifferentiated chorus to account the needs of the entire planet, and often make hard decisions to ensure the continuity of all lifeforms.

Individually, nymphs tend to honor mortals whose wishes are within grasp, and to bedevil those who would defile their natural splendor. The fates call some nymphs to greater destinies, like aiding a god in great need or overthrowing the cosmic order. Besides this, how consistent or capricious, kind or cruel, and giving or selfish a nymph may be is ultimately her own choice.

INCARNATION AND ADVENTURE

Of all the gods, nymphs are the most likely to become adventurers. Nymphs may intercede in the mortal world on behalf of their divine liege lord. Others quest to earn honor or a favor from a major god. Many nymphs act on their own divine prerogative, taking to the world to defend her homeland and worshipers, or to punish offenders abroad. Others still explore because they are curious or enticed by the mortal world, and seek the exaltation of mortal peak experiences. No matter the motivation, few are more keenly aware than adventuring nymphs that small discoveries have cosmic consequences.

NYMPH NAMES

Mother nymphs lovingly grant their children names, but adults nymphs may go by that name or innumerable others. Some nymphs adopt the names mortals bestow their landform, or the

Nymph Backgrounds

Adjust your nymph's background to represent her preoccupation across the ages. Is she a scribe for Hecate, a minstrel for Hades, a knight of Athena, a wild Maenad, a lusty follower of Aphrodite, or something else entirely? Under what conditions does she appear in physical form? Does she know her divine parents? Does she have a cult following? How does she treat her worshipers?

name of an elemental phenomenon common to it. Others still go by the legendary names nymphs inspire throughout the land.

- ▶ **Earth names:** Apalacha, Andrasteia, Cleodora, Citrine, Cyllene, Daphnis, Dune, Fissure, Echo, Hematite, Ida, Jade, Lapis, Marble, Magnetis, Nomia, Quartz, Rhene, Salt, Shale, Tundra
- ▶ **Forest names:** Anaguluskee, Aspen, Banshee, Chrysanthemum, Eratheis, Hesperia, Ivy, Karya, Kelp, Lantana, Laurel, Nandina, Mint, Minthe, Rhododendron, Shade, Willow
- ▶ **Water names:** Amicalola, Acrea, Brook, Cascade, Coral, Fountain, Frost, Galene, Glacier, Humidity, Lethe, Minnehaha, Mist, Nimbus, Rain, Rusalka, Sabrina, Selkie, Sireyna, Tide, Thetis, Undine

NYMPH TRAITS

As the goddess of a specific landform, your mortal body inherits the following racial traits.

- ▶ **Ability Score Increase.** Your Wisdom increases by 2.
- ▶ **Age.** Nymphs usually enter the world as a physical body as a rite of passage once they reach maturity, which for plants is a matter of years, but for rivers decades and stones centuries. This body is magical and it does not age, but its health and life force are connected to the nymph's landform. Many nymphs are as old as the hills and seas.
- ▶ **Alignment.** As nature spirits, most nymphs are Neutral because their cosmic responsibility relates to all lifeforms.



However, nymphs can be of any alignment. Compassionate nymphs who come to the defense of mortals or their homelands are categorically good.

- ▶ **Size.** You inhabit a magically-created mortal body resembling a human or elf. Your size is Medium.
- ▶ **Sex.** All nymphs have female bodies suitable to their spirits. Some nymphs are content to keep one body for their time on earth, while others frequently change their bodies.
- ▶ **Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 feet.
- ▶ **Natural Wonder.** You know the *druidcraft* cantrip. Your spellcasting ability for this is Wisdom.
- ▶ **Voice of Nature.** You can speak to plants, rocks, and water as though they shared your language.
- ▶ **Divine Knowledge.** You have proficiency with one of the following skills: Arcana, Nature, or Religion.
- ▶ **Fey Ancestry.** You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put you to sleep.
- ▶ **Languages.** You can read, speak, and write Common, Celestial, and Sylvan.
- ▶ **Subrace.** Although innumerable clans of nymphs exist, they generally arise from one of three primordial elements. Choose one of the subraces below.

EARTH

These nymphs arise from stone and soil in their many forms. The most common clan are the oreads, who embody mountains and caves. Earth nymphs can just as easily hail from valleys, particular stones, or underground mineral structures. Some even purport to be born of the stars.

- ▶ **Ability Score Increase.** Your Constitution score increases by 1.
- ▶ **Stone's Fortitude.** You have resistance to slashing damage.
- ▶ **Crystal Aegis.** You learn the *shield* and *shield of faith* spells, and can cast either spell once without expending a spell slot and material components. You regain the ability to cast in this way again when you complete a long rest. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for this feature.

FOREST

Forest nymphs occur from woodlands and vegetation. Hamadryads are the spirits of individual trees, and dryads are their aggregate forests. Whether they are distinct from or identical with the fey creature that shares their name is anyone's guess. Similar clans include flowers (anthousai), groves (alseides), winds and breezes (aurae), and even the cardinal directions.

- ▶ **Ability Score Increase.** Your Dexterity score increases by 1.
- ▶ **Tree Stride.** Once per turn, you can use 10 feet of your movement to step magically into one living tree within reach and emerge from a second living tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger. Once you use this feature, you must complete a long rest or a short rest to use it again.

WATER

Numerous legends report water nymphs leading foolish men to early ends; indeed, they are the most spirited and mysterious. The kingdom of fresh water nymphs (naiads) include those who live in lakes (limnades), rivers (potameides), streams, and fountains. Various salt water kingdoms include the oceans (oceanids) and the seas (nereids), each with clans unknown to landborne races. There are also clans frozen water nymphs (icebergs, glaciers, snow) and airborne water nymphs (humidity, mist, stormclouds).

- ▶ **Ability Score Increase.** Your Charisma score increases by 1.
- ▶ **Aquatic.** You can breathe underwater. You also have a swim speed of 30 feet.
- ▶ **Waterworks.** You learn the spell *create or destroy water*, and can cast it once without expending a spell slot and material components. You regain the ability to cast in this way again when you complete a long rest. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for this feature.

NEW FEATS

ELEMENTAL REFUGE

Prerequisite: Nymph

You can disguise yourself amongst your sisters in your time of need. You gain the following benefits:

- ▶ You gain proficiency with one skill from the following: Insight, Perception, or Stealth.
- ▶ You learn the *meld into stone* spell, and can cast it once without expending a spell slot and material components. If you are a forest nymph, this spell instead melds you into a tree. If you are a water nymph, this spell instead melds you into a body of water. You must complete a long rest to cast the spell in this way again. Your spellcasting ability for this spell is Wisdom.



NYPHOTIC SEDUCTION

Prerequisite: Nymph

Mortals plead for your holy affection and embrace. You gain the following benefits:

- ▶ Increase either your Charisma or Wisdom by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- ▶ You learn the *charm person* spell and can cast it once without expending a spell slot. You regain the ability to cast it again in this way when you complete a short or long rest. Your spellcasting ability for this spell is your choice of Charisma or Wisdom. 🧙‍♀️