

Verbena: Sisters of A Mystic Society

Author's Note: Verbena are loosely based on the Verbena from White Wolf's *Mage: The Ascension* and the original witch kit from TSR's *Complete Wizards Handbook*. This kit is designed to be used the *Complete Netbook of Witches and Warlocks*, which can be found online at <http://rpgghost.com/WebWarlock/> and the AD&D 2nd Edition Game.

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*"We begin life naked, covered in blood and screaming.
Do not pretend it is any different."*

*"We are not human beings having spiritual experiences.
We are spiritual beings having human experiences."*

Traditional Verbena Sayings

Verbena are mages that have a learned the magicks and secrets of witchcraft.

"Verbena" is the Latin name for vervain, an herb with manifold properties, both real and imagined. Through the ages, it has been held as a miracle plant. Romans used it to consecrate temples; herbalists included it in love potions; superstitious peasants believed it warded against witches. Ingesting this herb causes nausea.

Verbena are fate-weavers and rune-cutters, shape-changers and be-witchers, herbalists and midwives dedicated to learning the secrets of healing and life, pain and death. To them, Life is the most potent force in existence. The growing ash can crack mountains. The living cauldron, the womb, is a constant source of generation, unequalled since original Creation. Thus each body is a sacred shrine; the substance and power of body - blood, sap and other life-giving fluids - serve as sacraments. Life, therefore, is their specialty.

While there is some debate on the exact relationship between verbena and witches there is no mistake on their similarities. Verbena, like witches and druids, honor and respect nature and life. Also like witches, verbena form covens, participate in sabbats and use the same mystickal tools. Many verbena even worship the Goddess in her many forms. But this is where the differences begin. While witches are dedicated to the Goddess and live through magic, verbena are devoted to the magic itself. This minor philosophical schism is a deep crevasse to witches and verbena.

Verbena History: While many verbena will claim that they "have always been", there are some occult scholars who disagree. It is their belief that verbena are an offshoot of a nature worshipping proto-witch (shamanistic) coven (they also believe that this is the same or similar coven that gave rise to the Druids). At some point in this coven's development some of the proto-witches decided that the magic became more important than the source, the Goddess. These witches left their sisters to form their own covens and became the verbena.

Verbena, unlike witches, use "blood magic" to achieve various magickal rites. These rites can include the use of their own blood, the blood of others, or carving magical runes and sigils in their own bodies. To verbena blood is the substance that contains the life force of living things. The Blood of Nature contains the vital force of Nature itself. Verbena using the power of sympathetic magick often

use mundane blood and ritual sacrifice to make their magick more powerful. In this respect this brings their thinking in line with the Mara Witches. But unlike the Mara, verbena see undead as an unholy abomination.

Note: For this verbena can, regardless of alignment, use any of the "blood magic" spells listed in the *Complete Netbook of Witches and Warlocks*.

Verbena also have a ritual of initiation. This ritual is often viewed as a symbolic death and rebirth of the mage, again similar to the Mara. But while this rebirth is symbolic it often is very physically challenging and exhausting.

All Initiates must undergo the ritual death and rebirth. After study and testing, the prospective Verbena enters the circle and undergoes some form of ordeal (often illusionary, sometimes not). When the coven is satisfied she has the necessary spirit and dedication, they call the elements as witnesses. Most Verbena stay loyal unto death.

Alignment: Verbena may be of any alignment but true neutral. The philosophy of the verbena requires them to make a moral or ethical stand.

Preferred Schools: Verbena, as a whole, are interested in life forces, so many prefer spells from the schools of necromancy, enchantment/charm and conjuration/summoning. Many also opt spells from abjuration, alteration, and divination.

Barred Schools: While no schools are barred to the verbena, most do not take spells from invocation/evocation or illusion schools.

Verbena must be general mages; specialty wizards cannot become verbena.

Role: Verbena see themselves as the self styled protectors of the world and the mundanes (non-magical humans). Often they clash with other wizards on the topics of how magic should be best used to do this. Verbena also look down on their witch cousins. They believe that the typical witch is not living up to her own full magical potential, which they refer to as "awakened". That full potential would be of course to become a verbena.

The verbena see themselves as participants on the Tree of Life. These simultaneously allies them and puts them at odds with some occultist witches and druids.

Secondary Skills: Herbalist or Alchemist.

Non-Weapon Proficiency: Herbalism and Spellcraft are gained for free at 1st level. The verbena may also choose freely from the list of witch proficiencies.

Weapon Proficiency: Required, dagger.

Equipment: All verbena need a focusing tool. Usually this is their Athame or Wand. Without it a verbena cannot cast spells or perform rituals.

Note: Unlike witches, the athame of a verbena is sharp and can be used for cutting. A verbena will rarely use her athame in combat, not for fear of desecrating it, but fear of damaging her spell focus. As you can imagine, many true witches find this offensive.

All verbena also possess a *Book of Shadows*. These books however are typical wizard spell books and can be read using a *read magic* ability or spell. Verbena, like any other mage, still cannot read a witch *Book of Shadows*.

Occult Powers: The verbena has access to occult powers at the following levels.

| Level | Power | Typical Powers |
|------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| 6 th level | Lesser | Glamour, Chill Touch |
| 9 th level | Minor | Heal / Harm Touch |
| 12 th level | Medial | Necromantic Protection |
| 15 th level | Greater | Fascination |

Special Hindrances: Like the witch, verbena are distrusted by outsiders. Unless an NPC is exceptionally open-minded or has extremely high Intelligence or Wisdom (13 or more in either ability), the verbena receives a -3 reaction roll, if she is known to be a verbena. If the NPC is uneducated, comes from an extremely superstitious or unsophisticated culture, or has a low Intelligence or Wisdom (under 9 for both), the verbena receives a -5 reaction roll. Additionally, if a verbena lingers in a superstitious or unsophisticated community for more than a day, she runs the risk of facing a mob of hostile citizens bent on running her out of town, imprisoning her, torturing her, or executing her. (The DM decides the size of the mob, their intentions, and the likelihood of accosting the verbena. As a rule of thumb, assume a 20 percent chance of a 4d6 member mob forming in a hostile community if the verbena stays for the day. This chance increases by 5 to 20 percent every additional day the verbena remains; the size of the mob increases by 2d6 members.)

Because of their non-conventional training, verbena do not earn bonuses to their experience for high ability scores.

Wealth Options: The verbena receives the standard (1d4+1) x 10 GP as starting money.

Races Allowed: Only humans are allowed to become verbena. Like witches, verbena are disproportionately female.

Allies and Enemies: Like witches, verbena belong to a coven or cult. The structure is the same as most covens. The DM can decide what religious ceremonies, if any, are performed.

Many witches see the verbena as insane. Yes they have some greater power (higher level spells) but the costs to the witch are too high. A true witch would never seek revenge, or carve runes into her own flesh. Verbena do not follow the rede.

Despite their alignments, a verbena will never associate with members of a diabolic or demonic cult, and especially witches and sorcerers that have such associates. Verbena do however get along well enough with some Tantric witches and shamans.

Verbena are also on fairly good terms with most druids. Druids, for the most part, tolerate, but do not trust, the verbena.

Using Verbena in Your Campaign

While general perceived to be evil, most of the time the motives and goals of the verbena are her own. Verbena can be used as PC's who wish to play a more mystical type of mage, but does not wish to play a witch. As a DM the verbena makes a great adversary not only to traditional PC groups, but to other witch types as well.

Like the sorcerer wizard kit listed in the *Complete Netbook of Witches and Warlocks*, the Verbena kit may be used to replace the witch kits listed in the *Complete Wizard's Handbook*, *The Complete Book of Necromancers*, or *Players Option: Spells and Magic*. The Witches of Hala from *Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium*, vol. 3 cannot be replaced by verbena.

