

# LEGEND AND FOLKLORE SYMBOLS: Xochiquetzal

*Known as Xochiquetzal, Ixquina or Tlaelquani, this Aztec goddess bestowed the gifts of beauty, fertility and love on mortals and gods alike.*

**H**er name means 'most precious flower' and she was worshipped by the Aztecs as goddess of the fruitful and flowering Earth until the collapse of the Toltec civilisation. Many Aztec deities were dark and cruel, but Xochiquetzal brought beauty and grace to the land of the living and even her association with the Underworld was celebrated with offerings of golden marigolds. Xochiquetzal was life and youth and she blessed her people with children.

## Garden of the goddess

In early myths, Xochiquetzal was married to Tlaloc, the rain god, but later legends describe her abduction from her husband by Tezcatlipoca, Lord of the Smoking Mirror. Tezcatlipoca carried off Xochiquetzal to the Nine Heavens, where she became a love deity and spent her days in a beautiful garden. It was said that no one in heaven or on Earth rivalled her beauty.

*The flowers in Xochiquetzal's garden could grant the gift of passionate love.*





## SYMBOLISM OF XOCHIQUETZAL

The Aztecs held their deities in the greatest respect and petitioned their aid with sacrifices (often bloody) and generous offerings to avoid invoking their wrath. Xochiquetzal's attributes are gentle, but she too should be approached respectfully.

**Hang up bird feeders to encourage birds into your garden like Xochiquetzal.**

 Xochiquetzal loved flowers, especially bright-golden marigolds, which were offered to her during the Aztec festivals of the dead. This custom still continues today on the Mexican Day of the Dead (La Día de los Muertos, see Sheet 26/30), when the goddess is believed to protect the souls of the departed as they travel between Earth and the Underworld.

 Butterflies and birds were said to frequent Xochiquetzal's garden, because they were devoted to her.

 Aspects of both life and death are celebrated through Xochiquetzal: green garlands reveal her role in spring fertility, but her skull symbol indicates her other role as an Underworld deity.