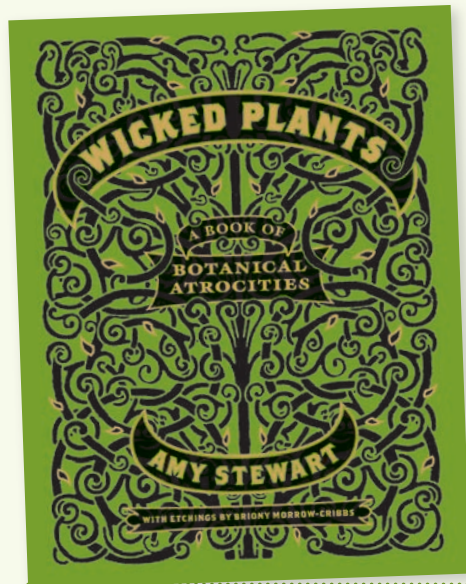


# WICKED PLANTS

## A BOOK OF BOTANICAL ATROCITIES

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Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the garden. The bestselling author of *Flower Confidential* delves into the dark side of the plant kingdom.

A tree that sheds poison daggers; a glistening red seed that stops the heart; a shrub that causes paralysis; a vine that strangles; and a leaf that triggered a war. In *Wicked Plants*, Amy Stewart takes on Mother Nature's most appalling creations. It's an A to Z of plants that kill, maim, intoxicate, and otherwise offend.

Menacing botanical illustrations by Briony Morrow-Cribbs and splendidly ghastly drawings by Jonathon Rosen create a fascinating portrait of the evildoers that may be lurking in your own backyard.

Drawing on history, medicine, science, and legend, this compendium of bloodcurdling botany will entertain, alarm, and enlighten even the most intrepid gardeners and nature lovers.

### WICKED PLANTS IN HISTORY

**MONKSHOOD** (*Aconitum napellus*) contains a toxin so powerful that Nazi scientists used it in poisoned bullets

Dr. James Livingstone reported on the use of ordeal poisons in Africa such as **CALABAR BEAN** (*Physostigma venenosum*). If the accused vomited the bean, they were innocent, but if it killed them, that proved their guilt.

Historians believe that **DEATH CAMAS** (*Zigadenus venenosus*) played a role in the terrible illnesses faced by members of the Lewis & Clark expedition.

The deranged behavior that led to the Salem witch trials may have been caused by **ERGOT** (*Claviceps purpurea*), a fungus that grows on rye and causes wild hallucinations.

**JIMSON WEED** (*Datura stramonium*) gets its name from Jamestown, where settlers first encountered it—and used its intoxicating powers to drug British soldiers.

The First Sacred War (595-585 BC) is believed by some historians to have been won after a Greek military alliance poisoned the water supply of the city of Kirrha with **HELLEBORE** (*Helleborus spp.*).

Homer's *Odyssey* mentions an elixir called nepenthe that allowed Helen of Troy to forget her sorrows; many scholars believe that nepenthe was derived from the **OPIUM POPPY** (*Papaver somniferum*).

### FAMOUS KILLERS & UNFORTUNATE VICTIMS

The KGB used ricin, the poison in **CASTOR BEAN** (*Ricinus communis*), to murder communist defectors.

Dr. Thomas Cream, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century serial killer, slipped **STRYCHNINE** (*Strychnos nuxvomica*) to his patients and was eventually hanged for his crimes.

The ghastly symptoms of pellagra, a syndrome caused by eating too much **CORN** (*Zea mays*), could have inspired European myths of vampirism in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: pale skin that erupted in blisters when exposed to the sun, sleepless nights, an inability to eat normal food, and a morbid appearance just before death.

Frederick Law Olmsted, America's most famous landscape architect and designer of Central Park, was nearly blinded by **POISON SUMAC** (*Toxicodendron vernix*).

**POISON HEMLOCK** (*Conium maculatum*) killed the Greek philosopher Socrates, who in 399 BC was convicted of corrupting the youth of Athens, among other offenses.

Claudius, Emperor of Rome from 41 to 54 B.C., died under mysterious circumstances. Historians believe his symptoms point to poisoning by muscarine, a toxin found in several species of **DEADLY MUSHROOMS**. Who fed him his final meal? One expert

suggested that "Claudius died of *de una uxore nimia*, or one too many wives."

**WHITE SNAKEROOT** (*Eupatorium rugosum*) causes cows to produce poison milk, resulting in the deadly illness called milk sickness that killed Abraham Lincoln's mother.



AMY STEWART

Amy Stewart's essays and commentaries have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Garden Design*, *Organic Gardening*, and elsewhere. She has been featured on NPR, Good Morning America, and CBS Sunday Morning. To find out more, visit [WWW.AMYSTEWART.COM](http://WWW.AMYSTEWART.COM)

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### DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

A woman in Southern California tried to collect on her husband's life insurance by putting **OLEANDER** (*Nerium oleander*) leaves in his food.

After blasting a **MULBERRY TREE** (*Morus spp.*) with a hose in a misguided attempt to wash off the pollen, a husband and wife felt their throats close and had to lock themselves in the bathroom all night just to be able to breathe.

**DAPHNE** (*Daphne spp.*), a beloved winter shrub, produces attractive red berries so toxic they could kill a child.

**ANGEL'S TRUMPET** (*Brugmansia spp.*) contains compounds that can easily be absorbed through the skin or inadvertently rubbed into the eyes, causing the pupil to enlarge until it almost fills the iris, making

it difficult to see. The effect is so frightening that it can send people to the emergency room in fear of a brain aneurysm.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has identified **SAGO PALM** (*Cycas spp.*) as one of the most toxic plants that pets may encounter. All parts of the plants, especially the leaves and seeds, contain carcinogens and neurotoxins.

All parts of **LILIES** (*Lilium spp.*) are toxic to cats, causing kidney failure and death within 24-48 hours.

### BOTANICAL OUTLAWS

An Andean shrub called **COCA** (*Erythroxylum coca*) supplies the raw ingredients for cocaine, fueling a global drug war.

**KHAT** (*Catha edulis*) is a flowering shrub that flourishes in Ethiopia and Kenya. Its

leaves are an addictive stimulant; in Black Hawk Down, gun-toting Somalian men stuffed khat leaves into their cheeks and raced around Mogadishu with a jittery high that lasted until late into the night.

States are cracking down on the sale of **DIVINER'S SAGE** (*Salvia divinorum*), a tender, flowering salvia that is widely traded on the Internet for its hallucinogenic properties.

Absinthe, that pale green, highly alcoholic drink from the 19th century that was believed to cause hallucinations and madness, gets its bad reputation from **WORMWOOD** (*Artemisia absinthium*).

Without question, the world's most wicked plant is **TOBACCO** (*Nicotiana tabacum*), responsible for the deaths of at least 90 million people worldwide.



### WICKED PLANTS: ABOUT THE ART

The botanical etchings that illustrate *Wicked Plants* were created by **BRIONY MORROW-CRIBBS** using a copper etching technique that dates to Rembrandt. Working from life, photographs, and antique botanical illustrations, she sketched each of the forty plants she illustrated, then etched the drawing on a copper plate coated in a waxy ground. She then dipped each plate in a bath of ferric chloride, which "bites" into the exposed metal, leaving behind lines sunk into the plate. Then she cleaned the remaining waxy ground off the plate, coated it in ink, and wiped the surface, leaving ink only in the etched lines.

To create the final artwork, Morrow-Cribbs put each plate through a high-pressure printing press together with a sheet of soft rag paper to make the final prints, which were then digitized to illustrate *Wicked Plants*.

Original, limited edition, hand-tinted prints from the book will be on exhibit around the country and for sale directly from the artist. To find out more, visit [WWW.BRIONYMORROW-CRIBBS.COM](http://WWW.BRIONYMORROW-CRIBBS.COM).

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### BRIONY MORROW-CRIBBS

Briony Morrow-Cribbs began studying printmaking with her father, Bruce Morrow, at the Cat Skinner Press in Freeland, Washington as a teenager. Her printing education continued at Bennington College for two years, and in 2005 Briony graduated from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, B.C. with a BFA. In 2008 she moved to Brattleboro, Vermont from Whidbey Island, Washington to start Twin Vixen Press, an intaglio-based printmaking studio. Morrow-Cribbs is represented by Davidson Galleries in Seattle, WA.

### TWIN VIXEN PRESS

Helen O'Donnell and Briony Morrow-Cribbs established Twin Vixen Press in January 2008 in Brattleboro, Vermont. Located at the Whetstone Studios in Brattleboro, Twin Vixen Press is available for studio visits by appointment and is always open the first Friday of every month for Brattleboro's Gallery Walk. The studio space and etching press is available for rent to other print artists. Morrow-Cribbs and O'Donnell also teach printmaking classes from their studio and do other printing and design projects for artists and musicians. To find out more, visit [WWW.TWINVIXENPRESS.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://WWW.TWINVIXENPRESS.BLOGSPOT.COM).