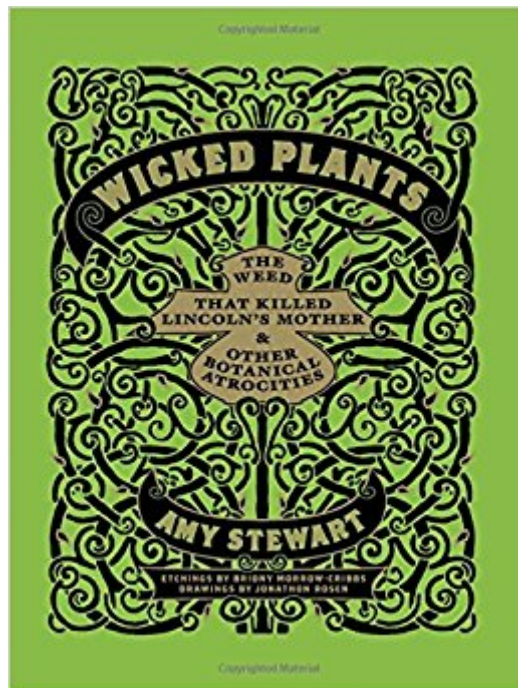


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Wicked Plants: The Weed That Killed Lincoln's Mother And Other Botanical Atrocities



Synopsis

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*, Stewart takes on over two hundred of Mother Nature's most appalling creations. It's an A to Z of plants that kill, maim, intoxicate, and otherwise offend. You'll learn which plants to avoid (like exploding shrubs), which plants make themselves exceedingly unwelcome (like the vine that ate the South), and which ones have been killing for centuries (like the weed that killed Abraham Lincoln's mother). Menacing botanical illustrations and splendidly ghastly drawings 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

They may look sweet and innocent, but anyone who has ever broken out in a rash after picking a hyacinth blossom or burst into violent sneezing after sniffing a chrysanthemum knows that often the most beautiful flowers can pack the nastiest punch. This comes as no secret to mystery writers, who have long taken advantage of the nefarious properties of common garden plants to create the devices by which a deadly dose of poison is administered to an unsuspecting victim. But, as Stewart so entertainingly points out, such fiction is based on pure fact. There are plants that can kill with a drop of nectar, paralyze with the brush of a petal. From bucolic woodland streams choked by

invasive purple loosestrife to languid southern fields overrun by kudzu, some plants are just more trouble than they're worth. Culling legend and citing science, Stewart's fact-filled, AZ compendium of nature's worst offenders offers practical and tantalizing composite views of toxic, irritating, prickly, and all-around ill-mannered plants. --Carol Haggas

"Culling legend and citing science, Stewart's fact-filled, AZ compendium of nature's worst offenders offers practical and tantalizing composite views of toxic, irritating, prickly, and all-around ill-mannered plants." ---Booklist --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

I love reading crime fiction, and got a kick out of this book just from the perspective of the many ways a plant can kill. But there are other considerations, too. As Amy Stewart says in the Introduction: "We'll brew a medicinal tea from unrecognizable bark and leaves that a friend passes along, assuming that anything natural must be safe. And when a baby comes home, we rush to add safety caps to electrical outlets but ignore the houseplant in the kitchen and the shrub by the front door -- in spite of the fact that 3,900 people are injured annually by electrical outlets while 68,847 are poisoned by plants." (This book was published in 2009.) The plants are presented in alphabetical order, and each is put into one of 7 categories. Several, you'll see, fall into more than one category:....DEADLY. One example is the castor bean. In castor oil, the poisonous ingredient is processed out of the plant. But ricin, found in the seeds, is the poison used to kill Georgi Markov in 1978. Remember the soviet defector killed by a jab from an umbrella?....ILLEGAL. The peyote cactus is in this category, though I believe the Supreme Court has given religious dispensation. It's actually pretty difficult to find in the desert now, because it's slow-growing and has been over-harvested.....INTOXICATING. Speaking of plants you may grow at home, the Morning Glory has a surprise. It's seeds have small quantities of LSD.....DANGEROUS. My Mom has planted Lobelia in her spring garden. But probably not the variety nicknamed "vomitwort".....PAINFUL. Celery -- yes, celery -- is dangerous to eat in large quantities before sunbathing. It has "phototoxic compounds" which react to the sunlight.....DESTRUCTIVE. Even I've heard of kudzu, introduced in the southern U.S. to abate soil erosion. Works great, except it never stops growing and is nearly indestructible: "This vine covers seven million acres in the United States. The damage it has caused is estimated in the hundreds of millions."....OFFENSIVE. You don't want to plant the Squirting Cucumber in your garden. This juice of this species will cause vomiting and diarrhea. AND, "it's two-inch-long fruits are famous for bursting when ripe, squirting a slimy, mucuslike juice and seeds almost twenty feet away." I very

much like the book's presentation. The pages are not totally white, but shaded as if it's a well-used gardener's notebook. Plants are shown by charming copper etchings by Briony Morrow-Cribbs. There are also some illustrations by Jonathon Rosen. The book doesn't have an index, but there's an extensive bibliography. Stewart's writing style is breezy and "Wicked Plants" is a lot of fun. If you haven't run across her books before, she wrote a 2011 companion book, *Wicked Bugs: The Louse That Conquered Napoleon's Army & Other Diabolical Insects* And I enjoyed her 2013 foray into "The Plants that Create the World's Great Drinks", *The Drunken Botanist* Happy Reader

I loved it. it's full of exotic lore, very well written, with a humorous punch to it. Amy has way with words. nice paper, I like the size, too, so easy to carry or hold while reading; one can feel the thoughts given to the production. the etchings by Briony Morrow-Cribbs are outstanding. I was not as enthralled by Jonathon Rosen sketches, however. But all in all - very good production, Algonquin books of chapel hill. Thanks. By the way, poison hemlock is mentioned a few times in the old testament. it is called ROSH in hebrew. and Mandrakes are mentioned too, as Le'a gave them to Rachel to buy of a night with Jacob. they are known as DUDAIM in hebrew.

Wicked Plants: The Weed That Killed Lincoln's Mother and Other Botanical Atrocities is a wonderful book that goes into some of the world's most toxic plants. If you ever wanted to create a poison garden or know what plants you should avoid hugging this is your book! *Wicked plants* feature plants from all over the world with information about why they are toxic, how this has affected its evolution and human history. We also get interesting anecdotes about events that have made these plants infamous. This is a must read for plant geeks!

I will never be persuaded to ingest something because "it's natural" again. "Natural" can be very scary! There are many kinds of vegetative wickedness described in this book: deadly and poisonous; painful; invasive; and illegal, for example. The writing is excellent- I read it cover to cover, as if it were a novel, and learned a lot. There may be a bit of unseemly relish in the way the effects of various of these wicked plants are described- did you know that foxtail burrs can work their way into dogs' brains??? Euew! -Of course, that's part of what makes it so fascinating. It's a very pretty book, and possibly emphasizes that more than being a reliable reference; there's no index, for example, and while many of the entries are in alphabetical order, some are gathered together under various headings. It's intended, I think, more for reading and browsing than for serious reference work, though the information is solid. I bought this after reading and loving the author's "Drunken Botanist"

book, and it lived up to my expectations. But- it may well make you a bit paranoid about what is in the gardens and woods!

Person loved it. I told them not to get any ideas....but we are both horticulture oriented so this is a fun...not so in depth book...may have a few errors but over all a nice little book that's related to those plants.....

This is a fascinating nonfiction book about mostly common plants--and how they can kill you! All of the plants mentioned in the book are noxious and to be avoided. Some are downright deadly. It contains fascinating historical lore and criminal legend (which were my favorite parts), but also a healthy dose of medicine and science dished up in a way that was really interesting. Those topics are not usually interesting to me but the author presented it in a way that really kept me hooked. The illustrations were a nice touch, but I am going to be greedy and say I wished there were also full-color photographs to make identification of the plants easier. It was amazing to think that so little dosage of some tiny plants could be so fatal. This is definitely a book a mystery writer, or potential murderer, would want to read. It should be required reading for anyone planting a garden. It is more a gift or trivia book rather than for a serious researcher. Even if you're not a gardener, or potential murderer, this book is interesting and written in a way that could provide just pure fun and enjoyment. It is a book you will want to sip slowly, to savor. At one time, much of this would have been common knowledge as people were more in tune and in contact with the natural world around them. Books like this are so important so that vital knowledge, and folklore, isn't lost.

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