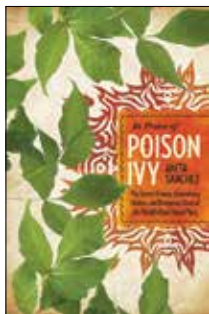


## Recommendations for Your Gardening Library

### In Praise of Poison Ivy

Anita Sanchez. Taylor Trade Publishing, 2016. 370 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$24.95.

AS SOMEONE who has experienced the discomfort of a poison ivy rash, I initially hesitated to pick up this book because of the stunningly graphic illustration of the plant on its cover. Once I pushed past my reluctance and opened the book, I was rewarded with a well-researched and absorbing story about one of our most pervasive—and reviled—native plants.



Anita Sanchez, whose specialty is to write about the least popular of the world's flora and fauna, sweeps the reader away on an adventure that stretches from the rugged New World settlement of

Jamestown to the elegant palaces of France and the bucolic English countryside. Along the way, she shares fascinating stories that connect famous historical people with poison ivy. Among others enfolded in the vines of the storyline are Captain John Smith, Charles Darwin, John James Audubon, Carolus Linnaeus, Marie Antoinette, and Thomas Jefferson. Who knew that such disparate people have a common botanical bond?

Facts about poison ivy's natural history also will improve the reader's view of this plant. For example, recent research has shown that the leaves and berries serve as important food sources for many insects, birds, and mammals. And poison ivy's roots play a significant role in erosion control, especially on fragile sand dunes. The autumn beauty of the russet-colored leaves (of which no two are alike) doesn't escape the appreciative eye of the author, a passionate proponent of native plants and their value to their ecosystems.

The book's appendix addresses the chemical makeup of urushiol, the rash-causing resin secreted by poison ivy. It also describes how it acts upon the human immune system, how to treat resulting rashes, and how to identify the plants to avoid those itchy rashes in the first place. Control options are offered, with a cautionary note concerning chemical methods.

The author's wry style adds to the appeal of the book, which is sure to delight those who enjoy reading about botany as well as those drawn to historical anecdotes. Upon completion, the reader will, without a doubt, have gained a fresh perspective on this ubiquitous and under-appreciated plant.

—Kathryn Lund Johnson

*Kathryn Lund Johnson is a nature writer and photographer living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Find her on [www.KLJNaturePhotos.com](http://www.KLJNaturePhotos.com).*

### Plant: Exploring the Botanical World

Phaidon Press, New York, NY, 2016. 352 pages. Publisher's price, hardcover: \$59.95.

SO MANY FORMS of media vie for our attention these days that it is both refreshing and reassuring when a traditional coffee-table book manages to be mesmerizing. *Plant: Exploring the Botanical World* is just such a book. It represents the best that a large format art book can offer, packed with hundreds of high-quality reproductions of plant images and illustrations, complemented with informative text.



Arranged, by and large, as a series of beautifully paired images, the book

invites readers to dive in wherever they wish. With some exceptions, the images have no chronological or taxonomic relationship to each other. Sourced from all over the world and across various eras of human history, *Plant* makes few didactic comparisons, allowing viewers to muse on whatever theme strikes them.

It is difficult to say which is my favorite set of images. For sheer curation, the contrast between Claude Aubriet's watercolor *Agapanthus umbellatus*, prepared for Louis XIV in 1700, and Ron Van Dongen's photograph, *Pennisetum glaucum* 'Purple Majesty', taken in 2005, is a visual wonder. Despite the difference in medium, the watercolor of the *Agapanthus*, with its swirling leaves and upright stem, speaks across time to the photograph of a single stem, seed head, and blade of ornamental millet.

Another striking example is a page from one of J.M.W. Turner's sketch books depicting a patch of weeds. Juxtaposed with this hasty sketch is a far more contemporary work, *Lightweeds*, 2006, an interactive exhibition by Dutch-born artist Simon Heijdens. Described as a "location sensitive light projection work," these silhouettes of unidentified weeds and grasses reportedly grow in front of gallery visitors—spurred on by foot traffic and actual conditions out of doors. Interestingly, Turner's static sketch appears to have more movement than the photographic capture of Heijdens's dynamic installation.

*Plant's* unorthodox approach to the art, science, and visual history of botanical illustration makes for an exhilarating reader experience. In our fast-paced, digital world, this book offers a welcome indulgence in good old-fashioned paper-and-ink media focused on flowers and landscapes.

—Susan Hines

*Susan Hines gardens in Hyattsville, Maryland, and is an active member of the Hyattsville Horticultural Society.*

## GARDENER'S BOOKS

### Plant Lore

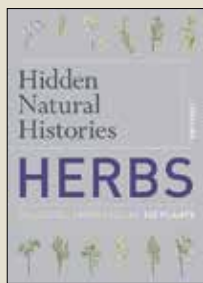
**I**N THE DEPTHS of winter, spring can seem like a far-off dream to many gardeners. To make the wait easier, settle in a comfortable chair with these recently published books filled with lush illustrations and fascinating yarns about interesting plants. Perusing their pages will feel almost like walking outside to enjoy the start of another growing season.

Flower enthusiasts will appreciate Noel Kingsbury's *Garden Flora: The Natural and Cultural History of the Plants in Your Garden* (Timber Press, 2016, \$40). It contains the abbreviated origin



stories of 133 of the most common temperate zone plants, lavishly illustrated with artwork by classic painters, contemporary photography, and images from vintage catalogs. Considered specimens from *Abutilon* to *Zinnia* appear alphabetically by genus, and Kingsbury's entries amble through both their ecological origins and cultivation history.

In *Hidden Natural Histories: Herbs* (University of Chicago Press, 2015, \$25), Kim Hurst profiles 150 plants with properties that enhance human quality of life in one way or another. The book includes both common and lesser-known herbs, arranged alphabetically by botanical name. Hurst provides a brief outline of each plant's culinary, medicinal, cosmetic, or other use, as well as tidbits of folklore. Each profile also highlights the herb's most admired properties or warns of toxicity if misused.



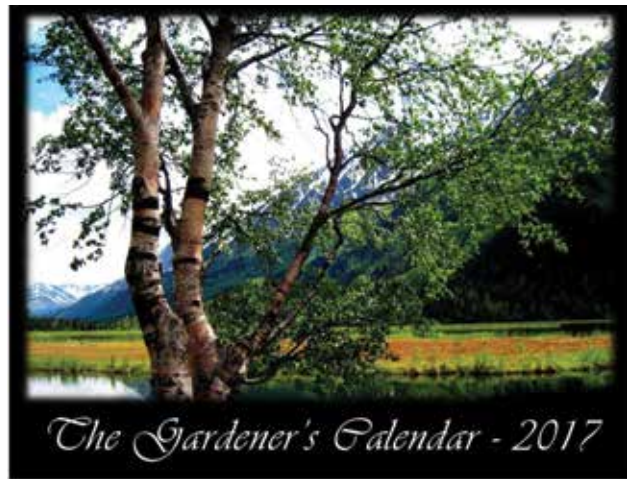
Each profile also highlights the herb's most admired properties or warns of toxicity if misused.

*Cattail Moonshine & Milkweed Medicine: The Curious Stories of 43 Amazing North American Native Plants* (Storey Publishing, 2016, \$19.95) by herbalist Tammi Hartung includes species that



“have often greatly influenced how we shaped our daily lives both in practical and even survival ways, but also in ways that have given us great pleasure or comfort.” This colorful volume also discusses these plants' potential contributions to a sustainable future in the form of plant-based materials, climate adaptation, or environmental cleanup.

—Lynn Brinkley, *Editorial Intern*



#### 2017 "Gardeners" Calendar

One of the benefits that TGOA/MGCA offers its members is the opportunity for TGOA/MGCA and AHS members to participate in our annual photography contest. From these entries, photos are chosen for our annual calendar. We encourage all men and women to become a member of TGOA/MGCA and enjoy all the benefits of a worthwhile organization. For more information about TGOA/MGCA or to order calendars for \$7.00 postpaid, please call or email:

The Gardeners of America/  
Men's Garden Clubs of America  
Box 241, Johnston, IA 50131-0241

(515) 278-0295 Email: [www.tgoa-mgca.org](mailto:www.tgoa-mgca.org)

Website: [www.tgoa-mgca.org](http://www.tgoa-mgca.org)



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