

## BOOK REVIEW

ELIZABETH A. DAUNCEY & SONNY LARSSON. 2018. **Plants That Kill: A Natural History of the World's Most Poisonous Plants.** (ISBN-13: 978-0-691-17876-9, hbk). Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, U.S.A. (**Orders:** [press.princeton.edu](http://press.princeton.edu)). \$29.95 US, 224 pp., 400 color illustrations, glossary, further reading, index, 8½" × 11".

*From the publisher:* A full-color illustrated guide to the natural history of the most poisonous plants on earth. This richly illustrated book provides an in-depth natural history of the most poisonous plants on earth, covering everything from the lethal effects of hemlock and deadly nightshade to the uses of such plants in medicine, ritual, and chemical warfare.

Featuring hundreds of color photos and diagrams throughout, *Plants That Kill* explains how certain plants evolved toxicity to deter herbivores and other threats and sheds light on their physiology and the biochemistry involved in the production of their toxins. It discusses the interactions of poisonous plants with other organisms—particularly humans—and explores the various ways plant toxins can target the normal functioning of bodily systems in mammals, from the effects of wolfsbane on the heart to toxins that cause a skin reaction when combined with the sun's rays. This intriguing book also looks at plants that can harm you only if your exposure to them is prolonged, the ethnobotany of poisons throughout human history, and much more.

A must for experts and armchair botanists alike, *Plants That Kill* is the essential illustrated compendium to these deadly and intriguing plants.

- \* Provides an authoritative natural history of the most poisonous plants on earth
- \* Features hundreds of color illustrations throughout
- \* Looks at how and why plants produce toxins
- \* Describes the effects of numerous poisonous plants, from hemlock and deadly nightshade to poppies and tobacco
- \* Explains poisonous plants' evolution, survival strategies, physiology, and biochemistry
- \* Discusses the uses of poisonous plants in medicine, rituals, warfare, and more

**Elizabeth A. Dauncey** is a freelance plant toxicologist and the author of *Poisonous Plants: A Guide for Parents and Childcare Providers*. Sonny Larsson is a licensed pharmacist at the Swedish Poisons Information Centre.

I have long been fascinated with poisonous plants and have given one lecture on the topic, *Murderous Plants: Poisonous Herbs in our World*, more times than I can remember. With a few killer plants, some engaging props, unforgettable sounds, and dazzling visuals you will have a captivated audience. *Plants That Kill* is a superb reference on the topic and it will captivate you as well. The authors are graphic and thorough with their subject matter. The meticulously designed pages—with carefully chosen chapter titles—are filled with beautiful images (mostly color), Fact files or bullet form details of featured plants, Boxed Insets (highlights of a particular poison case or general interest items about the plant), chemical formulas, chemical structures, diagrams, and graphs! *Plants That Kill* approaches the dark subject in a lively and fascinating way while raising awareness about potentially dangerous plants that are truly all around us in nature and in our homes, gardens, landscapes, and even foods.—*Barney Lipscomb, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.*