

Purple and Poppies

A field of purple and poppies symbolizes sleep and remembrance. The Iris and the poppy have been beautiful reminders of those lost in battle and in love.

*In Flanders Field the poppies bow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the
sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

-John McCrae, In Flanders Field

Since Iris is the Greek goddess for the Messenger of Love, her sacred flower is considered the symbol of communication and messages. Greek men would often plant an iris on the graves of their beloved women as a tribute to the goddess Iris, whose duty it was to take the souls of women to the Elysian fields. -Hana no Monogatari: Stories of the Flowers



Poppy

Poppies have long been used as a symbol of sleep, peace, and death: sleep because of the opium extracted from them, and death because of the common blood-red color of the red poppy. In Greek and Roman myths, poppies were used as offerings to the dead. Poppies used as emblems on tombstones symbolize eternal sleep. This symbolism was evoked in the children's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, in which a magical poppy field threatened to make the protagonists sleep forever.

-L Frank Baum, Michael Patrick Hearn (image by Linnea W. Rhodes)



Poppy

Ornamental poppies are grown for their colorful flowers; some varieties of poppy are used as food, and other varieties produce the powerful medicinal alkaloid opium which has been used since ancient times to create analgesic and narcotic medicinal and recreational drugs. Following the 1st World War which took place in the poppy fields of Flanders, red poppies have become a symbol of remembrance of soldiers who have died during wartime.

-L Frank Baum, Michael Patrick Hearn (image by Andrew Wilkinson)



Poppy

Morphine, derived from the Poppy, is a poison favored by Agatha Christie. In *Sad Cypress*, morphine is administered through, it is thought, fish paste on sandwiches; instead it is served in a pot of tea, the murderer also drinking from the pot to ally suspicion, then surreptitiously self-administrating an emetic.

-Anne Harrison (image by Gail Bracegirdle)



Wisteria

The highly invasive Japanese wisteria is still very popular in the nursery trade, despite its destructive habits. Its hard woody vines twine tightly around host tree trunks and branches, eventually causing death by girdling.

New vines on the ground form dense thickets that shade out native vegetation and impede natural community development. A good alternative is the less aggressive American wisteria.

–Diana Raichel, D&R Greenway (image by Gail Bracegirdle)

Flowerly Foes

Poison has a certain appeal ...it has not the crudeness of the revolver bullet or the blunt instrument.

*-Agatha Christie, *They Do it With Mirrors**

In this room, the poisonous flower and the invasive plant fill their canvases, pleading with viewers to paint but not plant them. The beautiful blossoms that delight the eye can easily harm the body and the land. From the fierce effects of Belladonna on a character in a mystery novel, to the strangling of native plants by mile-a-minute vines, the flowers in this room are uniformly lovely and unmistakably deadly.

Belladonna: In Italian, a beautiful lady; in English a deadly poison.

*-Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary**



Foxglove
Digitalis

Since the introduction of *digitalis* into therapy approximately 200 years ago, there have been continuing admonitions concerning its toxicity. Over 400 years ago, herbalists listed the plant as being poisonous. In fiction, the homicidal use of digitalis has appeared in the writings of Mary Webb, Dorothy Sayers, and Agatha Christie. There have been ten instances in real life of alleged homicide by digitalis and trials of the accused have ensued.

-Burchell HB (image by Silvere Boureau)

Foxglove *Digitalis*

It is possible that many readers cheered when the nasty, sadistic Mrs. Boynton was poisoned in Agatha Christie's *Appointment with Death*. She was poisoned with an overdose of the heart medication known as digitoxin.

Digitalis is a substance obtained from the dried leaves of the common foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and used as a drug that strengthens contractions of the heart muscle for patients suffering congestive heart failure. It must be prescribed and monitored with great care because there is not much leeway between the effective dose and a lethal dose. "And Mrs Boynton already suffered from heart trouble?" "Yes, as a matter of fact, she was actually taking a medicine containing digitalin." ... "D'you mean ... that her death might have been attributed to an overdose of her own medicine?"

– Cristina, Blog for English Lovers



Belladonna
Atropa belladonna

The name *Atropa* is thought to be derived from that of the Greek goddess Atropos, one of the three Greek fates or destinies who would determine the course of a man's life by the weaving of threads that symbolized his birth, the events in his life and finally his death; with Atropos cutting these threads to mark the last of these.

—Edward Harris Ruddock (image by Silvere Boureau)



Belladonna

Atropa belladonna

Belladonna (also known as Deadly Nightshade, Devil's Berries or Death Cherries) features in British crime writer Agatha Christie's *The Caribbean Mystery* and *The Big Four*. Foliage and berries are toxic, containing a mixture of alkaloids including hyoscine (scopolamine) and atropine (both anti-cholinergic anti-muscurinic in action) and hyoscyamine (an isomer of atropine).

-Anne Harrison (image by Franz Eugen Köhler)



Belladonna
Atropa belladonna

The anti-dote for belladonna poisoning is physostigmine, which is itself used as a poison in Agatha Christie's *Crooked House*, administered via eye drops. Derived from the West African calabar bean, physostigmine is a cholinesterase inhibitor, reversibly blocking the action of acetylcholinesterase in the synaptic cleft of the neuromuscular junction. Overdose results in the cholinergic syndrome, due to central and peripheral increase of acetylcholine at muscarinic and nicotinic receptors.

-Anne Harrison (image by Linda Brooks Hirschman)



Pitcher Plant

Sarracenia leucophylla

The deeply folded leaves, cup-shaped opening and sweet nectar of the pitcher plant are hard to resist. The unsuspecting insect that enters is unable to climb back out; the sweet nectar within contains chemicals that slowly dissolve the captive guest, turning it into the very juice it once tried to drink.

–Anne Zeman (text & image)



Round-leaved sundew
Drosera rotundifolia

Beautiful to look at, but deadly to insects that fly near them, these beautiful plants have extensions that look like fireworks with a gel-like substance resembling dew or moisture. The insects that fly too near the plant get stuck on them and, once there, the plant consumes them.

–Anne Zeman (text & image)



Cardoon
Cynara cardunculus

This thistle-like plant, with its prickly, almost dagger-shaped leaves, looks more dangerous than it is. It must be handled with care for even the stalk has nearly invisible spines that can cause pain if they lodge in the skin.

Yet these plants can be eaten—leaf stalks and midribs are tasty when blanched, and the unopened flower heads can be eaten like artichokes.

—Anne Zeman (text & image)



Bracket Fungus

Bracket fungi feed on wood, either as living trees or dead ones forming shelf-like structures that stick out from the trunk—often appearing as if “blooming” on the tree. These fungi gain their sustenance through the decomposition of dead and dying plant matter. The visible portion of the bracket fungus is the fruiting body. Not all Bracket Fungus is poisonous—thus introducing a menacing uncertainty to this abundant forest dweller.

–Anne Zeman (text & image)



Rhododendron

One of our most popular and beautiful of cultivated plants with over 30,000 cultivars, but chemicals in the leaves, flowers and nectar is dangerous to humans, animals, birds and insects.

–Anne Zeman (text & image)

Still Lives & Vignettes

A dead hydrangea is as intricate and lovely as one in bloom.

-Toni Morrison, *Tar Baby*

The scenes and still lifes in this room compare various treatments of a similar and familiar subject. William Vandever's crisp and modern interpretation of the traditional still life contrasts with Dolores Cohen's soft emblems of hospitality. Coffee filters complement tea sets, rocks answer lace, and friendly sunflowers greet stalks of minimalist orchids.

Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns. I am thankful that thorns have roses.

-Alphonse Karr



The beautiful hydrangeas in my painting “Blue Rhapsody” are poisonous when ingested, due to a chemical called Hydrangin (cyanide); the delicate Wisteria in my painting “Wisteria I” can cause mild to severe digestive upset when the seeds or pods are ingested; the bark leaves and seeds in the holly tree as depicted in my painting “Chicadees” are poisonous due to a chemical called Theobromide, an alkaloid related to caffeine and chocolate, which can cause allergic reactions; and the poinsettia’s in my painting “Flowers of the Season” which can cause allergic reactions as well as breathing problems due to a latex protein in the leaves.

However, for all the dangers these flowers possess, they are all clothed in captivating beauty we can all appreciate and admire.

-Dolores Cohen (text & images)



Porcelain Berry
Ampelopsis
brevipedunculata

A beautiful yet aggressive invader in the landscape, Porcelain Berry is a deciduous vine that can grow up to 20 feet in a season. Forming a dense mat as it climbs, it out competes our native species for light, water and nutrients. It is one of nature's most beautiful fruits, and also one of its most invasive--enveloping everything in its path--and difficult to eradicate..

–Anne Zeman (image by Kathie Miranda)



Lotus

By means of microscopic observation and astronomical projection
the lotus flower can become the foundation for an entire theory of
the universe and an agent whereby we may perceive Truth.

-Yukio Mishima

Image: American Water Lotus by Kathie Miranda



Horse Nettle

Solanum carolinense

Horsenettle is a member of the nightshade family and has fruits that are poisonous to humans. This plant has hard spines along the stems that can penetrate the skin and break off. The fruits of Carolina Horsenettle, like many plants in the nightshade family, contain solanine, a glycoalkaloid that can be fatal to humans and animals.

–Emily Blackman, D&R Greenway (image by Kathie Miranda)



Japanese Barberry *Berberis thunbergii*

Introduced in the late 1800s as an ornamental, Japanese Barberry is invasive throughout the northeast where it is capable of forming dense stands in closed and open canopy woodlands. In large infestations, its leaf litter causes changes in the soil chemistry, making the habitat less hospitable for native plants. Good native alternatives are red chokeberry and highbush blueberry.

–Diana Raichel, D&R Greenway (image by Kathie Miranda)



Mile-a-minute Vine
Polygonum perfoliatum

Also called tearthumb, mile-a-minute vine earns its name from its barbed stems and rapid colonization of open spaces. It attaches and literally climbs over other plants to monopolize the light available and crowds out other species in its path.

–Emily Blackman, D&R Greenway (image by Kathie Miranda)



Pokeweed
Phytolacca Americana

Pokeweed is considered a pest by many farmers because parts of the plant are toxic to livestock (and humans) if consumed. However, the berries are a food source for songbirds such as the Northern Cardinal and Brown Thrasher.

–Emily Blackman, D&R Greenway (image by Kathie Miranda)



Flower of an Hour
Hibiscus trionum

Flower of an hour is an annual introduced as an ornamental and has become naturalized as a weed in cropland or disturbed land. Each flower blooms during a single sunny day and remains open for only a few hours.

–Diana Raichel, D&R Greenway (image by Kathie Miranda)