

**PRINCIPAL  
POISONOUS PLANTS  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

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Principal poisonous plants of the United States by V. K. Chesnut

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**V. K. CHESNUT**

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BULLETIN No. 20.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.  
DIVISION OF BOTANY.

PRINCIPAL POISONOUS PLANTS  
OF  
THE UNITED STATES.

BY

V. K. CHESNUT.



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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
DIVISION OF BOTANY,  
*Washington, D. C., December 20, 1897.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith for publication as a bulletin of this division a manuscript on the "Principal Poisonous Plants of the United States." In the annual report of the Botanist for 1894 was emphasized the importance of doing something to lessen the increasing number of fatal cases of poisoning due to carelessness or to a lack of correct knowledge of our poisonous plants, and as a result the Secretary of Agriculture, in November, 1894, appointed Mr. V. K. Chesnut as an assistant in the Division of Botany to take charge of such a line of work. In addition to the chemical and physiological investigations which have since been in progress, it has seemed desirable to distribute at once some simple but authoritative account of our commonest poisonous plants. In the prosecution of this work a novel method of securing correct information about actual cases of poisoning has been adopted. Through newspaper clipping bureaus the Division of Botany receives notices of all the cases of poisoning that are recorded in the principal newspapers. Then, through the persons mentioned by name in these articles or through the local postmaster, we get into correspondence with the physician in charge of the case, secure a specimen of the plant which is responsible for the poisoning, and place on file a complete record of the symptoms, treatment, and results. By this means we have secured a large amount of authentic and valuable information, additional to the published statements, the partial benefit of which is given to the people in this publication, and the remainder of which will be used from time to time in more detailed publications on the poisonous qualities of particular plants.

The plants which have been considered, about fifty in number, include most of the important poisonous species. Each is illustrated, wherever necessary, by an original drawing from authentic specimens, and is briefly described in a popular way. This, together with the liberal use of common names and a brief outline of the geographical distribution, will doubtless enable individuals in different localities to recognize any of the plants. For general educational purposes it has been thought best to follow the scientific classification.

It is the purpose of the Division of Botany to collect statistics and general information relating to all of the poisonous plants of the United States, and so far as possible to examine into their chemical and physiological properties and to discover their antidotes. With this end in view, it is hoped that the heartiest cooperation will be received from all those who are able to render assistance.

Respectfully,

FREDERICK V. COVILLE,

*Botanist.*

Hon. JAMES WILSON,  
*Secretary of Agriculture.*



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