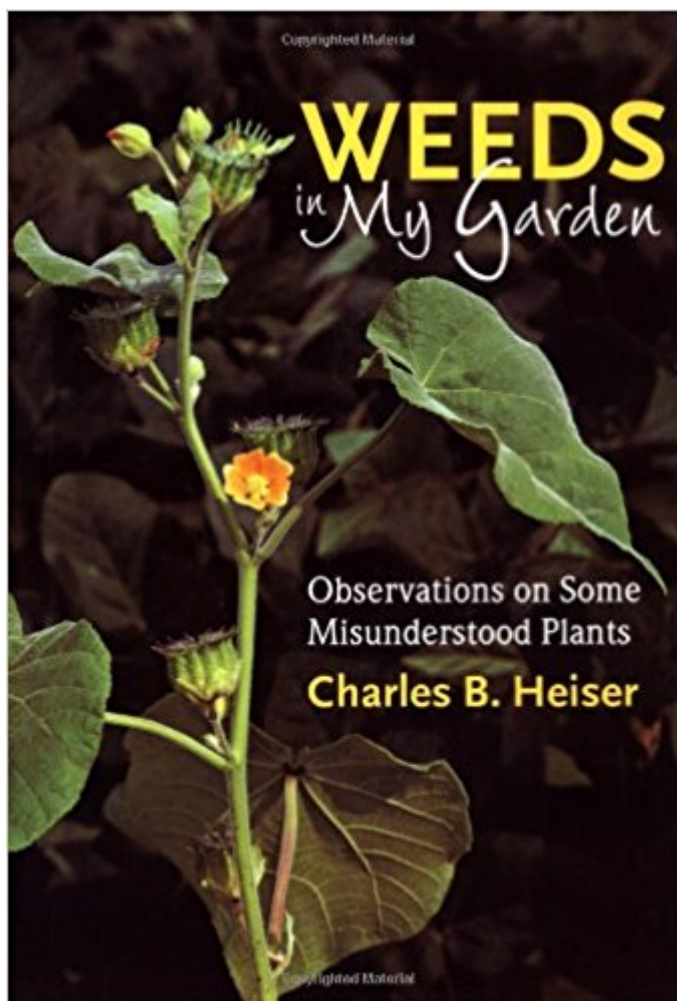


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Weeds In My Garden: Observations On Some Misunderstood Plants



Synopsis

What is a weed? Definitions abound, some more clever than true. For the author, weeds are plants that grow uninvited in places disturbed by people or their animals. But although weeds may invade our fields and gardens, most are not aggressive away from disturbed areas. Some have notable virtues, whether medicinal, culinary, or even ornamental. Not intended to be a manual of weed identification --- although the descriptions, drawings, and photographs will help readers name many of their newfound friends --- or weed eradication, this book is for anyone interested in weeds as plants. A veritable natural history of weeds, it will encourage readers to look anew at these previously unwelcome guests.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Weed warfare seems to occupy most of a gardener's time, yet these unrivaled adaptative champions of the plant world need not be the bane of one's existence. Some, like *Hypericum perforatum*, commonly known as St. John's Wort, are popularly believed to have medicinal applications, while others, like *Toxicodendron radicans* (poison ivy), require medical attention instead. For good or ill, learning to appreciate these ubiquitous plants, if not in our gardens then at least in more appropriate habitats, is the premise of Heiser's work and the guiding force behind his lengthy career as a botanist. Profiling 140 weeds, Heiser first classifies them by botanic family, then briefly discusses their nomenclature before offering a concise, nontechnical description of their growth habits and background. Like the retired professor he is, Heiser's is a scholarly approach, at

once erudite and entertaining. Although it is not meant to serve as a tool for weed identification, Heiser's guide helps us appreciate those commonplace plants we look at daily without ever really seeing. Carol HaggasCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

For anyone interested in weeds as plants. -- The Bookseller, January 2003

I love this book and the author's insights and reflections, I am very interested in weeds so I am a bit biased. Living in California ironically some of the weeds in this book are ornamentals in California.

Ultimately I found this book to be frustrating. The premise sounded great: plant professor talks about the weeds he's known over the many years with university garden fields. "Weeds" is an interesting class of vegetation that is finally getting some much-needed attention, from folklore to foraging. I would however rather recommend such books as *Weeds of the Northeast* (Comstock books), the unfortunately out of print *The Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac Book: A Short Natural History and Cautionary Account*, and *The Forager's Harvest: A Guide to Identifying, Harvesting, and Preparing Edible Wild Plants*. The first is useful for field identification; the second is not only educational but kind of fun to read as well; and the third is a readable and well illustrated ID guide and quasi-cookbook, although I haven't used it as much yet as the others, but it came highly recommended from some foragers I respect. This book however is more a compilation of rambles, where Professor Heiser does give specific botanical details but otherwise an inconsistent (and frustratingly incomplete) take on each plant. You can feel, through the text, a sense of entitlement to cover the material however he likes, because of his age and position -- there is not enough of a sense of remembering his audience. There are color photos but aside from the cover shots and a couple of the interior shots, they are unclear -- not close enough, not enough of a depth of field, ultimately not as useful as they could be and certainly not as sharp as one would expect. Yes, diagrams and drawings can actually be more useful than photos -- but there aren't enough of them either, and those present are more aesthetic and illustrative than educational. We have a lot of these weeds, and I know a little about a lot of them, enough to want to know more, and enough to feel that he has left out some important bits and also to be irritated by the subjective rambling. Of course Professor Heiser knows his material; he needed a stronger editor to send the manuscript back with notations to flesh out many of the entries. *I was however very glad to see that he does not perpetuate the urban legend of milkweed's bitterness and toxicity.* The technical botanical terms are more than I am used too -- I would have to work through them with drawings and definitions but then

I'm sure I'd get the hang of it, just takes time -- but would probably be simple enough reading for more experienced gardeners. It is nice that he combines taxonomy trivia, excerpts from historical documents, folklore and the like. It's just frustrating that one pretty much has to look up any details in another book, as this one brings up a lot of topics (craft, medicinal and cooking applications for example) but does not follow through. Another thing that annoyed me about this book was the way he did give certain details that I could have done without -- specifically naming the people he considered responsible for the introduction of certain weeds. He may well be correct, as he likely supervised many of the projects and saw the weeds come in, but to this reader it felt too much like gossip, and inappropriate. It could be fun reading for some though. Please see my page views in the Images section to get a sense of the text. I hope this was of some help and if it was please click the button.

This is an interesting book about weeds. I personally would like more pictures but that was not the authors purpose in writing the book.

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