

Plants that Changed the World, are Evil or Weird, OH MY!

Usually when we think of things that changed the world, we think of events, people, discoveries, etc. Have you considered how plants have changed history? There are many plants that have changed the course of events such as wheat, sugarcane, cotton, tobacco, cacao, coffee, tea, rubber, marijuana. The first plants domesticated were wheat, barley, lentils, peas, rice and potatoes. When people stopped chasing and gathering their food and stayed in one place to cultivate food, we call it the Neolithic Revolution. That's right, domestication of plants caused a revolution in how people lived! There are still plant revolutions going on today; think marijuana!



The word, evil, usually conjures up images of monsters and bad guys. But plants can also be evil! Consider dodder, jumping cactus, cocklebur, castor bean, slobber weed, water hemlock and poison ivy. If you are unfortunate to be allergic to poison ivy, you know what is meant by evil plants. Water hemlock, though, is the most violently toxic plant in North America. A small amount of this toxin is all that is needed to poison livestock or humans. It attacks the central nervous system and causes convulsions.



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And then there are just the really weird plants. They were never programmed to appear "normal". Consider these "stand outs": cork oak, Wollemi pine, jackfruit, cashew tree, strangler fig, pitcher plant, Spanish moss, African baobab. Did you know that jackfruit is the largest fruit in the world? It can reach up to 100 pounds in weight; no grocery sack can hold it! Some consider it a miracle fruit as it is rich in magnesium, vitamin B6, and has antioxidants. The taste has been compared to pulled pork. Even the seeds have nutritional benefits and can be boiled, roasted or ground.



If you would like to know more about this trifecta, join the PCMG Continuing Ed committee on June 19th immediately following the regular monthly meeting at St. James United Methodist Church. Cody George, horticulturalist at Crystal Bridges, is the featured speaker for the morning meeting. Afterwards pre registered guests will head to Jones Hall for a box lunch at 12:30 and then return to the worship center for an exhilarating afternoon session with Ann Wood, a very involved White County Master Gardener and well known presenter. Ann is a former high teacher, grows an assortment of vegetables, has shade and sun perennial gardens featuring roses and day lilies.

How can you be certain to attend this exciting educational experience? Check your email beginning May 17th, complete the registration form and mail a check for \$25 (includes a box lunch) to Katie Reddick at the extension office. PCMGs will earn two hours of educational credit for the morning and two and one half hours for the afternoon. Registration is limited to the first 100 registrants. Need additional information or just want to say how excited you are about the training, contact Michele Wasson at michele4950@att.net.