"[T]his cosmopolite, this Captain Cook [James Cook] among plants" suggests "not merely commerce but its attendant vices."

Thoreau’s Journal Entries

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{Datura} & \\
Datura stramonium (JIMSONWEED) & II..............................................................343, 345 \\
& VI..............................................................487 \\
& VII............................................................8[EP] \\
(-like) & VII..............................................................483 \\
\end{tabular}
Jimson weed (*Datura stramonium* L.), known in Nahuatl as *tlapatl*, which had been first described in a European language by Dr. Francisco Hernández in 1577 (at that time unpublished), was in this year again mentioned, by Fabio Colonna.
Presumably the *Datura stramonium* Jimsonweed was brought along with some *Nicotiana tabacum* imported from Trinidad, unless it had already been imported to the continent as a native American trade item for use in initiation ceremonies.

**A Chronological Table**

Of the most remarkable passages in that part of America, known to us by the name of NEW-ENGLAND.

_Anno Dom._

1614. Bermudas Planted.

June 2, Sunday (Old Style): Sir Thomas Dale arrived in London, leaving Virginia in hands of Captain George Yeardly.

During Governor Dale’s administration of the Virginia colony, the English had conducted a program of raids on Powhattan villages. In the course of one such excursion, the Indians seem to have enticed Dale and a few of his men to join them in a dose of an hallucinogen, perhaps *Datura stramonium*, the alkali-bearing plant which the settlers called thornapple or Jamestown or Jimson weed. Percy reported:

_Sr Tho: Dale makeinge more invasyons & excursions upon the Salvages had many conflicts wth them and one thinge amongst the reste was very remarkable The wch may be supposed to have bene ocasyoned by the Salvages Sorceries and Charmes for Sr Thomas Dale wth Some of the better sorte sitteinge in An Indyans howse A fantasy possessed them thatt they impagined the Salvages were sett upon them eache man Takeinge one another for an Indyan And so did fall pell mell one upon an other beatinge one another downe and breakeinge one of Anothers heades, thatt Mutche miscgiefe mighte have been donn butt thatt itt pleased god the fantasy was taken away wherby they had bene deluded and every man understood his error._
During the “Bacon’s Rebellion” of 1675/1676, Major Robert Beverley, Sr. was an ally of Royal Governor Sir William Berkeley. Afterward he would become controversial clerk of the House of Burgesses.

Back in 1616, sixty years before, during Governor Dale’s administration of the Virginia colony, some natives seem to have enticed Dale and a few of his men to join them in a dose of an hallucinogen, perhaps *Datura stramonium*, the alkali-bearing plant which the settlers called thornapple or Jamestown or Jimson weed, with the most emphatic result. In this year a group of soldiers sent out to combat Bacon’s Rebellion prepared a salad for themselves, mistakenly including some leaves of this plant — and there was another such episode of delusion. The British “turn’d fool” and it required fully eleven days for them to recover.

May 29, Thursday / July 25: Walking along the beach of Hog Island near Boston, “one summer day,” Thoreau was concerned not only for the remorselessness of the manner in which the land was being nibbled away by the ocean waves, but also by the profuseness of the wild *Datura* blooming along the beach. He proposed that the locals should combine these two symbols for two attributes of wildness and use this as a device for their shields. The shield should show a ripple symbolizing “a wave passing over them” and a thornapple “springing from its edge.” *Datura,* “not an innocent plant,” he pointed out, produces a “mental alienation of long duration” without particular injury to the body.

Richard Bridgman’s DARK THOREAU

...let us try to understand what Thoreau might have felt about the conjunction of a benign wave passing over and a harmless narcotic. It was he after all who developed the symbolism, for his original journal entry had confined itself to observing that the wave and the thorn-apple were each physically characteristic of the locale. Thoreau also noted here in CAPE COD that some islands were being eaten away voraciously while still others were being created. New shores were being “fancifully arranged,” so that on Hog Island “everything seemed to be gently laping into futurity.” Generalized, then, the components of the proposed heraldic device were: a passive yielding to nature’s constructive energies, even if done, paradoxically, at the cost of destruction, coupled with a period of narcotic release in which men cavorted in innocent lewdness. One must decide whether to entertain some such interpretation or to concede the incoherence of two pages of Thoreau’s published work.
DATURA STRamonium Poisoning

Jimson Weed is a common weed along roadsides, in cornfields and pastures, and in waste areas. *Datura stramonium* comes from the family *Solanaceae*, the potato or nightshade family. The plant is native to Asia, but is also found in the West Indies, Canada, and the United States. Of the more than 12 species, *Datura stramonium* is the most common type found in the eastern United States. Many names have been given to this plant including: Jimson Weed, Locoweed, Angel’s Trumpet, Thorn Apple, Devil’s Trumpet, Mad Apple, Stink Weed, Sacred Datura, Green Dragon, and Devil’s Trumpet. Although exposure is sometimes unintentional by gardeners or farmers, its toxic effects are seen most commonly in teens, who intentionally misuse it for its hallucinogenic and euphoric effects, while presenting with serious illness or death from its anticholinergic properties.

**Epidemiology**

The plant has been described throughout history as a toxin famous for its mind-altering properties. There are references to it in Homer’s Odyssey, and Shakespeare’s plays: Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and Anthony and Cleopatra. It is one of a group of plants known as “belladonnas,” thought to be named from their use by Italian women to dilate their pupils, which was considered beautiful. It was also known to be used for the medicinal treatment of colds and asthma, and for religious purposes. Its most common name, Jimson Weed, is a contracted form of Jamestown Weed, after its use was described in 1676, in Jamestown, Virginia. This was the first record in the United States of physical symptoms following its ingestion by British troops sent to halt Bacon’s Rebellion, as noted in Beverly’s “History and Present-State of Virginia.” Accidental exposure of adults has also been reported in the literature. An 82-year-old male mistakenly ate the root of an Angel’s Trumpet, *Datura innoxia* for a horseradish in his garden. “Gardener’s Mydriasis” was reported in a 54-year-old male who complained of blurred vision after cutting Angel’s Trumpet, *Datura suaveolens*, in his garden. A 49-year-old woman presented with delirium after making a tea to use as a mouthwash for treating gingivitis from a plant in her friend’s garden. “Cornpicker’s Pupil” is another presentation of mydriasis after exposure during harvesting. Intentional misuse by teenagers who eat seeds, drink tea and/or smoke cigarettes made of Jimson Weed has been reported by many authors. Although most use is sporadic, there is often clustering or increased use around press reports which increase interest in the drug but do not emphasize risks. Jimson Weed is used in over-the-counter asthma preparations: Asthmador, Barter’s Powder, Kinsman’s Asthmatic Powder, Green Mountain Asthmatic Compound, and Haywood’s Powder, often abused by teens. The American Association of Poison Control Centers’ Toxic Exposure Surveillance System reported 318 cases of Jimson Weed poisoning.
in 1993.

**PHARMACOLOGY**

The toxins in Jimson Weed are tropane belladonna alkaloids which possess strong anticholinergic properties. They include: hyoscymamine (leaves, roots, seeds), hyoscine (roots); atropine (d,l-hyoscyamine) and scopolamine (l-hyoscine). They act as competitive antagonists to acetylcholine at peripheral and central muscarinic receptors at a common binding site. The peripheral receptors are on exocrine glands which affect sweating, salivation, and smooth and cardiac muscle. Poisoning results in widespread paralysis of parasympathetic innervated organs. As tertiary amines they also have central nervous system absorption, inhibit CNS receptors and result in a central anticholinergic syndrome of acute psychosis or delirium. These toxins are easily absorbed from mucous membranes and the GI tract. The half-life of atropine is approximately 4 hours. Metabolism occurs in the liver by hydrolysis which eliminates approximately half the drug. The remainder is excreted unchanged in the urine.

**TOXICOLOGY**

*Datura stramonium* is an annual plant. It grows 4 to 6 feet tall and has dark green, long stemmed, lobed leaves which exude a foul odor. Its flower which blooms in late spring is usually white, sometimes lavender, solitary and tubular. A four-lobed, thorny, green seed pod fruit ripens in early fall. Each lobe contains 50-100, 2-3 mm, kidney-shaped, black/brown seeds. All parts of the plant are toxic. They are ingested, smoked and absorbed topically especially through mucous membranes. The exact concentration of specific alkaloids varies with species, cultivation, environment, temperature, moisture, and storage. The range of toxicity is highly variable and unpredictable; toxicity may vary from leaf to leaf, plant to plant and season to season. This contributes to the danger of misuse of the plant since the dose cannot be predicted. The highest concentration occurs in the seeds: approximately 0.1 mg of atropine per seed or 3-6 mg/50-100 seeds. An estimated lethal dose in an adult is >10 mg atropine or >2-4 mg scopolamine.

**CLINICAL EFFECTS**

The mnemonic for clinical effects of typical atropine poisoning is: "blind as a bat, mad as a hatter, red as a beet, hot as a hare, dry as a bone, the bowel and bladder lose their tone, and the heart runs alone." Symptoms include mydriasis; cycloplegia; flushed, warm, dry skin; dry mouth; ileus; urinary retention; tachycardia; hyper or hypotension; delirium with hallucinations; jerky, myoclonic movements; choreoathetosis; hyperthermia; coma; respiratory arrest; rare seizures; and central stimulation followed by depression. Hallucinations are reported in as many as 83% of cases; typically they are simple visual images in natural colors, but infrequently also tactile hallucinations of crawling insects. The onset of symptoms occurs within 30 to 60 minutes after smoking leaves or drinking tea;
and 1-4 hours after ingestion of plant material or seeds. Initial symptoms include dry mouth then pupil dilatation. The duration of symptoms is often 24-48 hours because of delayed gastrointestinal motility; symptoms have been reported to last up to 1-2 weeks. Although poisoning may lead to fatal medullary paralysis, arrhythmias and cardiovascular collapse, Jimson Weed-related deaths mainly are as a result of impaired judgment and coordination resulting in risk-taking activities associated with accidental death.

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“It’s all now you see. Yesterday won’t be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago.”

– Remark by character “Garin Stevens” in William Faulkner’s INTRUDER IN THE DUST

Prepared: December 6, 2013
This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot “Laura” (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.
Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology—but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.