

# HORRIFIC HERBARIUM - VOLUME 2



The second installment in a series of field guides designed to help adventurers navigate the deadly plants of the world, *Horrific Herbarium Volume 2* outlines 12 additional plants from around the planes. Ranging in threat from trivial to life-threatening, the plants contained herein are as sinister as they are varied. For legal reasons, the author suggests that adventurers hoping to become skilled at the identification of such dangerous plants do so with extreme care, and under the supervision of a competent teacher, lest they find themselves poisoned, drowned, or host to a growing parasitic tree.

## SEEDS OF CHAOS

As adventurers move through campaigns, they are more than likely going to be encountering more than a few wilderness areas. This supplement will help DMs populate these areas in between cities, ruins, and dungeons with plant life that will make players think twice about traipsing through them. These plants pose an especially potent risk for survival campaigns, where characters are constantly interacting with the natural world.

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### HEMOWORT

Hemowort is a species with an elegant protection against herbivory. Its stem is filled with a red, iron-rich substance that looks and smells remarkably similar to beast blood. When a creature attempts to eat this plant, the release of this substance attracts nearby predators.

**Identification:** Hemowort is a ground-hugging plant. It's above-ground body consists of a single leaf on a thick stalk. The leaf is uniquely shaped, semicircular in nature with large lobes around the fringe. It can be easily identified by its bright red leaf veins and subtle iron-like smell, which becomes intense when the stem is broken and the red liquid within is released.

**Mechanics:** Whenever a creature damages a hemowort plant, the strong scent of blood attracts predators, even ones that are far afield. Every predator within 1 mile that relies on its sense of smell to hunt will catch the scent of blood. Whether any individual creature pursues this scent is the decision of the Dungeon Master.

### BONEWOOD

A strange example of biomimicry, the bonewood tree (colloquially called the "skeletree" by seasoned adventurers) is a member of the family that contains the commonly seen ironwood and musclewood species. Much rarer is the bonewood, which uses its unsettling appearance to protect itself from herbivores.

**Identification:** The bonewood is easily identified by its unsettling appearance. It's trunk, roots, branches, and twigs all bear a striking resemblance to humanoid bones, connected at "joints". Its leaves have evolved to reflect red light instead of the typical green, giving them a striking crimson colour that adds to the tree's intimidating presence.

**Mechanics:** A creature that sees a bonewood for the first time must succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence saving throw or be frightened by the tree for 1 minute. The creature can make this saving throw again at the end of each of its turns to end this effect early.

### GLASSBERRIES

Glassberries get their name from their peculiar adaptation for seed dispersion. The berry is roughly the size of a pea, orange in colour, and coated in a natural material similar to glass. These berries are specifically meant to be swallowed whole by birds and dispersed, as the delicate seeds within cannot survive the harsh process of chewing. Any creature that chews on a glassberry will quickly find the berry's glassy texture broken in its mouth, cutting it to ribbons.

**Identification:** Glassberry bushes are usually 3-5 feet tall and just as wide. They bear long, toothed leaves. The berries grow on top of large stalks that stick out of the top of the bush, oriented toward the birds they are meant to be eaten by.

**Mechanics:** A creature that chews a glassberry will take 1d4 piercing damage to the inside of its mouth. An affected creature has disadvantage on all checks related to speaking until the wounds are healed, including the casting of spells with verbal components. If a spell with verbal components cast by a creature affected by glassberries would force another creature to make a saving throw, that saving throw is made with advantage. The effect lasts until the creature heals a number of hit points equal to the damage taken.

### FALSE GOODBERRY

The berries produced by this plant are nearly identical to those produced by the Goodberry spell, however they are very poisonous if eaten.



**Identification:** growing on a small bush, these berries are nearly indistinguishable from goodberries. Keen naturalists can tell the difference by examining the leaves of the plant – the edges of a goodberry leaf are slightly and softly lobed, whereas the edges of false goodberry are jaggedly toothed. Once the berries are picked, they are indistinguishable from goodberries until ingested.

**Mechanics:** A creature that eats a false goodberry must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 3d6 poison damage, or half on a success. Additionally, on a failed save, the creature is poisoned for 1d6+2 hours.

### ARCANA-DEVOURING HAWTHORN

The origins of the Arcana-Devouring Hawthorn (ADH) are unknown, though many theories exist. The most popular theory is that a wizard who specialized in magical plants attempted to dispel the magical effects of a lighteater hawthorn, a species in the same family that absorbs all light within 5 feet of it. In doing this, she infused the plant with a powerful Dispel Magic spell, which the plant absorbed and incorporated into its light-devouring ability. Some ancient tribes believe the ADH originated when a cursed sorcerer ventured out into an ancient forest called the Stranglewood to pray to have his curse removed. Legend says the Gods created this plant to drain his magic ability and free him from his curse.

**Identification:** The ADH is a large shrub typically standing in open areas with lots of light. Under good conditions, this shrub can reach over 6 feet in each dimension. It bears long spade-shaped leaves that are rough to the touch. On its branches, there are long spines that can reach up to 3 inches in length before terminating in a sharp point.

**Mechanics:** When a creature with spell slots comes within 10 feet of an ADH, they must succeed on a DC20 Constitution saving throw or lose one of their highest-level spell slots available. This slot cannot be regenerated by any means until the creature completes a long rest. The ADH only drains available spell slots. For example, if a wizard with access to one 2nd level spell slot comes within 10 feet of the ADH, but spent that spell slot earlier in the day, the ADH instead drains one of their 1st level slots, if they have any remaining. Additionally, all magical items with charges that come within 10 feet of an ADH are immediately reduced to 0 charges.

### TERRORCHERRY TREE

The terrorcherry tree is a member of the cherry family, but typically grows to be more robust and larger than other species. Their berries are a powerful hallucinogen, but always result in terrifying visions.

**Identification:** Unlike other species of cherry, the terrorcherry's spring flowers do not bloom red or pink; they instead bloom into an ashy-black colour. Their fruit are near identical to regular cherries, making them a popular madness-inducing poison for those with use for one.

**Mechanics:** A creature that eats a terrorcherry will hallucinate for 1d4+2 hours, during which time they will see terrifying images. The creature takes 1d12 points of psychic damage for each hour they are under the cherry's effects. When the effect wears off, the creature suffers a point of exhaustion.

### PARASITIC BIRCH

A truly distressing species, the parasitic birch has evolved to germinate inside of a beast or humanoid. The seeds of these trees are microscopic, and when inhaled by a beast or humanoid, implants itself in their lung tissue and feeds off them from the inside. The tree eventually sprouts and grows into an adult tree, using the creature's body as a primary source of nutrients. The areas surrounding this species are typically littered with bodies of beasts that have been victimized by the tree and serve as unwilling nutrient-packages for its offspring.

**Identification:** Like other birch trees, the parasitic birch bears toothed, spade-shaped leaves and bark that peels in strips. The bark bears a noticeable but modest green hue, setting it apart from its white, black, and yellow-barked cousins. Typically, the area within a few miles of a stand of parasitic birch will bear corpses of beasts that have inhaled the seeds. These corpses usually have young trees growing from them, most commonly sprouting from the chest but occasionally sprouting from the mouth or eyes.

**Mechanics:** Creatures that come within 5 miles of a parasitic birch during the breeding season must succeed on a DC 5 Constitution saving throw or inhale a seed, having it implant itself in their lungs on a failed save. This DC increases by 5 for every mile closer they come to the tree. Regardless of whether they fail or succeed this saving throw, the creature will not feel any different or take note of the seed. Once the seed implants itself in a creature, it will begin to feed on them from the inside. 1d8 weeks after initial exposure, the seed will germinate. At this time, the creature's hit point maximum will decrease by 5 points every day until they die or are cured. Additionally, their strength score becomes a 6, unless it is already lower, as the growing tree saps their strength. Once the seed reduces their hit point maximum past half of their pre-exposure maximum, the toll taken on the creature will be greater. They will be permanently under the effects of the slow spell, though it will be considered a nonmagical disease and not a spell effect. The growing tree can only be removed by a Greater Restoration spell or a surgery. To conduct the surgery, a creature must succeed on a DC 30 medicine check to successfully remove the seedling. If the creature's hit point maximum is reduced to zero before they are healed of their affliction, they die. Roll a d6. On a roll of 1-5, a tree sprouts from their chest. On a roll of 6, a tree sprouts from their mouth and eyes.

### AXEMAN'S BANE

An infamous tree among woodcutters and woodworkers, axeman's bane belongs to the maple family, and is characterized by its wood. The grain pattern on axeman's bane forms patterns and shapes so indescribably complex that they drive anyone who observes them to madness. This tree most often affects lumberjacks and woodcutters, who see the grain upon felling the tree and go mad on the spot.

**Identification:** Aside from its wood grain, axeman's bane is difficult to distinguish from a similar species, red maple. Bearing the same toothed leaves and general bark structure, the only reliable way to identify axeman's bane is by digging into its roots. Where the roots of other plants grow in no discernable pattern, the roots of axeman's bane grow in perfectly straight lines, changing direction at perfectly right angles.



**Mechanics:** A creature that looks at the wood from an axeman's bane must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or suffer one form of indefinite madness as detailed on page 260 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

### GATORWEED

This carnivorous aquatic plant is named for its hunting technique, which is similar to that of an alligator. This plant pulls its prey to the bottom of the river or lake in which it lives. Once the creature is drowned, the plant's vines pierce its skin and take nutrients from the creature's body from the inside.

**Identification:** Gatorweed is a large, ground hugging plant that lives on the bottom of lakes and slow-moving rivers. It bears 5 large, round leaves that can grow to be as large as 3 feet in diameter. These leaves grow in a palmate orientation, and from the centre of them sprout 3-5 thin, tough vines, lined with small structures that are filled with air, lifting the vines to the surface. These vines are the easiest way to identify gatorweed from above the surface; they typically float right at the surface, their tips extending roughly 2 centimetres out of the water. The vines have a glossy appearance, afforded to the sticky substance that coats them. Contact with these vines causes them to contract toward the leaves, which close with surprising strength, pinning the plant's prey under the water, drowning them.

**Mechanics:** A creature that comes into contact with the vines of a gatorweed plant, whether on the surface or below it, must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained by the plant. A creature restrained in this way is immediately dragged to the bottom of the lake or river, where they are enveloped by the leaves of the plant. The creature may make a saving throw at the end of each of its turns to escape the plant's grasp. The saving throw can be based in either strength of dexterity, with a DC of 16. A creature with a swimming speed makes this saving throw with advantage.

### TOWERING SAWGRASS

A wetland plant, towering sawgrass can grow to be impossibly tall and often grows in large populations. This combined with their naturally sharp leaf margins makes them extremely dangerous to navigate.

**Identification:** An adventurer will know towering sawgrass when they see it. Growing up to 60 feet tall, towering sawgrass populations often resemble a massive green wall, and are about as penetrable. The blades themselves are typically 4-7 feet wide and are barbed in a single direction at the margin. This means that, going one way, they feel smooth, but going the other way, they can be sharp enough to cut flesh.

**Mechanics:** Creatures attempting to move through a patch of towering sawgrass must spend 4 feet of movement for every foot they move. For every 5 feet a creature moves, they must succeed on a dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 slashing damage from the sharp leaves.

### STINGING NETTLE

Contact with a stinging nettle causes irritation of the skin and a lasting rash. While often nothing more than an annoyance, navigating large patches of this plant can be dangerous.

**Identification:** An upright, single-stalked plant, stinging nettle bears sharply toothed leaves in a whorled orientation. All parts of this plant appear matte, and closer inspection reveals this is caused by thousands of tiny, translucent stingers.

**Mechanics:** a creature that comes into contact with stinging nettle takes 1d4 poison damage, as the tiny stingers pierce their skin, causing irritation and a rash.

### PITFALL PINE

This tree's roots are unnaturally strong, and actually account for most of the tree's structural integrity. The roots' aggressive growth often leaves the ground around them very loose, and hollow in places. Creatures that step into the radius of these pockets risk falling beneath the earth.

**Identification:** A member of the pine family, pitfall pine is more gnarled than other species of its family. Its trunk is usually thin and irregularly shaped. Looking at the roots of the pitfall pine will reveal them to be very thick and tough, capable of holding up the tree in loose, structurally poor soil.

**Mechanics:** When a creature comes within 20 feet of the trunk of a pitfall pine, roll a d6. On a roll of 1 or 2, the ground beneath them gives out, as they step over an air pocket. They fall 1d4x10 feet, hitting roots on their way down. The creature takes fall damage as normal and is stuck in the hole. A creature can attempt to climb the roots and escape with a successful DC 10 Athletics or Acrobatics check.

*Written and prepared by Calder Schweitzer using the Homebrewery*