

*O thou weed  
Who are so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet  
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst  
ne'er been born!*

Shakespeare, Othello. Act iv, sc. 2, 1.67.

Mrs. Betty Conabere is one of Australia's leading botanical artists. The following is a short resumé of her work over the last 10 years.

In 1965 she was commissioned by the National Herbarium of Victoria to paint a series of fifty illustrations of alpine plants. Five of these illustrations are currently being reproduced for sale as prints.

In 1967 she held an exhibition of flower drawings in Canberra, including some of the alpine illustrations lent by the National Herbarium. Some of her illustrations of alpine plants were also included in an exhibition of botanical illustrations held in the Canberra Botanic Gardens in 1973.

Mrs. Conabere's wildflower illustrations were included in the Society of Wildlife Artists of Australia annual exhibitions in Melbourne, Sale, Sydney and Canberra in 1974 and 1975.



presented by the Vermin and Noxious Weeds  
Destruction Board,  
Department of Crown Lands and Survey

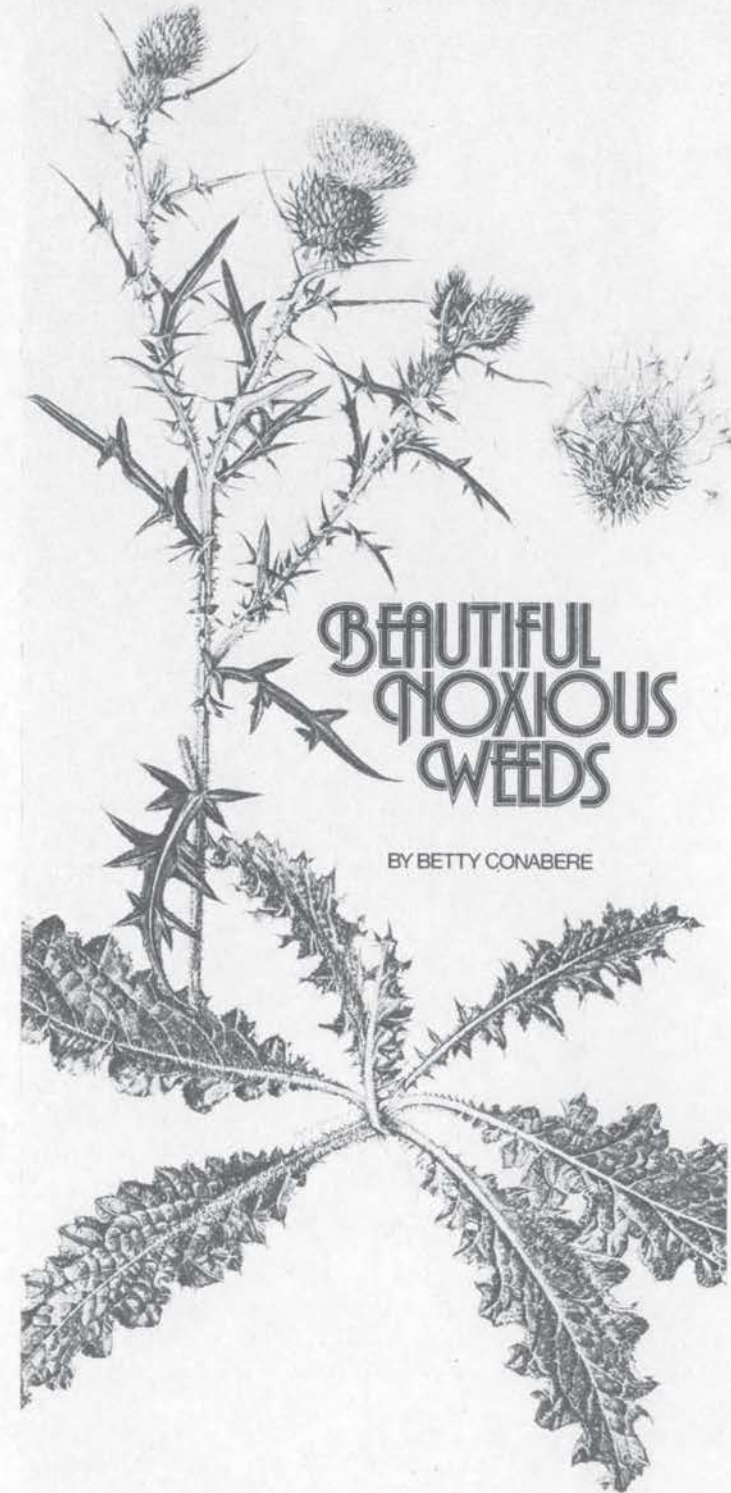
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C. H. Rixon, Government Printer, Melbourne

In 1968 the publisher, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd. commissioned Betty Conabere to illustrate "Wildflowers of South Eastern Australia". The Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board approached Mrs. Conabere in the same year, but it was 1973 before she was able to commence the illustrations of noxious weeds and poisonous plants for the Board.

Betty Conabere was requested by The Sydney National Herbarium in 1972 to consider illustrating New South Wales native plants.

In 1974 Thomas Nelson (Australia) Ltd. published a limited edition of "Wildflowers of South Eastern Australia", containing 80 pages of Betty's illustrations of native plants. The original illustrations were later acquired by the Victorian Government and presented to the Latrobe Library.



Now 'tis the spring and weeds are shallow-rooted;  
Suffer them now, and they'll o'ergrow the garden  
And choke the herbs for want of husbandry.

Shakespeare, 11 Henry VI Act iij, sc. 1, 31.

Thorn Apple (*Datura innoxia*). This annual noxious weed, growing to 1 m high, is widespread in Victoria. The long, white, trumpet-shaped flowers produce spiny spherical fruit which droop on short stalks and contain many brown, kidney-shaped seeds. The spines on this fruit are numerous and soft. The plant is poisonous to animals.

Thorn Apple (*Datura stramonium*) is an annual noxious weed growing to 1 m high. It is widespread throughout Victoria. The flowers are often slightly purple, trumpet-shaped and up to 15 cm long producing oval fruit armed with stiff spines. The fruit sits erect on short stalks, and contains many black, kidney-shaped seeds. Some specimens of *stramonium* have purple colouration of the stems. The plant is considered to be poisonous to animals.

Silver-leaf Nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*). This perennial noxious weed is found in the northern parts of Victoria. Growing 30–60 cm high with many branches, its silver-white leaves have yellow spines along their midribs. The fruit is a capsule, mottled yellow when ripe, and contains numerous round flattened seeds. The plant is also propagated by its extensive root system. Silver-leaf Nightshade competes with cereal crops and pastures and is poisonous to animals. An alternative name for the plant is White Horsenettle.

Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*) is an annual native plant growing 30–60 cm high. It is a common weed in all parts of Australia and many other countries. Black Nightshade is frequently, but wrongly, called Deadly Nightshade. The plants may

be distinguished by the size of the berries. Black Nightshade has clusters of pea-sized berries while the true Deadly Nightshade produces much larger single berries. Deadly Nightshade is not found in Victoria.

The unripe or green berries of Black Nightshade are somewhat poisonous but when ripe and black are quite edible. There is little danger of stock being poisoned by Black Nightshade.

Devil's Claw (*Ibicella lutea* and *Proboscidea louisianica*) is an annual noxious weed 30–60 cm high having many thick branched stems which exude a slimy material from glandular hairs. The typical yellow or purple trumpet-shaped flowers produce fruit somewhat like gherkins, each with a long beak. When mature, the fruit splits into two hard curved claws. These can attach to animals, causing injury, hindering feeding and can eventually lead to death by starvation. Devil's Claw occurs only as isolated plants and is found in the north of Victoria and in a few patches near Werribee.

Spiny Rush (*Juncus acutus*) was introduced to help control erosion and reduce the salting of irrigated and flooded lands. Dense tussocks up to 1 m high of tough sharp pointed leaves impede the movement of man and animals but provide shelter for rabbits. This perennial noxious weed is found mainly in the western, central and north-central parts of Victoria.

Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*) is a perennial noxious weed often found in neglected pastures and the partly forested areas of the Otway Ranges and Gippsland. It grows up to 1 m high and is suspected of being poisonous. It was first introduced into Victoria as a garden plant because it has attractive reddish foliage and bright yellow flowers.

Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* L.agg.). This perennial noxious weed was introduced into Victoria for its sweet tasting fruit and for the control of soil erosion. It is now commonly found along streams, in pastures and in disturbed forest lands in the high rainfall regions of the State. The dense prickly thickets are found up to 3 m high, and the canes may reach 7 m in length. Although it is not always impenetrable, it is a definite hindrance to man and animals and may exclude other plants.

Ox-eye Daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*). This perennial noxious weed was introduced into Victoria as a garden plant and was known as "marguerite daisy". It is now a problem weed in the high rainfall areas of Gippsland and the Otway Ranges. The daisy, which grows up to 1 m high, readily invades pastures to the exclusion of other plants, but is not readily eaten by stock.

Variegated Thistle (*Silybum marianum*) has large shiny leaves often variegated with white veins and white patches. It is an annual noxious weed which was introduced as a medicinal plant and is now widely spread throughout Victoria. It grows up to 1.5 m high and when wilted may be poisonous to sheep and cattle.

Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) was introduced as a garden plant. It is poisonous to humans and animals but is not readily eaten by stock because it has a musty odour. The plant is widely distributed through southern Victoria growing in moist waste places and occasionally in pastures. Hemlock is an annual or biennial noxious weed growing up to 2 m high.

Sweet Briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*). Seedlings from this perennial woody noxious weed will grow in areas where there is little pressure from grazing animals. When established, thickets of the briar hinder grazing stock and provide shelter for rabbits. Sweet Briar grows to a height of 3 m and occurs throughout Victoria.

Soursob (*Oxalis pes-caprae*). This perennial noxious weed was introduced as a garden plant but is now established as a weed in most parts of Victoria. It has clover-like leaves with bright yellow long stalked flowers. It was the sour acid flavour of the stalks which gave Soursob its name. It grows to about 30 cm high and can invade cultivated land and pastures, offering strong competition to desirable plants. The plant is poisonous to sheep and cattle.

Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) is a proclaimed noxious weed found in grazing lands and wheat fallows. It is often wrongly called "Scotch Thistle". The foliage of Spear Thistle is usually dark green while the more lightly branched Scotch Thistle is clothed with downy white hairs. Spear Thistle grows to 1.5 m high, competes with other plants and considerably reduces pasture production.

St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) is a perennial noxious weed found in central and north-eastern Victoria. It is a shrubby plant growing to 1 m high, having bright yellow flowers and paired, often stalkless, leaves. The leaves are dotted with transparent glands containing an oily substance which causes photosensitivity and dermatitis when eaten by white-skinned stock. The animals develop running sores, lose condition and may even die. St. John's Wort was introduced into Victoria as a medicinal and ornamental plant.