Poems from Plant Poets’ Corner

At Plant Poets’ Corner, we meet to focus on plants and fungi and explore our learning through poetry. We welcome people who are new to poetry, or to plant science, or both, as well as those returning to writing, or looking to make more space for it in their lives. Over time, we have created a generous and caring group that continued to meet and grow online during 2020–21, amid the restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic.

We share these poems in celebration of our work, and to illustrate the learning resources that were created from our sessions, which aim to inspire others to write their own poetry, and to help writers and teachers lead workshops inspired by plants and fungi.

Pepper
by Sadelyn

Black pepper, chilli pepper
Scotch bonnet pepper
Any pepper

Chest grater – Mucus hater
Charging in with fire
Your warmth – Comforting
Releasing and invigorating

1 teaspoon – 1 tablespoon
Any spoon

Pounding in the mortar
Pounding harder and harder

As you’re swallowed
Revenge you take
Knocking infection
Mucus and germs
Far asunder
Wishful Thinking
by Kirstie

I walk amongst trees and admire the different textures of their protective coats.

Is bark the building material of their upright stance?

Almost trance-like I’m lost in their uniqueness and I start to recognise similarities to the faces and expressions of those I know.

Each gnarly and wrinkled crease, position of bough and branch makes a connection to a memory in my head.

A plan, a vision, a wish unfolds.

Could trees become a figurehead for my revenge?

What if I could cast a spell on all of those who have caused me strife and unleashed unkindness in my life?

Could I curse their soul deep into a tree, hold them to account by consolidating their negativity?

A prisoner bound by solid wood.

Could I? Should I?

I laugh at this and it brings me back to reality.

To put that obligation on a tree would not be fair, besides this is no fairy tale.

I exhale with some wishful regret, pick up my old wooden spade, readjust my protective gloves and continue my search for Deadly Nightshade.
Summer Salad
by June and Lucy

Tear, wash and spin
Your fresh green lettuce leaves
Chop them as finely as you can
Without slicing your fingertips.
Add a large red onion,
Diced.
Mum says it cleans your blood.
Wear a diving mask to protect your eyes
From the fierce stinging.

Now,
Dice or grate or slice or chop
Whatever you can find:
Peppers
Carrots
Tomatoes
Mange tout
Sugar snaps
Cabbage
Spinach
Cauliflower
Add peas, chickpeas
And spuds (boiled and cooled)
Sprinkle liberally with Raquel’s oregano
And fresh, clean parsley
And heaps of cracked black pepper.
Splash with balsamic vinegar.

Then,
Finally,
Eat it in the sun.
Savour the crunchiness
Roll the freshness round your mouth
Let the tang tantalise your tongue.
Enjoy the moment
With plenty of chatter
And banter
And laughter.

In this cup of tea
by Sally

In this cup of tea is
a spent flower, stewed leaves,
the stench of imperialism.
I don’t like the taste.
Violet
by Steven

A riot of silence in the misty depths of a velvety nebula.
From far away in Space, Violet bestows its spiritual blessings upon us, as if Royalty. In its majesty, I feel its blessed calm.

Fungi
by Clara

From Earth unexpected you appear. With the help of Humans’ hands you grow too. Joy and surprise you give to us all, but, as you wildly spread, a warning is left in the air. Choose me wisely, be aware of Who I Am. And, if you do have the power of healing, show me how it is done. Take away the pain. Take away the dark clouds from the mind. Make the juice you give do the miracle, to bring back happiness in the heart.

Daffodil?
A group poem

Duck herald
Golden trumpet
Spring star
Flapper’s dress
Pig snout
Candle snuffer
Ear horn
Butternut plant
Pollen trap
Yellow bee scanner
Exploded baker’s hat
Sun-on-me

We hope you enjoyed our poems. We wrote many more! If you write anything inspired by this work, or the resources, we would love to read it. You can send it to communitylearning@kew.org and we will reply when we can.

Special thanks to all the poets who shared their work, to Valentina Zunino and Seth Richardson for all their support and guidance, and to everyone at RBG Kew who wrote and helped to create the materials and resources that inspired us.

Created for Kew by poet Miriam Nash.
For more information on Kew, visit kew.org