



The Denizens Guide

When I first set out to create a tarot deck, I had no overarching theme in mind. My original vision for the deck was actually far more macabre and dark than it turned out. As I moved through the cards, the symbolism, and themes that I loved were far more gentle, and based around nature, plants and animals. I was half way through the deck when the idea of "denizens of earth" came to me.

Denizen: an inhabitant or occupant of a specific place.

The minor arcana are represented by animals and plants, and the major arcana are represented by a mixture of animal headed, plant headed human figures and symbolic imagery.

It wasn't until I completed the deck that I realized that I hadn't included any fungi, or reptiles or amphibians. It's not a flawless representation of life on planet earth, but I love viewing tarot from the perspective of all life, not just human ones. Below are the meanings for each card as well as anecdotes about creating them and what their symbols are.

Zero: This was the first card I created for the Denizens deck, and it's still one of my favorites. The fool represents innocence, the beginning of a journey. My little fawn is curled up in the grass, full of potential. Behind them is the geometric figure "the flower of life". Seen in many ancient culture's art and sculptures, it is supposed to represent the seven days of creation. It also mimics the process of mitosis and the creation of life.

Two: The high priestess is connected to intuition, the subconscious and her own instinctive knowledge. Her orchid head represents her existence in her own mind ruling her action. She balances the moon representing intuition and a geometric figure representing intrinsic knowledge. This card took a few iterations for me. The first version of her head was an iris, but I liked the connection to p. amabilis, the moon or moth orchid.

Three: While both the magician and the high priestess are traditionally represented by a male magician and female priestess their roles are more about feminine or masculine energy. The empress and the emperor are the physical form. The empress is the female body, life giving, nurturing, a vessel. No matter if you chose to have children or not, having a female body will define aspects of your life. Her belly is ringed with the seed of life, precursor to the flower of life.

Four: Partner to the empress, the emperor is the male form. For my emperor I chose to represent him as an androgynous figure. He has the head of a lioness and a body which could be seen as male or female. The emperor represents discipline, authority, and social organization. His sacred geometric figure shows a sphere held in the confines of a triangle, illustrating control.

Five: A hierophant is a person, who interprets sacred mysteries or esoteric principles. In Pagan and Wiccan traditions, deer takes on numerous aspects of God during the harvest season. My hierophant appears before the seeker as a guide to the mysteries they are attempting to unravel. He sits in his own bubble, apart from the world, although still connected to it.

Six: The lovers card has been an often misrepresented one. Although it can mean a romantic or sexual relationship, it can also mean a connection to another human being. To illustrate that, my "lovers" are two genderless hands reaching for each other in the void. Behind them is a simple Metatron's Cube, which symbolizes the journey of energy throughout the universe, and balance within the universe.

Seven: The chariot means movement, forward momentum, action. My chariot is simply feet, walking with purpose, their legs turn into branching trees above them. Although action can be viewed as its own event, it's the fruits of that activity you look towards. It's not just the movement, it's what you hope to accomplish with your momentum.

Eight: This card was again one of the first I created and had to be reworked later to help it better fit with the remainder of the deck. Originally the little daffodil headed figure was wearing a dress, but as my deck moved toward unclothed ambiguous bodies, I changed that. They hold open the mouth of a much larger tiger, showing that strength does not have to come from a position of dominance or loudness, it can also be quiet and gentle.

Nine: Originally the deer headed elder depicted on card five was the hermit, but it didn't really fit. After reflecting, the hermit to me is more about withdrawing into oneself. Introspection and self-care are the best ways to get back in tune with your own desires, goals, and needs. I represented this simply as a brain, floating in space guided by the light and intuition of the universe. The hermit is about finding your way internally.

Ten: The wheel is intended to represent the cycle of life, the rotation of the seasons, the rise and fall of the sun, the moon, and the tides. It shows us that we are all connected to the same journey. The planets are inscribed on a human hand, showing that we are bound to the cycle, but that we also have agency over our role in that cycle. We can't stop the moonrise, but we can choose what we do during it.

Eleven: Justice and card twenty judgement are very closely related. Justice is earthly, human laws, mankind's version or attempt at truth. It's represented by a human figure with a wild rose head, wielding a sword. Human labels, laws, societal truth have their place in our lives. It is not a final or absolute truth though. Hopefully it is guided by a righteous north star, and serves to bring balance to a community.

Twelve: This design was one that came easily, I created it in one sitting, and never altered it. Even when I went to add color, I loved the first version I came up with! A monarch butterfly stands on its chrysalis, free of it, but not yet ready to fly. The hanged man is change, not necessarily the decision to change, but that moment between the decision and action. The hanged man is breaking free, seeing the world or your life from a new perspective and being on the cusp of a change.

Thirteen: Death is always a fascinating card to me, I look for it first when browsing new tarot decks. The way that an artist chooses to represent death is very telling about their own perspective of mortality. Sometimes it's a frightening specter, sometimes merely a peaceful grave. My design shows a serene skeleton, at peace, with pansies growing all around. Death can represent mortal death, but also the end of something, the closing of a chapter or season.

Fourteen: Temperance means balance, finding equilibrium in all matters. My temperance card shows the brain and heart halved together. So often imbalance comes from a disconnect between desire and logic. You can know objectively that a behavior, a vice, a person in your life isn't healthy, but your heart can continue coming back to it. The seed of life is split on either side, representing the need for balance to have a whole being.

Fifteen: The devil card is so misunderstood, especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition that symbolizes the devil as an evil entity leading you astray. The devil is hedonism, your base instinct, it is unbridled desire. The devil is your alter ego, open and confident in what you want. My devil design is a feminine figure poised for action, led by her open poppy head and guided by the pentagram star above her.

Sixteen: The tower represents a sudden change, great upheaval. My design shows a figure, their head turned one way, the body another, chest torn open, guided by another Metatron's Cube. The tower isn't necessarily a calamity or disaster, it's a sudden and unsolicited change. Although big moments like this are startling, they can provide the opportunity for awakenings that we would otherwise not have received. I wanted my hare headed figure to show that although they are in turmoil they are reflecting, and choosing how to take this change.

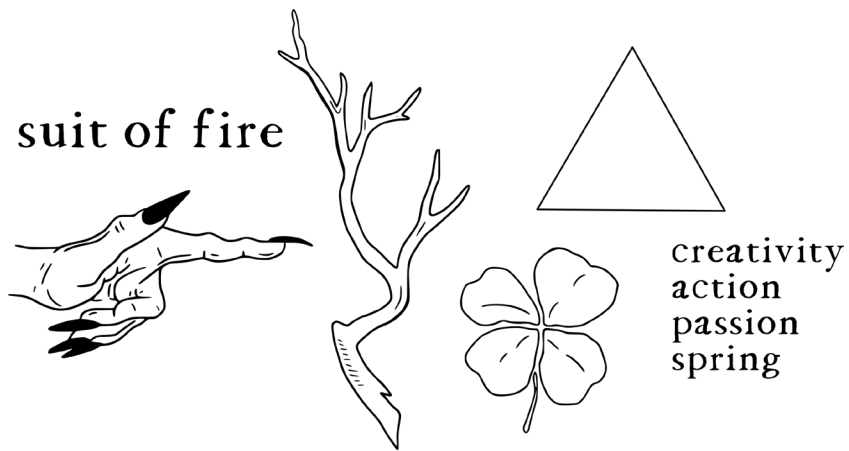
Seventeen: The star is hope, light, purpose, belief that you have a place in the universe. The star's sacred geometric shape is rounded all the way out as to make a circle, representing the wholeness of finding your place in the universe. The star can also represent spirituality, whatever your beliefs might be, the star is your understanding of your role in the ethereal world.

Eighteen: The moon is intuitive, as explored in the high priestess card. The moon can also represent repressed desires, illusion or anxiety. The moon only shines because of the light of the sun, it is a reflection and a reversal of that light. The moon in my deck is accompanied by a hawk moth, a nocturnal creature and also drawn to the light.

Nineteen: The sun is a difficult thing to illustrate in a minimalist black and white style. It doesn't have a form exactly, it's light, a ball of energy burning in the sky. So I chose to represent it with a sunflower, all that light turned into life, and mimicking the shape of the sun. This card represents warmth, success, positivity, the purest form of happiness.

Twenty: The counterpart to justice, judgement is universal truth. It is karma, the laws of the universe, not of man. In ancient Egypt it was believed that after your death, the god Osiris weighed your heart against a feather, if it was lighter you were led to the afterlife. If it was heavier however, it was thrown to the ground and devoured. There was no hell for the Egyptians, just non-existence. Even if earthly justice deems you righteous, the weight of your own guilty conscience can be a far more serious judgement.

Twenty One: The world card is the last of the major arcana and represents... well the world. It means completeness, accomplishment, being whole. For this card I chose a simple depiction of Earth. In staying with the motif of the deck, our world is our planet Earth and completeness is living in harmony with all the denizens of it.



In *Denizens of Earth*, the four minor suits are represented by their elemental names, fire, water, earth, air rather than the traditional tarot suit names, wands, cups, pentacles and swords. Additionally, in Rider-Waite decks the court cards are King, Queen, Knight and Page, in this deck those court cards are Father, Mother, Guardian and Child respectfully. For each of the minor cards, there is a brief explanation and then some keywords for your readings.

Father of Fire

c. simum | White Rhinoceros

White rhinos are functionally extinct in the northern part of Africa, the southern species has around 20,000 animals left but are plagued by poachers. The story of rhinos can show humanity that we've lost a connection to the primal energy of the world if we take something innocent and use it for our own selfish gain. Natural leader, visionary, honor.

Mother of Fire

c. lupus | Grey Wolf

Wolves are excellent mothers, taking great care in preparing for her litter, and protecting her children. She chooses a den with care that is away from rival packs and humans to give her pups the best chance at survival. Although, unlike many other animals she isn't totally alone. Her male partner brings her food during the first weeks after giving birth and mothers in the same pack often watch each other's litters as they grow. Confidence, independence, social butterfly.

Guardian of Fire

p. pardus | Leopard

Leopards are incredibly energetic and opportunistic hunters. They'll go after prey as small as tiny birds and as big as giraffes. They've been known to drag the carcasses of animals 2-3 times their weight into trees for storage. Energy, inspired action, impulsiveness.

Child of Fire

v. vulpes | Red Fox

The red fox is the most widespread of all the fox species. They can be found all over the northern hemisphere, including North America, Europe, Asia and parts of northern Africa. They are excellent at adapting to novel environments and often settle near humans. Inspiration, potential, free spirit.

Ace of Fire

l. nobilis | True Laurel

Laurel was used to fashion the laurel wreath of ancient Greece, a symbol of highest status, this tradition carried on to Rome as well. Because of this, laurel is the root word for bac-

calaureate and poet laureate. To achieve a high status at work, at home, with your art you must find inspiration around you, be open to new opportunities and turn your potential into true growth. Growth, potential, learning.

Two of Fire
c. majus | Celandine

The name Celandine is actually an English corruption of the Greek word Chelidon "a swallow." It received this name because it would come into flower when the swallows arrive in April and fade at their departure. According to medieval folk belief, the swallows would use the sap of the plant to impart sight to their young. Progress, planning for the future, discovery.

Three of Fire
e. purpurea | Echinacea

The genus name is from the Greek echinos, meaning "hedgehog," an allusion to the spiny, brownish central disk of the flower. Echinacea can be brewed into an herbal tea that aids the immune system. When growing conditions are right echinacea plants can quickly take over the area. Expansion, forward thinking, development.

Four of Fire
v. sororia | Blue Violet

The Iroquois or Haudenosaunee, an indigenous people from northeast North America, have a legend that the violet is a child born of both sky and earth. The violet represents harmony between worlds, and is often paired with roses in depictions of love, joy and equilibrium. Harmony, celebration, joy.

Five of Fire
d. pinnata | Garden Dahlia

In Rider-Waite decks five of fire or wands represent conflict or disagreements. Traditionally Dahlias symbolize grace and kindness in the midst of pressure and strife. Dahlia tubers are edible and have been a food source during especially hard times for different civilizations including the Aztecs. In this deck the two ideas combine in the Dahlias to represent both conflict and the courage to continue. Conflict, disagreement, overcoming.

Six of Fire
t. patula | French Marigold

Marigolds have a widespread and lengthy history of usage in numerous different civilizations. Notably, in Mexico marigolds are a symbol of remembrance and are popular during Dia de los Muertos and in Hinduism, marigolds are associated with the Sun. They symbolize auspiciousness, brightness, and positive energy. Public recognition, success, positive self image.

Seven of Fire
s. wallisii | Peace Lily

Peace lilies are a common modern day gift for housewarmings and after a loved one passes. It's a symbol of the peace of being at rest, protection and moving forward. It's also often seen at Easter celebrations to symbolize rebirth. Protection, perseverance, peace.

Eight of Fire
t. officinale | Dandelion

The dandelion, a very common weed is excellent at quick adaptation. Dandelions have been used by humans both medicinally and as food for centuries. The pilgrims brought dandelions to North America on the Mayflower. Movement, quick change, swift action.

Nine of Fire

g. grandiflorus | Gladiolus

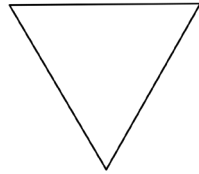
The Latin root of this long, slender flower is "gladius" meaning "little sword". It refers to the sword-like shape and appearance of the plant's leaves and flower spikes. The hardy plants were hybridized in the 18th century and grow in almost all colors. Resilience, persistence, tenacity.

Ten of Fire

m. spicata | Garden Mint

Different species of mint have been used all over the world since ancient times for medicinal and culinary uses. A symbol of hospitality and wisdom, Pliny wrote "the very smell of it reanimates the spirit". Ancient Hebrews scattered mint on their synagogue floors so that each footstep would raise its fragrance. Responsibility, burden, completion.

suit of water



love
emotion
empathy
summer

Father of Water

o. vulgaris | Common Octopus

Octopus species are widespread and ancient people from the Greeks to the Hawaiians had stories about these animals. With their many limbs coming from a central place they have become a symbol of multi-tasking, and balance. Equilibrium, diplomacy, all-encompassing.

Mother of Water

m. novaeangliae | Humpback Whale

There is so much that is fascinating about whales, and so much we don't understand about them. Whales in specific regions sing their own song, so all North Atlantic humpback whales sing one song and in the Pacific they sing a different song. It's been observed that over time the song slowly changes. Emotional stability, intuition, compassion.

Guardian of Water

c. carcharias | Great White Shark

Great White's are a misunderstood species. Although they do account for more human attacks than any other shark species, it's more a public perception that they are especially dangerous. Most of their bites are "test bites" to see what a human is not a cold blooded attack. Imagination, beauty, curiosity.

Child of Water

h. histrix | Spiny Seahorse

The first human depictions of what you might call a seahorse is from ancient Greece and shows Poseidon on a chariot pulled by seahorses. Though these look a lot more like a horse with a fish body, you can see they had elements of the actual animal. Possibility, subconscious, opportunity.

One of Water

r. chinensis | China Rose

Roses have been a symbol of beauty and love spanning over a variety of time periods and civilizations. Aphrodite, according to Greek legend, created red roses as she cried for her lover Adonis, her tears watered the ground and from there roses grew. Love, compassion, beauty.

Two of Water

a. psilostachya | Ragweed

Ragweed is often the culprit behind seasonal allergies, but the plant was long used medicinally by indigenous people. Ragweed makes a mild antiseptic for minor cuts, insect bites, and stings and when brewed into a tea can curb fever and nausea. Duality, partnership, twofoldness.

Three of Water

h. helix | English Ivy

English Ivy is invasive in the United States, its creeping stems weigh down trees, smother buildings and out compete native plants. Ivy is a lovely plant, but if you let it take over there is no room for anything else. Collaboration, codependency, interconnected.

Four of Water

s. officinalis | Common Sage

Since ancient time sage has been used to ward off evil, increase fertility, improve snake bites and many more minor ailments. The Romans called sage "holy herb," and used it in their religious rituals. Reevaluation, mending, reflection.

Five of Water

r. graveolens | Rue

The bitter taste of Rue has led it to be associated with the verb rue, "to regret". In literary works, it's been called "herb-of-grace" and symbolizes regret. Regret, disappointment, melancholy.

Six of Water

l. angustifolia | English Lavender

The flowers and leaves of lavender are used as an herbal medicine to alleviate symptoms such as anxiety and difficulty falling asleep. It's a favorite scent for anything made to be relaxing, Epsom salt baths, massage oil, lotions, eye pillows etc. Purity, tranquility, nostalgia.

Seven of Water

m. deliciosa | Monstera

Monstera or swiss cheese plant is a popular house plant for its beautiful big leaves, but it's hard to grow in colder climates. In the tropics, it's often grown outdoors where it can get up to nine feet tall. Opportunities, self-deception, choices.

Eight of Water

a. absinthium | Wormwood

Wormwood is a bitter plant used in creating absinthe. In his 1651 book, Nicholas Culpeper said wormwood was the key to understanding. Later commentators would describe this entry on wormwood as the rambling of a drunk and a stream of consciousness. Although biographer Benjamin Woolley has said that this could have been an allegory about bitterness as Culpeper had a history of opposing the powers of the day and had been wounded and imprisoned for it. Escapism, disappointment, withdrawal.

Nine of Water

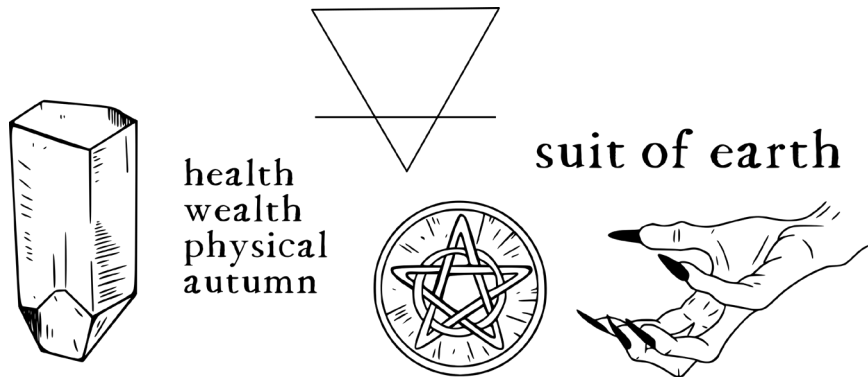
h. macrophylla | Hydrangea

A tea made from hydrangea is used on *kan-butsu-e* (the Buddha bathing ceremony) in Japan. During the ceremony the tea is poured over a Buddha statue and given to the attendees. The legend goes that nine dragons poured "ambrosia" on Buddha the day he was born. Gratitude, fulfillment, recognition.

Ten of Water

p. vulgaris | Primrose

The Victorians were particularly interested in the "language of flowers", for them primrose meant young love, youth or a love you can't live without. First love, pure love, harmony.



health
wealth
physical
autumn

suit of earth

Father of Earth

t. thoreyi | Dragonfly

Dragonflies have been a popular decorative motif around the world for centuries. Some indigenous American tribes in the southwest associate dragonflies with transformation. They called dragonflies snake doctors because they believed they followed injured snakes into the ground to heal them. Healing transformation, security, abundance.

Mother of Earth

l. mactans | Black Widow

The female black widow spider has a reputation for killing her partner after mating. Studies have indicated that this behavior may promote the survival odds of the offspring. Sexual cannibalism has been observed more often in laboratory cages where the males could not escape. Pragmatic, nurturing, financially responsible.

Guardian of Earth

s. sacer | Sacred Scarab

Scarab beetles or dung beetles were particularly important to the ancient Egyptians. Scarab beetles eat their dung balls, and lay their eggs in them so in turn, their newly hatched young can feed on it in a very practical cycle of rebirth. Hard work, productive routines, renewal.

Child of Earth

a. mellifera | Western Honey Bee

Honey bees live their lives in a very structured balance with their hive. They are born with purpose and work together to survive. Honey bees give the world the gift of pollination and create honey in surplus to share as well. Manifestation, fulfillment of one's potential, dedication.

One of Earth

s. alba | White Mustard

Harvested for their pungent seeds, mustard is also grown in rotation with other crops to prevent diseases and other ailments from spreading through the fields. The leaves of the white mustard plant are edible and it's also often grown as ground cover for grazing animals. Opportunity, bounty, prosperity.

Two of Earth

i. germanica | Bearded Iris

Iris, in Greek mythology, is the personification of rainbows and a messenger of the gods. She had the additional responsibility of carrying water from the River Styx in a vase whenever the gods had to take a solemn oath. The water would render unconscious for one year any god or goddess who lied. Wisdom, adaptability, regulation.

Three of Earth

t. baccata | English Yew

Yew trees were sacred to the Druids, old yew's drooping branches can take root where they touch the earth creating new trees. For this reason, in Celtic culture yew trees symbolize rebirth or resurrection. Old knowledge, understanding, collaboration.

Four of Earth

t. vulgaris | Common Thyme

The name Thyme comes from the Greek "thymos" meaning spirit or smoke. Properties attributed to thyme by the Greeks included the giving of strength and bravery. Security, control, stability.

Five of Earth

v. officinalis | Valerian

The Latin "valere", means "to be strong" or "to be healthy", valerian is mostly used for its calming properties. The plant has been used to treat anxiety, depression, and headaches for centuries. Worry, disquiet, disturbance.

Six of Earth

j. officinale | Jasmine

The name Jasmine originates from the Arabic-Persian word ysmín or yzmin, which means a scented flower. White is the most common color and symbolizes purity of heart, innocence, generosity. Benevolence, self-sacrifice, naive.

Seven of Earth

e. aureum | Devil's Ivy

Devil's Ivy is a popular houseplant as it's very hardy, easy to propagate and isn't picky about being over or under watered. It's a plant I associate with my mom since she's always had at least a few of these plants in our home since I was very young. Sustainability, practicality, perseverance.

Eight of Earth

l. vulgare | Ox-Eye Daisy

In Norse mythology, the daisy is Freya's sacred flower. Freya is the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility, and as such the daisy came to symbolize new mothers and new beginnings. Neophyte, learning, fledgling.

Nine of Earth

c. sativus | Saffron Crocus

Human cultivation of saffron has taken place for more than 3,500 years and spans different cultures, continents, and civilizations. Saffron is the most valuable spice by weight. Abundance, luxury, affluence.

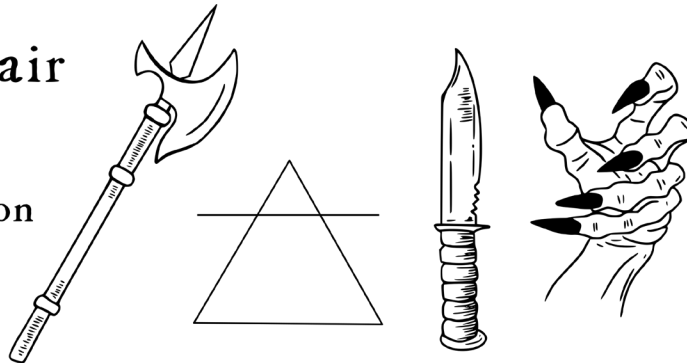
Ten of Earth

t. aestivum | Common Wheat

Wheat is a long-standing symbol of fertility, bounty and resurrection. This symbolic association dates to the earliest days of Western civilization. Cultivation of wheat in order to produce bread created the ability to have surplus food and therefore sustain greater numbers of people. Wealth, lasting success, family.

suit of air

thought
action
observation
winter



Father of Air

t. alba | Western Barn Owl

Another association from the Greeks, owls were a symbol of the goddess Athena. She was the patron goddess of Athens, the center of artistic creation and learning in ancient Greece. Intelligence, wisdom, mental clarity.

Mother of Air

c. brachyrhynchos | American Crow

In Hopi mythology, Angwusnasomtaka (The Crow Mother) is the maternal leader of the Kachinas. She leads other Kachinas into the village during the Powamuya (Bean Dance) carrying corn kernels and bean sprouts to symbolically start the new season properly. Nurturing, authority, messenger.

Guardian of Air

a. alexandri | Black-Chinned Hummingbird

A very adaptable species of hummingbird, it's often found living in urban areas. During migration they rarely remain long at any one food source and are constantly on the move. At rest, the black-chinned hummingbird's heart beats an average of 480 beats per minute. Driven, ambitious, energetic.

Child of Air

p. ruber | American Flamingo

Flamingos select mates by performing synchronized movements until one bird stops the operation. It can be calm, male and female walking in unison, or intense with the pair walking quickly with their heads low. Although they are usually a monogamous pair for that season, threesomes and quartets of birds all caring for the eggs are common. Inventiveness, novel communication, curiosity.

One of Air

g. biloba | Maidenhair Tree

Ginkgo has long been cultivated in China, some planted trees at temples are believed to be over 1,500 years old. It's a common supplement for memory and mental clarity, although the evidence of that is mixed. Mental clarity, development, breakthroughs.

Two of Air

c. oblonga | Quince

Quince is a fruit tree, similar in appearance to a pear the quince fruit is golden yellow when mature. The book of Genesis in the Bible doesn't name a specific fruit that Adam and Eve ate, but some ancient texts suggest it might have been a quince. Difficult decisions, weighing options, choices.

Three of Air

a. caudatus | Love-Lies Bleeding

Also called Amaranth, this plant gets its common name from its flower's deep red hue which hangs down off the plant and resembles dripping blood. Heartbreak, sorrow, grief.

Four of Air

p. rhoeas | Common Poppy

Poppies have long been used as a symbol of sleep, peace, and death. Probably at least in part due to opium, which can be extracted from some varieties and is a sedative. In ancient Greek and Roman mythology poppies were used as offerings to the dead. Rest, stillness, meditation.

Five of Air

t. vulgare | Tansy

Tansy has a lengthy history of medicinal use, in the Middle Ages high doses were used to induce miscarriages of unwanted pregnancies. Symbolically tansy is recognized as a declaration of war. Conflict, disagreement, controversy.

Six of Air

c. angustifolium | Fireweed

Fireweed is a tall brightly colored pinkish purple wildflower which thrives in open meadows, along streams, roadsides, and forest edges. The name "Fireweed" comes from its penchant to colonize recent burn areas. In some places, like Alaska this species is so abundant, it can carpet an area so thickly that it becomes a sea of purple flowers. Transition, change, renewal.

Seven of Air

a. majus | Snapdragon

The name "snapdragon", originates from the flowers' reaction to opening their mouth like a dragon when their throat is constricted. These hardy plants can grow in the crevices around rocks, sidewalks and walls, giving them a symbolic meaning of deviousness and strength. Deceitful, deception, cunning.

Eight of Air

d. muscipula | Venus Fly Trap

The plant's common name is a reference to the Roman goddess of love. Venus fly traps are indigenous to a very small area of North and South Carolina's coastline. All carnivorous plants still photosynthesis, but supplement their diets most likely due to their habitats having poor soil quality and other limitations. Imprisonment, restriction, limitation.

Nine of Air

h. perforatum | St. John's Wort

The name "St John's wort" comes from St. John's Feast day, which occurs on the summer solstice, the flower commonly blossoms and is harvested at that time. People would hang the herb on their doors to ward against harm to their families and livestock. Anxiety, disquiet, apprehension.

Ten of Air
a. vera | Aloe

Although aloe is often grown as an ornamental succulent the gel found in its leaves can be used medicinally. Aloe gel is typically used for topical applications such as to treat burns, wounds, rashes or dry skin. Wounds, emotional trauma, crisis.

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