



About the Cover

Many of the silky-haired seeds being released from the splitting pod of a milkweed shown on the cover were presumably blown away and eventually germinated, probably in a grassy area. There are about 120 species of milkweed (*Asclepias*), all known for the milky latex they produce, and for being host plants to the caterpillars of monarch butterflies. Other insects, birds, and animals tend to shun milkweeds because the latex is bitter, but Native Americans used infusions of roots for at least 1,000 years to treat respiratory ailments and fevers. In the past, similar root infusions were also widely used in American medicine as an expectorant, and to treat cancers. The flowers, as shown in the Chapter 23 opener, are elegant.

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