



Garstang United  
Reformed Church

# Plants for Reflection: Wormwood

**Wormwood** is an herbaceous perennial plant native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa. It is used to flavour drinks most notably the spirit absinthe and in earlier times was also used for medicinal purposes. It is also mentioned in Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*.

## **Bible Passage: Revelation 8:11 (NRSV\*)**

The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.

The book of Revelation is an example of a style of apocalyptic writing common two thousand years ago. It is full of colourful imagery and symbolism which are presented as a series of dreams or visions. Revelation is a book which provokes a wide variety of responses and interpretations from different people, many of whom find it a difficult book to deal with.

The book of Revelation is perhaps the finest piece of art in the whole Bible. One approach is to read it as you would to the poetry of William Blake, or how you would listen to a piece of music that transports you to another place. Some of the images in the book are fantastical, straight from the best fantasy novel. Others are grislier as though they are scenes from a horror movie, like the one in this verse. However, at the heart of the message of the book of Revelation are ideas about the importance of faithfulness and the eventual triumph of good over evil.

## **Reflection: Water**

The Bible passage paints an image of the destructive impact of the lack of clean water. Access to clean water remains fundamental to human life. Many of us are accustomed to the steady flow of fresh water from our taps so it is something that it is easy to take for granted. However, for many people across the world access to clean water remains a big challenge to their daily lives. The charity WaterAid estimates (in 2022) that 771 million people across the world don't have clean water close to home. That's one in ten of the world's population.

Lack of access to clean water impacts on many aspects of daily life, having an adverse impact on people's health, education, and economic activity.

\* New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, © 1989, 1995, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Water (or lack of it) is also central to 90% of the natural disasters in the world, and these are getting more frequent and severe with the impact of the climate crisis. If you live in the United Kingdom, think of the disruption caused in your local communities from flooding in recent years. Across the world, major storms, flooding, and droughts have a catastrophic effect on people's lives.

## **Prayer**

Creator of water, we give you thanks for your great gift.  
Water satisfies our thirst and keeps us cool and clean.  
It enables crops for our food to grow and be nurtured.  
So many things that we use each day depend on your gift of water.  
We give you thanks.

Water is fundamental to human life, but  
we remember that millions of people across the world do not have ready access to  
clean water.

We are saddened by the impact that this has on their lives.  
For the poverty lack of clean water creates in health, education, and employment.  
We offer our prayers and commitment for a better future.

Too much or too little,  
water is at the heart of most of the natural disasters in our world.  
We see on television the impacts on the lives of our fellow women and men.  
We offer our compassion to those affected by storms, floods, and droughts.  
We give thanks for those who place themselves alongside those who suffer and  
work tirelessly to provide hope of solutions and a better life

Creator of water, hear our prayers.  
Amen.

## **What we do: Toilet Twinning**

We all have at least one toilet in our houses, but one in five of the world's population don't have a decent toilet of their own. This is dangerous for so many reasons as the waste cannot be managed safely and the germs from it can pollute water sources and food, spreading diseases like diarrhoea and cholera.

Our church has have worked with the charity Toilet Twinning to provide funding for toilets in eleven different countries across the world from the Philippines to Burundi. You can see the locations of our toilet twins on our website.

The Toilet Twinning website ([www.toilettwinning.org](http://www.toilettwinning.org)) has lots of information about the benefits of providing decent toilets to communities who would otherwise not have access to these facilities. The website also provides details about how you could twin the toilets in your home, school or office like our church has done.