The goal of this assignment is for you to investigate, analyze and present the interactions between a plant or plant product and human civilizations. You’ll need to create an interesting and compelling thesis concerning your plant and human civilizations, and then support this thesis with a strong argument. Your paper shouldn’t be exhaustive, it should only be 6 – 8 double spaced pages.

In creating an interesting thesis, you first need to identify an interesting or controversial aspect of your plant and its interaction with humans. Aspects to consider in selecting your specific topic and creating your thesis:

**Biology / Natural history:**
How does your plant grow? Where did it originate? Does it interact with animals as food or with pollinators? Has it been domesticated? Where? By whom? Where does it grow now? Is it cultivated and / or has it been domesticated? If so, do wild varieties differ from cultivated varieties? How are they different? Why are they different?

**Social / Cultural:**
How is the plant used by humans? Is there any specific cultural or religious significance of the plant? Currently? Historically? Are there different uses for different cultures? Are there different uses within a culture or society? Why is your plant important to humans? Is your plant used in art? Is this significant?

**Economic:**
What are the economic factors that are important in its production, sale or use? Are these consistent across cultures? Through time? Is the plant important in international trade?

**Historical:**
How has the use of your plant changed through time? How has the production / cultivation of your plant changed through time? Has the importance of your plant (economically, culturally) changed through time? Why? How?

**Human health:**
How does your plant impact human health? Is it an important component of human diet? What are its nutritional aspects (if it is used for food)? Medicinal attributes? Psychoactive properties? Is it poisonous?

**Policy / legal:**
Is your plant legal to grow and consume? Where is it produced legally? Where is its use prohibited? Why is it prohibited? Are there policies in place to increase its production? Where? Why?

**Not all plants have interesting stories in ALL categories.** However, each of the plant species in the list below is interesting in several of the categories above. Your research paper should describe and analyze your plant from an interesting perspective and form a cohesive, interesting argument. Your paper must have an identifiable thesis. Your thesis will take a stand on a single point, and will let the reader know that this is what your paper is about.
Thesis examples (good and bad)

“The rapid dispersal and current world-wide distribution of chili peppers is the result of an innately human desire for novel and even painful sensory experiences”

Strong thesis. Clearly debatable with an interesting and focused argument.

“Some cultures have adopted this plant as a vegetable and have selected for varieties that do not produce capsaicin. Other cultures use this plant as a spice, and have selected for varieties with high capsaicin content.”

Poor thesis. Not debatable, summarizes facts with no clear argument, but it is interesting and focused.

“Of all of the domesticated crops, chili peppers have the most interesting history.”

Poor thesis. While technically debatable, there is no clear focus for the argument.

“Chili peppers’ primary culinary role is to add spiciness.”

Poor thesis. Despite it being marginally debatable and focused, this thesis statement is very uninteresting and fails to present a novel argument.

Please note that before you create your thesis, you will need to do quite a bit of research on your plant. Before selecting your plant from the list below it is a good idea to explore what is known about the plant and make sure that it is interesting to you.

Paper Details

• 6 – 8 pages, double spaced, 12 point Arial or Times New Roman font.

• 1” margins.

• Citations in APA style. (NOTE - Your paper format does not need to be APA, just the citations)

• Your paper must be an original work. Papers that you have written or are writing for another course are not allowed.

• You should use AT LEAST 8 peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles as references for your paper. Any additional references must be reliable peer-reviewed literature, published books, nationally or internationally distributed journals are generally reliable. Websites, such as Wikipedia, are not reliable.

• Please give your TA a hard copy and upload an electronic copy to Canvas using either msword files (.doc, .docx), .pdf, or .txt (Your TA can help you upload to Canvas should you run into problems).

• We will be using originality checking software (such as SafeAssign or VeriCite) this semester. This program allows us to submit a draft of your paper where it is then checked against a very large database of web and published works. It will also compare your paper to other work turned in by students at CSU in this class and throughout the University. The program then reports on instances of similarity between your draft and other papers.
LIST OF PLANTS TO INVESTIGATE

Each of the plants on the following list has an interesting story in at least a few of the categories above. **Please select the plant you want to write about from this list.**

Plants you **cannot** write about: Corn, Apples, Potatoes, Tulips, Cannabis, Coca, Opium, Coffee, Tea, and Capsicum. This is because it will be very difficult for you to generate a NEW and interesting thesis about them.

**You may know of a plant, not on this list, that has a good story. If there is a plant that is not on the list that you want to write about, please contact your TA to discuss your idea**

Almond (*Prunus dulcis*)
American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*)
Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)
Belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*)
Black Pepper (*Piper nigrum*)
Black Walnut
Khat (*Catha edulis*)
Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*)
Castor (bean) plant (*Ricinus communis*)
Chickpea or garbanzo (*Cicer arietinum*)
Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum spp.*)
Clove (*Syzygium aromaticum*)
Cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*)
Cumin (*Cuminum cyminum*)
Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
Date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*)
Datura (*Datura stramonium*)
Ebony (*Diospyros spp.*)
Ma Huang (*Ephedra sinica*)
Frankincense (*Boswellia spp.*)
Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)
Ginseng (*Panax spp.*)
Grape (*Vitis spp.*)
Gum Arabic (*Acacia senegal*)
Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)
Indigo (*Indigofera spp.*)
Kava (*Piper methysticum*)
Lavender (*Lavandula spp.*)
Flax (*Linum usitatissimum*)
Mandrake (*Mandragora spp.*)
Mistletoe (parasitic) (*Phoradendron spp.*, *Viscum spp.*, *Arceuthobium spp.*)
Mustard seed / Canola (*Brassica spp.*, *Sinapsis spp.*)
Myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*)
Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*)
Oats (*Avena sativa*)
Olive (*Olea europaea*)
Orange (*Citrus spp.*)
Peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*)
Quinine (*Chinchona spp.*)
Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*)
Rice (*Oryza sativa*)
Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*)
Saffron (*Crocus sativus*)
Sandalwood (*Santalum spp.*)
Sesame (*Sesamum indicum*)
St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
Sugarbeet (*Beta vulgaris*)
Sugarcane (*Saccharum spp.*)
Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)
Sweet potato (*Ipomea batatas*)
Tamarisk / Saltceder (*Tamarix spp.*)
Teak (common) (*Tectona grandis*)
Tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*)
Tumeric (*Curcuma longa*)
Vanilla (*Vanilla spp.*)
Wormwood (*Artemesia absinthium*)
Yam (*Dioscorea*)