

Crown of Thorns

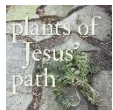
Stranglehold to Stronghold

© Shelley S. Cramm from [Plants of Jesus' Path](#), published at www.gardeninDelight.com on Mar 26, 2026

The [Plants of Jesus' Path](#) continue to lead us into the heart of the Savior's passion as we witness His head entangled in piercing branches, a tragic exchange—His true authority and rightful place in heaven's throne room, seated at [the right hand of the Father](#), for this humiliating heckle in the Roman ruler's palace. From throne to thorns. The mockery of this moment was rampant as the soldiers taunted His blood-torn body from their knees, brazenly defying the reigning prophecy, [before me every knee will bow \(Isaiah 45:23\)](#). Imagining this scene of stolen honor is hard work, although not the kind one might have anticipated from the cultivating curse ([Genesis 3:18](#)).



The soldiers took Jesus into the palace (called Praetorium) and called together the entire brigade. They dressed him up in purple and put a crown plaited from a thornbush on his head. Then they began their mockery: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" They banged on his head with a club, spit on him, and knelt down in mock worship. Mark 15:16-19 The Message



The [Plants of Jesus' Path](#) is a 7-week study of plants as a way of cultivating a deeper appreciation for our Savior in the days leading to His crucifixion

Ugh. He was pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5), a prophecy pointing to His physical stabbing on the cross (John 19:34), yet the crown of branching barbs served up a prelude of torment paired with emotional daggers. Our Savior endured dishonoring ridicule, a harsh test of His restraint. He could have grown indignant yet remained humble. He could have smote the soldiers with a Word yet remained silent. In deep reverence, let us grasp the gross mockery satan engages, the evil one's relentless assault on God's anointed destinies and blessings.

Thornbushes

Which thornbush was used to torment the Savior? As I have reported often from Biblical botanists and scholars, sorting thorns, thistles, brambles, and briars of the Bible is not a

straightforward matter. There are many spikey species found in the Holy Land, along with over 20 Hebrew words referring to the disruptive lot. However, the buckthorn family offers a few likely suspects, and particularly Christ thorn, *Ziziphus spina-christi*, is aptly named as a strong candidate for the plant of His piercing.



Dismiss images of hefty, rose-like barbs or mesquite tree spikes that often accompany Easter devotions; the thorns of Christ thorn are subtle, almost unnoticeable, formed beneath the stems of the bush's vibrant green leaves. In other words, trudging through riverbank thickets, one might become painfully entangled in its foliage and never see it coming.

Learn [more about Christ thorn in the Garden in Delight Plant Guide](#)

In a poignant detail, the taunting Roman soldiers wove a crown of thornbush branches to place on Jesus' head, a crescendo of ridicule, along with whipping and flogging, of his kingdom rule (Mark 15:17). The crown of thorns would have punctured his skin, an opposite image of a gleaming royal crown fit for a king. It was a sobering play on words of thorn and throne, Christ's rightful place (Revelation 22:2–3).

—from “Crown of Thorns,” [My Father is the Gardener](#), page 45

Beware the Briar Patch

Among the many layers of theology and meaning in this devastating scene, let us connect the crown of thorns to our own potential to be pinned down as the Savior warned in parable. Lent is the season to draw closer to Jesus and understand what He did for us. The crown of thorns stings with the likelihood of our own ensnaring, teaching us to circle back from stranglehold to [stronghold](#).

Through one of His most explicit stories, Jesus warned that “thorns” can stifle us as well; that is, thorns as a metaphor for the distraction of worries and wealth that can hook us, blocking our minds from the fortification of God’s Word and thoughts captive to Christ ([2 Corinthians 10:5](#)).

And the one sown with seed among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, and the anxiety of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Matthew 13:22 NASB

And you know people who hear the word, but it is choked inside them because they constantly worry and prefer the wealth and pleasures of the world: *they prefer drunken dinner parties to prayer, power to piety, and riches to righteousness.* Those people are like the seeds sown among thorns. Matthew 13:22 VOICE

Such thinking and anxious preoccupation will creep into our minds, encroaching and edging out God’s Words, advancing as wild brambles do, until we have abandoned the [stronghold of the Lord](#) for a strangled thicket of fruitless fetish.

Isaiah warned us, too:



Ziziphus spina-christi, collected by W.N. Koelz, Iran, 1939

Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation, And have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, Therefore you will plant pleasant plants And set out foreign seedlings; In the day you will make your plant to grow, And in the morning you will make your seed to flourish; But the harvest will be a heap of ruins In the day of grief and desperate sorrow. Isaiah 17:10-11 NKJV

We are vulnerable to deception (just ask Eve), as Isaiah painted a picture of a hollow harvest, a reality resulting in Eden's downfall....which is how we ended up with thorns in the first place!

You anoint my head with oil, a praise from Psalm 23, is a decree we can enforce to keep our thoughts active and captive to the Lord and free from the entangling torment of evil evident in the world. Hold the good ground of truth: Because Jesus bore the crown of thorns, suffered, and died in our place, we live surrounded in His holy love, set free to pursue His plans for us in communion with Him.

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:10-13 NIV

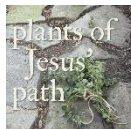
The Lord went to great lengths to secure our blessing; the Lent season helps us to grow in our awareness of all that He did, and the plants, like the Christ thorn, help the message stick.

Closing Prayer

O Father, thank You for sending us Your Son. Thank You for all that He accomplished through His hours of mockery, excessive ridicule, suffering, and crucifixion. Thank You for exposing the evil one's ways and cruel tactics in the crown of thorns; he will use any and everything, especially the blessings of abundance that You pour out, to torment and distract us and choke out Your growing devotion in our lives. Yet You saw to it that Jesus was sustained and able to endure horrible torture and pain to see Your Word fulfilled in salvation victory! I agree that Your grace is sufficient in any sticky, stabbing situation (2 Corinthians 12:7). May I see Your Word and its magnificent story wraparound me, hedging my protection in Your Strength and Sovereignty. Your sweet surround, Your "wings," bring healing (Malachi 3:20); evil schemes cannot succeed (Psalm 21:12). Lord, I praise You that as we become good ground, a harvest is coming beyond our wildest dreams (Matthew 13:23 The Message)!



You came to greet him with rich blessings and
placed a crown of pure gold on his head.
He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—
length of days, for ever and ever. Psalm 21:4 NIV



The [Plants of Jesus' Path](#) is a 7-week study of plants as a way of cultivating a deeper appreciation for our Savior in the days leading to His crucifixion. These botanical touch points are met through tangible, scent-filled, tasty or intriguing branches, fruits, roots, trees or shrubs that give us something to grasp in a story hugely ungraspable. They are planted in key places to reveal the immensity of our Savior's grace, showing us converging prophecy and backstory to understand who He is and what He has done for us. Imagine the Stations of the Cross coming to Passover Dinner! Encounter palm branches, wheat & grapes in bread & wine, fig tree, spikenard, olive trees, thorns, and hyssop with the garden as your guide to a refreshed heart, ready to celebrate the Resurrection.



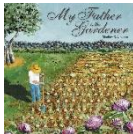
More from the Devotions Blog: Dig deeper into thorns in [Hedge of Protection](#) and into Jesus' seed parable in [Parable of the Sower Revival Prayer Guide](#)



Learn more about [Christ thorn as a garden plant in the Plant Guide](#)



Let rhyme and meter reveal the full thorn story in [T is for Thorns and Thistles](#) from the [A-to-Z Primer of Plants from God's Word](#)



Read more about the thornbush and its backstory in the Bible in [My Father is the Gardener](#), chapter 4. Additionally, journal questions for the chapter are available at [Preparing the Soil & Thistles and Thorns – Garden In Delight](#)



Read more on thorns in the devotions series on **Preparing the Soil from the Garden Work** section beginning on page a-23 in [God's Word for Gardeners Bible](#)

Photo Credits: *Ziziphus spina-christi*, collected by W.N. Koelz #14297, Iran, 1939, U.S. National Herbarium Catalog number 2194289, courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History, Department of Botany, photographed exclusively for *My Father is the Gardener, Devotions in Botany and Gardening of the Bible* by Gary Logan, Gary Logan Photography, www.garylogan.com; All other photos ©Shelley S. Cramm. *Ziziphus spina-christi* photographed in 2018 at the Sacred Garden in San Antonio Botanical Gardens

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