

Watercolor Class Notes – Sacred Datura Study with Susan Kennedy

July 16, 2026

Sources for Instruction

Sources of instruction:

- Pima Community College
- Cochise College Benson Center
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (certificate work)
- Books and self-study

Online Learning Resources

Free online resources and artist demonstrations

How to Draw series and online tutorials

James Gurney

Tom Shepherd

Hazel Soan

Daniel Smith demonstrations

Da Vinci

Winsor & Newton demonstrations

Art Institute (Pasadena)

Watts Atelier (Los Angeles)

Bobby Chiu's Schoolism

Art Supply Sources

Dick Blick – 800-828-4548

Arizona Art Supply, Tucson

Jerry's Artarama – 800-827-8478

Micheal's

Jackson's (English)

Avoid inexpensive chemical-heavy or unknown products when possible

Avoid low-quality paper and paints and anything from China

Paper Recommendations

- 140 lb or heavier watercolor paper
- 100% cotton preferred (approximately 300 GSM)

Recommended brands:

- Arches
- Canson
- St. Cuthberts Mill
- Saunders Waterford
- Fabriano
- Hahnemühle

Paint Recommendations

Professional artist grade paints:

- Daniel Smith
- Da Vinci
- Dromgooles / M. Graham
- Winsor & Newton (English)
- Schmincke (German)
- Gallo (Italian)
- Sennelier (French) *Hobby Lobby with high level student grade
- Holbein (Japanese)*really good

Read paint tube labels and learn about pigment information.

Traditionally no black or white

Brush Recommendations

Brush types:

- Squirrel
- Sable
- Synthetic
- Natural blends

Boutique brands:

- Princeton (American) Neptune Or Aqua Elite
- Rosemary & Co. (English) Wind River Arts
- Da Vinci brushes (German)

Painting Process

1. Sketch

- Use Edgar Payne composition principles.
- Establish a grid and determine the focal point.
- Draw the datura lightly using basic forms.
- Refer to diagrams as needed.
- Erase dark pencil marks before painting; once painted, marks become permanent.

2. Paint Preparation

1. Choose pigments: warm and cool versions of primary colors.
2. Create swatching rectangles.
3. Mix color batches before beginning.

Jane Blundell – (Australian) Color Theory

-Study flower anatomy: sepals fused together to form a tube; identify petals (5), sepals, and stamens.

-Decide in advance which areas will remain white and preserve them with masking tape or masking fluid.

3. Paint Forms

- A. Start with the lightest pigments, usually yellows. Keep values light and use lifting pigments.
- B. Move to reds. Keep values light and use lifting pigments.
- C. Add blues and violets for darker areas. Keep values light and use lifting pigments.
- D. Assess and correct.
- E. Darken
- F. Add first details using staining pigments.
- G. Repeat and refine; stronger staining pigments may be used in later stages.

4. Background

Complete the background after establishing the main flower forms and values.

Rembrandt Edges

- Light (subject) on Light (background)
- Light (subject) on Dark (background)
- Dark (subject) on Light (background)
- Dark (subject) on Dark (background)

Purpose- to integrate the parts of your painting. To integrate the subject with the background to avoid a “cutout” look.

Regional Subject Matter: Sacred Datura

Regional, native, and unique subjects provide opportunities for artists.

Work from your own photographs whenever possible. Online photos may be used for practice, but avoid using copyrighted photos for gallery or show work. Use multiple references and avoid making work overly recognizable from a single source.

Identification apps can help confirm subjects.

Learning Opportunities

Study habitats and related subjects:

- Geology
- Symbiotic relationships in nature
- Biology and botany
- Symbolism from different cultures
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

- Tucson Botanical Gardens
- Field guides and field trips

Datura wrightii (Sacred Datura / Thorn Apple / Jimsonweed)

Family: Solanaceae (nightshade family)

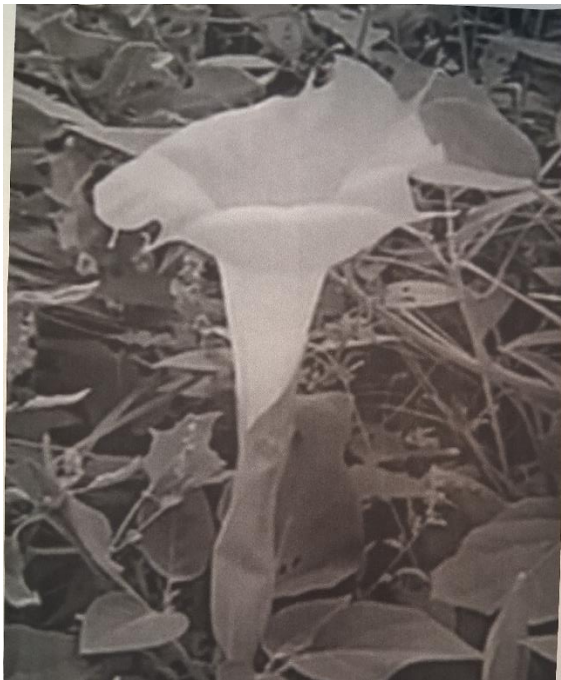
Related crops: potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers.

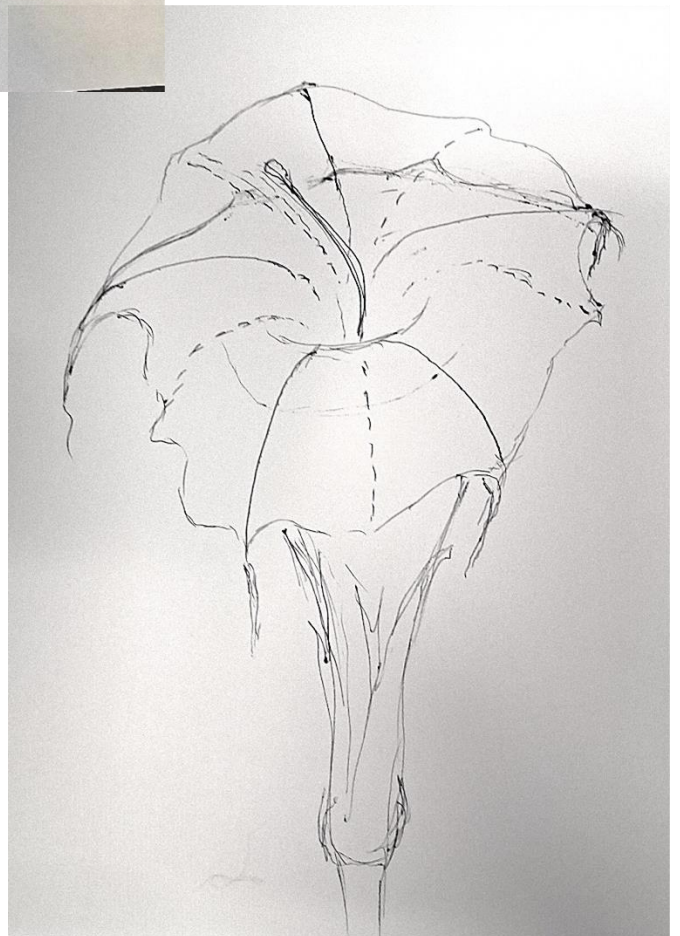
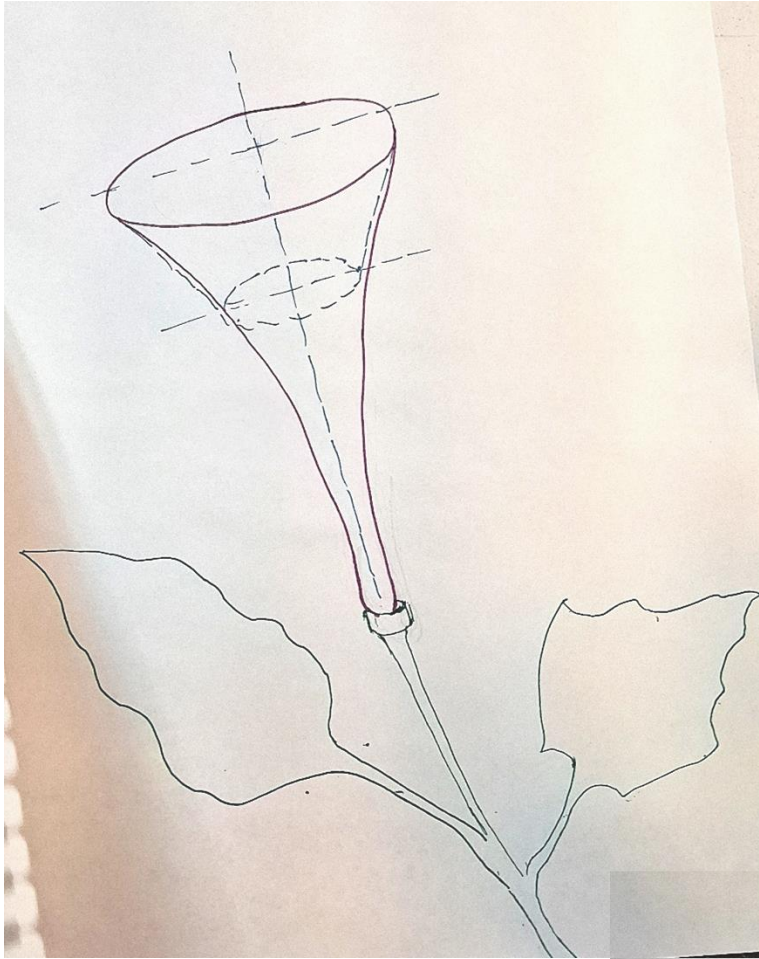
Regional value:

- Sacred thorn apple
- Large white trumpet flowers
- Night blooming
- Pollinated by hawk moths and other moth species
- Also visited by bees (native and introduced)

Cultural importance:

- Ancient symbolism and healing traditions
- Referenced by Mohave, Yaqui, Chihuahuan, Zuni, and other Indigenous groups
- Associated with religion and ceremony
- Hallucinogenic plant containing tropane alkaloids (e.g., scopolamine and atropine)
- Inspires design motifs and patterns





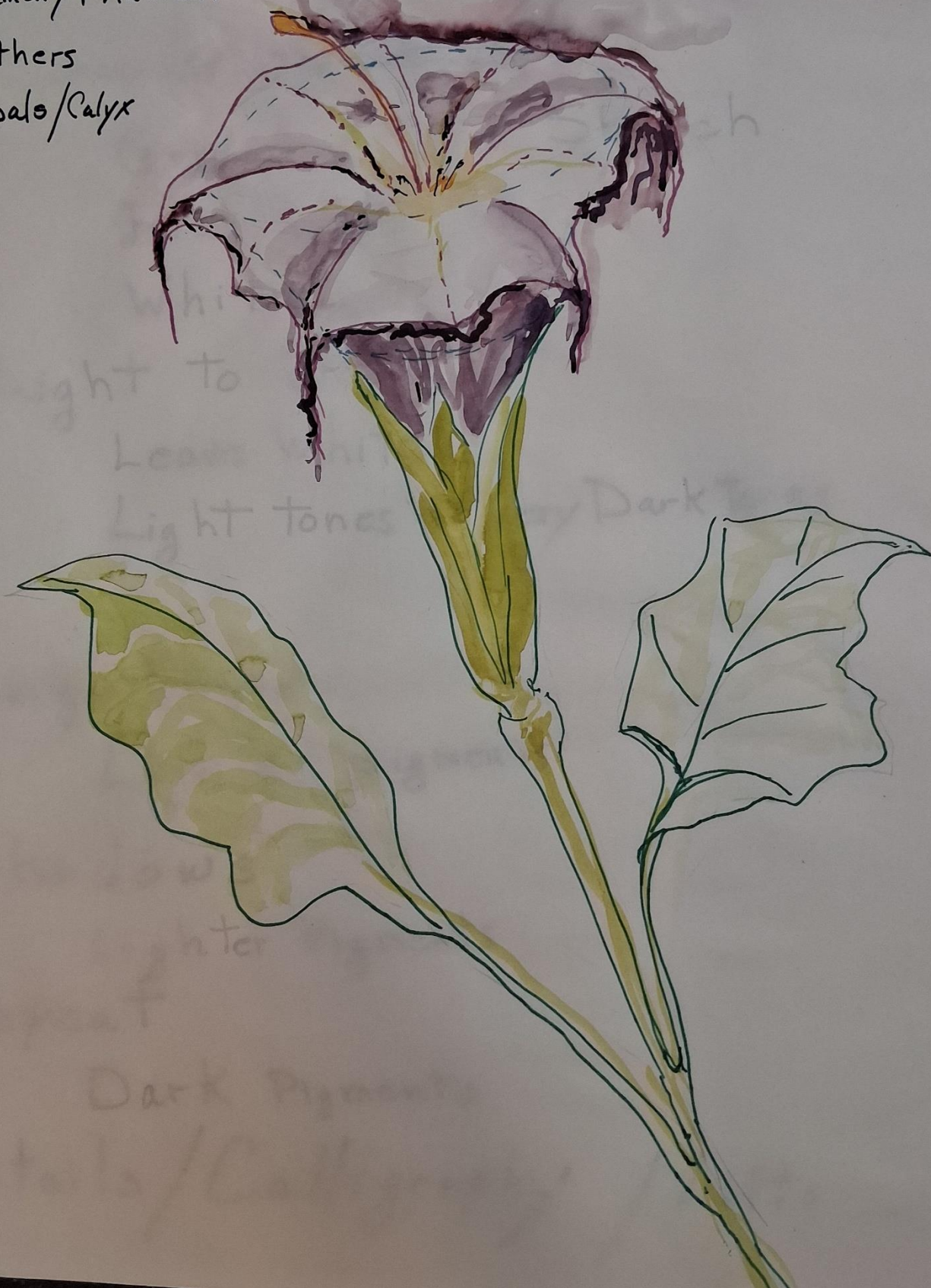
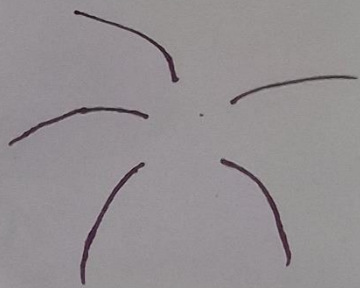
Petals/Corolla

Pistil/Stigma

Stamen/Filament

Anthers

Sepals/Calyx



Watercolor Basics

Composition Decisions

Grid

Sketch

Focal Points

Whites

Light to Dark

Leave Whites

Light tones to very Dark tones

Large Forms

Lighter pigments

Shadows

Lighter Pigments

Repeat

Dark Pigments

Details / Calligraphy / Lifts