



# A Golden Weed (Yale Agrarian Studies Series)

*Drew A. Swanson*

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## **A Golden Weed (Yale Agrarian Studies Series) Drew A. Swanson**

Drew A. Swanson has written an “environmental” history about a crop of great historical and economic significance: American tobacco. A preferred agricultural product for much of the South, the tobacco plant would ultimately degrade the land that nurtured it, but as the author provocatively argues, the choice of crop initially made perfect agrarian as well as financial sense for southern planters.

Swanson, who brings to his narrative the experience of having grown up on a working Virginia tobacco farm, explores how one attempt at agricultural permanence went seriously awry. He weaves together social, agricultural, and cultural history of the Piedmont region and illustrates how ideas about race and landscape management became entangled under slavery and afterward. Challenging long-held perceptions, this innovative study examines not only the material relationships that connected crop, land, and people but also the justifications that encouraged tobacco farming in the region.

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