



Poisonous Plants

What makes a plant poisonous?

- A poisonous plant may contain any one or more of hundreds of different poisonous principles from nearly a score of major groups, including:
- Alkaloids, glycosides, saponins, resinoids, oxalates, nitrites, and poisonous minerals

What should you do if you may have ingested a poisonous plant?

- The first rule is to call a physician
- There are few true antidotes for poisoning by plants.
- Treating symptoms in humans should be undertaken only by a physician

Call the vet for animal poisoning

What should you tell the Poison Information Specialist?

You should try to have the following information for the poison information specialist:

- Name or type of plant
- Plant leaf, shape, color, size
- Part of the plant that was eaten
- How it was eaten (cooked or uncooked)
- Age of the victim
- Time the plant was eaten
- Symptoms
- First aid that was given (if any)
- Name & phone number of caller

Should you try to induce vomiting if you suspect the ingestion of a poisonous plant?

- It is not always safe even to induce vomiting
- A few plants contain juice so corrosive that the walls of the digestive system are weakened and may be ruptured by the strong muscular contraction involved in vomiting
- Under other circumstances, vomiting may result in asphyxiation

- Poisoning by plants can be confused with poisoning from contaminated well water, agricultural lubricants, paint, insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals.

What would be some of the symptoms to recognize?

- Symptoms of poisoning from plants can include:
 - vomiting.
 - stomach cramps.
 - irregular heart beat.
 - burning to the mouth.
 - convulsions (fits).
- The type and severity of symptoms will vary according to the type of plant eaten, the amount swallowed and the size of the child. The most common problems are stinging around the mouth and skin allergies.

Is there any kind of first aid that can be given to someone suspected of poisoning?

- If you suspect exposure to something poisonous or harmful, first aid measures include:
 - **For skin contact** - gently wash the skin with clear running water.
 - **For eye contact** - irrigate the eye with clear running water for 20 minutes.
 - **For swallowed plants** - remove any remaining plants and wash out child's mouth.
 - **Phone the Poison Information Centre**

What is the phone number for the Poison Information Centre?

- If you require emergency assistance regarding a poisoning please contact (800) 222-1222 immediately.
- The hotline is staffed 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week, by registered nurses with special certification in toxicology
- The center offers guidance on handling drug overdoses and poison emergencies, and will contact the local hospital Emergency Department if hospital treatment is necessary.

What is LIRPDIC?

- **The Long Island Regional Poison and Drug Information Center (LIRPDIC)**
- **The LIRPDIC is a resource center for the general public, physicians and hospital emergency rooms. In addition to managing poison emergencies, they offer drug and herbal product information**

- For additional information or if you are calling from a cell phone and do not reach them, call the LIRPDIC hotline at (516) 663-2650

What should I do if I need to go to the hospital?

- If you need to go to hospital, take a piece of the plant with you if you can.

What are some common poisonous plants that may be in the landscape?

Some common poisonous plants that you might find in the landscape are the following: *Caladium* spp, Castor Bean, Larkspur (*Delphinium* species), Monkshood, Lupines, Autumn Crocus, Snowdrops, Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*), poppies, *Dicentra* - Dutchman's breeches (Bleeding heart), Foxglove, iris, lily-of-the-valley,

What are some of the most frequently involved plants with poisoning?

Some of the most frequently involved plants with poisoning are the following:

- Dieffenbachia
- Wandering Jew
- Jade plants
- Pokeweed
- Coleus

Are there any vegetables that are poisonous?

Yes, some vegetables have certain parts of the plant that are poisonous:

- **Potatoes** - Vines, sprouts (green parts), and spoiled tubers are poisonous
- Contain a chemically complex, alkaloidal poisonous principle that can cause intensive digestive disturbances and nervous symptoms.
- Death has occurred from eating green parts.
- To prevent poisoning from sunburned tubers, green spots should be removed before cooking.
- Discard spoiled potatoes.
- **Rhubarb** – Leaves are poisonous!
- Several deaths from eating raw or cooked leaves
- Abdominal pains, vomiting and convulsions a few hours after ingestion
- Without treatment, death or permanent kidney damage may occur.

Are there any landscape plants that are poisonous?

Yes, there are plenty of landscape plants that are poisonous; some of them are:

Lantana, Agapanthus, Prunus species, Golden Chain tree, Rhododendrons, azaleas, English Ivy, hollies, wisteria, Baneberry, daphne, privet, oleanders, Euonymus europaeus, yews, boxwood, oaks, Black Locust *Robinia pseudoacacia*, Mountain laurel.

Are there any meadow garden plants and/or weeds that are poisonous?

Some meadow plants and/or weeds that are poisonous are: deadly nightshade, bittersweet, Celandine, golden (*Chelidonium*), Buttercup, (*Ranunculus* species) and Spurges (*Euphorbia* species), Poison-hemlock, (*Conium maculatum*), Mayapple, Thornapple, also called stramonium, & Jimsonweed (*Datura* species), Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Chokecherry, milkweed, hogweed, St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*), and poison ivy.

Can you give me more information about poison ivy?

- Poison ivy can grow as a vine, or shrub. Active principle = urushiol in sap
- Found from Newfoundland to Florida
- Runs along the ground, climbs with aerial rootlets
- Sap is the active ingredient, non-volatile phenolic resin
- Potent enough that if an insect landing on a leaf and then on bare skin can cause a reaction
- Looks different each season:
 - Spring - really red and shiny
 - Fall - yellow, red, orange
 - Winter – look for cluster of white berry like fruits (VA creepers have blue berries)
- May be confused with Boston ivy (not ALL the leaves are divided into 3 leaflets) or Virginia creeper (5 leaflets)
- NYS: dry, rocky soil, thickets, edges of fields, woods, roads, paths
- Climbing form common in low, rich woodlands. Vine looks like fuzzy rope because of aerial rootlets.
- Spreads by creeping rootstocks, buried root sections,
- Seeds carried off and spread by birds that digest fruit
- Severity of reaction and itch depends on:
 - Individual sensitivity
 - Amount of urushiol contacted

- Season (spring & summer are worst because of lots of sap, lots of leaf injury via insects and bruising)
- Individual susceptibility changes with age becoming less with advanced age
- Natural immunity present in all but reduced by increasing number of contact with urushiol

I heard that cocoa mulch is harmful to pets, is that true?

- Just like chocolate, it contains theobromine, a chemical that can cause vomiting, muscle tremors, or even death to furry friends.
- Cocoa mulch, which consists mainly of cacao bean shells, contains a much higher concentration of theobromine than chocolate processed for human consumption. Dogs are attracted to the scent and in documented cases have eaten the stuff, leading to vomiting, diarrhea, trembling, seizures and, in some instances, death

What is theobromine?

- Theobromine, a caffeine-like chemical which acts as a mild diuretic and stimulant in human beings but is poisonous to animals less well equipped to metabolize it.

What should I do if I suspect my dog has ingested this kind of mulch?

- If you suspect your dog may have eaten cocoa mulch, the ASPCA recommends contacting your veterinarian immediately or calling the Animal Poison Control Center at 1-888-426-4435 for expert advice.
- If you're planning your own late-blooming garden, be certain to also brush up on poisonous plants, and pick out some pet safe suggestions instead.

Are there plants that I should stay away from planting if I have a pet?

- Even some of the most common flowers like Baby's Breath, which come in many arrangements, can be unassuming but totally harmful to your pets if ingested
- Asian Lily
- Burning Bush
- Chrysanthemums
- Clematis
- Elephant ears
- Dahlias
- Fleabane
- Coleus

- Hyacinths
- Geraniums
- Daffodils
- Garlic
- Gladiola

So what would be some “poisonous plant tips” for me to keep in mind?

- Know the name of the plant before you buy it
- Find out if a plant you have is poisonous
- Keep plants out of reach of children
- Call the poison center for plant information
- If you suspect a plant poisoning, remove any plant material from the victims mouth
- Call the poison center 1-800-222-1222 or (516) 663-2650
- Try to know the scientific and common names of all your plants.
- Do not make teas or home remedies from plants.
- Do not think that plants and shrubs eaten by birds and animals are safe for human consumption!
- Use protective gloves or clothing when handling potentially irritating plants.
- Keep all plants out of the reach of children.
- Contact your physician or Poison Control Center if you have symptoms or questions after any exposure to plants.