

PLANTS TOXIC TO PETS

Many pets will eat plants from time to time out of boredom, because they taste good, or to settle their stomachs. The consumption of any plant in sufficient quantity may cause vomiting and gastro-intestinal upset for dogs and cats but may not necessarily be life-threatening.

Things in the garden that look like a toy (round avocado pits, certain “sticks”), smell potentially delicious (mold in compost or manure, bone & blood meal) or are easy to access and knock over (many houseplants), may be harmful if ingested.

SYMPTOMS

While symptoms vary widely depending on the plant eaten, they may include: confusion, lethargy, weakness, depression, diarrhea, vomiting, loss of appetite, squinting/tearing, loss of coordination/staggering, drooling, pawing at face, foaming, excessive thirst, tremors, seizures, respiratory issues, swelling around mouth.

Some common house and garden plants can lead to serious or lasting harm, including multi-organ failure, respiratory distress, convulsions, coma, or death.

IF YOU THINK YOUR PET HAS EATEN A TOXIC PLANT

- Remove your pet from area
- **Call Pet Poison Helpline immediately at 855-764-7661**
- Note symptoms if present, but don't wait for them to appear
- Note the plant or substance, quantity, and time of ingestion
- Do not seek or administer internet remedies or “people medicine”
- Do not induce vomiting unless directed to do so
- Contact your veterinarian immediately for advice
- Bring sample of plant or substance to the vet or hospital

This reference page does not attempt to provide a complete list or veterinary advice. See reference list on p.3 for further information when considering your pet-friendly garden.

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COMMON GARDEN PLANTS THAT ARE TOXIC TO PETS

BULBS & CORMS

Tulips, Hyacinths, Daffodils, all types of lilies (cats), Lily of the Valley, *Hemerocallis*, *Cyclamen*, *Colchicum* (autumn crocus), *Iris*, *Oxalis*

- Bone meal in the planting hole may be recommended for bulbs but is attractive to digging pets who may then discover and eat bulbs, where the toxic compounds are most concentrated.
- Store unplanted bulbs and corms safely
- Spraying bulbs with organic deer deterrent or covering with mesh may deter digging pets (and squirrels)
- All lilies are highly toxic to cats – avoid

TREES, SHRUBS & VINES

Azaleas (all parts highly toxic to dogs, cats, horses), *Rhododendron*, *Hydrangea*, *Acer Rubrum* (red maple), *Wisteria*, *Taxus* (yew - all parts highly toxic), Oleander, Ivy, *Nandina domestica* (heavenly bamboo)

- When pruning, put branch cuttings (sticks), that may be attractive to dogs who like to chew, out of the pet's reach
- Provide alternatives to branches for play and chewing
- Red Maple leaves can be highly toxic to horses

COMMON ORNAMENTAL GARDEN PLANTS

Digitalis, *Aconitum* (monkshood), lilies, *Hemerocallis*, *Ricinus* (castor bean), *Helleborus*, *Solanum* (nightshades), *Chrysanthemum*.

- Hundreds of plants not listed here will cause some degree of GI upset or other symptoms for pets, such as *Hosta*, *Cosmos*, *Pelargonium*, *Dianthus*, and primrose
- Store seeds and fertilizers including blood & bone meal, safely
- Dogs eat grass to settle their stomachs – they may vomit but it is rarely harmful
- Avoid all *Lilium* varieties or *Hemerocallis* (daylilies) if you have cats

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FRUITS, VEGETABLES, HERBS

Grapes, currants, stone fruit (pits), rhubarb, avocado, *Alliums* (onions, chives, garlic, leeks), *Cannabis*, green parts of tomato plants.

- Grapes (/raisins) are very toxic to dogs. Limit access where grapes are grown, remove fruit from floor of patio and greenhouse, contain ripening fruit in gauze bags
- Dispose of fallen stone fruit pits that may resemble crunchy biscuits
- Avocado seeds look like a fun ball and don't compost well; dispose of them
- All edible alliums are toxic to cats and dogs – garlic is 5x more so than onions

INDOOR PLANTS & CUT FLOWERS

Aloe, *Pothos*, Sago Palm, Peace Lily, *Philodendron*, *Dieffenbachia*, *Schefflera*, *Kalanchoe*, *Amaryllis*, *Alocasia*, Jade Plant

- NOTE: Most tropical plants common as houseplants are poisonous to pets – reduce access/secure pots if houseplants are a temptation to your pet
- All parts of lilies, including pollen and cut-flower water, may be toxic to cats and result in sudden kidney failure and death

OTHER PET HAZARDS IN THE GARDEN

Some mushrooms, compost (tremorgenic mycotoxins), mold, wildlife/rodent excrement, organic and synthetic fertilizers, chemical treatments, slug bait/rat poison/pesticides can result in degrees of serious or lasting illness, seizures or death. If your pet ate something from box or with a label, take it with you to the veterinarian.

REFERENCES

Brooks, W. (2023, August 9). *Safe and toxic garden plants*. Veterinary Partner.

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James, H. (2018). *Pets, Plants, & Poison*. Presentation to VMGA.

Pet Poison Helpline. (2022, May 31). *Top 11 poisonous plants*.

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Poisonous plants. ASPCA. (n.d.). <https://www.aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants/p?page=1>