



Poisonous Plants



Vegetation helps sustain life. We eat many plants, herbs and so forth in our daily diet. But, we must remember to be choosy. Some plants, trees or shrubs are potential killers of man. Some part of the ornamental plants or flowers in your yard may contain deadly poison. Many poisonous plants are so common and seemingly innocuous you do not suspect their toxic qualities.

For example, who would expect that the beautiful oleander bush-grown indoors and outdoors all over the country-contains a deadly heart stimulant, similar to the drug digitalis?

It is easy to be deceived by plants. . .one part may be edible while another is poisonous. The following chart lists some of the more common poisonous plants.

PLANT	TOXIC PART	SYMPTOMS
HOUSE PLANTS		
Hyacinth, Narcissus, Daffodil	Bulbs	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea. May be fatal.
Oleander	Leaves, branches	Extremely poisonous. Affects the heart, produces severe digestive upset and has caused death.
Dieffenbachia (Dumb Cane), Elephant Ear	All parts	Intense burning and irritation of the mouth and tongue. Death can occur if base of the tongue swells enough to block the air passage of the throat.
Rosary Pea, Castor Bean	Seeds	Fatal. A single Rosary Pea seed has caused death. One or two Castor Bean seeds are near the lethal dose for adults.

FLOWER GARDEN PLANTS		
Larkspur	Young plant, seeds	Digestive upset, nervous excitement, depression. May be fatal.
Monkshood	Fleshy roots	Digestive upset and nervous excitement.
Autumn Crocus, Star of Bethlehem	Bulbs	Vomiting and nervous excitement.
Lily-of-the-Valley	Leaves, flowers	Irregular heart beat and pulse, usually accompanied by digestive upset and mental confusion.
Iris	Underground stems	Severe-but not usually serious-digestive upset.
Foxglove	Leaves	Large amounts cause dangerously irregular heartbeat and pulse, usually digestive upset and mental confusion. May be fatal.
Bleeding Heart	Foliage, roots	May be poisonous in large amounts. Has proved fatal to cattle.
VEGETABLE GARDEN PLANTS		
Rhubarb	Leaf blade	Fatal. Large amounts of raw or cooked leaves can cause convulsions, coma, followed rapidly by death.
ORNAMENTAL PLANTS		
Daphne	Berries	Fatal. A few berries can kill a child.
Wisteria	Seeds, pods	Mild to severe digestive upset. Many children are poisoned by this plant.
Golden Chain	Bean-like capsules in which the seeds are suspended	Severe poisoning. Excitement, staggering, convulsions and coma. May be fatal.
Laurels, Rhododendrons, Azaleas	All parts	Fatal. Produces nausea and vomiting, depression, difficult breathing, prostration and coma.
Jasmine	Berries	Fatal. Digestive disturbance and

		nervous symptoms.
Lantana Camara (Red Sage)	Green berries	Fatal. Affects lungs, kidneys, heart and nervous system. Grows in the southern U.S. And in moderate climates.
Yew	Berries, foliage	Fatal. Foliage more toxic than berries. Death is usually sudden without warning symptoms.
TREES AND SHRUBS		
Wild and cultivated cherries	Twigs, foliage	Fatal. Contains a compound that releases cyanide when eaten. Gasping, excitement and prostration are common symptoms.
Oaks	Foliage, acorns	Affects kidneys gradually. Symptoms appear only after several days or weeks. Takes a large amount for poisoning.
Elderberry	All parts, especially roots	Children have been poisoned by using pieces of the pithy stems for blowguns. Nausea and digestive upset.
Black Locust	Bark, sprouts, foliage	Children have suffered nausea, weakness and depression after chewing the bark and seeds.
PLANTS IN WOODED AREAS		
Jack-in-the-Pulpit	All parts, especially roots	Like Dumb Cane, contains small needle-like crystals of calcium oxalate that cause intense irritation and burning of the mouth and tongue.
Moonseed	Berries	Blue, purple color, resembling wild grapes. May be fatal.
Mayapple	Apple, foliage, roots	Contains at least 16 active toxic principles, primarily in the roots. Children often eat the apple with no ill effects, but several apples may cause diarrhea.

Mistletoe	Berries	Fatal. Both children and adults have died from eating the berries.
PLANTS IN SWAMP OR MOIST AREAS		
Water Hemlock	All parts	Fatal. Violent and painful convulsions. A number of people have died from hemlock.
PLANTS IN FIELDS		
Buttercups	All parts	Irritant juices may severely injure the digestive system.
Nightshade	All parts, especially the unripened berry	Fatal. Intense digestive disturbance and nervous symptoms.
Poison Hemlock	All parts	Fatal. Resembles a large wild carrot.
Jimson Weed (Thorn Apple)	All parts	Abnormal thirst, distorted sight, delirium, incoherence and coma. Common cause of poisoning. Has proved fatal.

Treat unknown plants with respect, and teach your children to do the same.

Chart reprinted from materials provided by the Texas State Department of Health and the National Safety Council