

Poisonous Household Plants

Many common household plants are toxic to cats and dogs. Plants are used every day in peoples homes to add color, life and nature to their homes. More and more people are becoming involved with indoor gardening, but not everyone knows which plants are potentially toxic. Identifying the plant an animal has eaten, determining whether it is toxic, and selecting the proper treatment can be challenging. Owners concerned about whether the plant that their pet ate is toxic should bring in the entire plant for identification. Once the name of the plant is known, a proper course of treatment can be prescribed. Not only are plants themselves potentially poisonous, but fertilizers, pesticides, and other gardening supplies also pose a health risk to pets. It is best, if possible, not to use these types of products if one owns pets, or if another animal could have contact with these items. Pesticide type products, such as snail bait are a commonly ingested poison by pets. Below is a list of some common household toxic plants:

Aloe: Toxic Part: The latex under the plant's skin (plant juices).
Signs: Vomiting. The toxin may cause urine to turn red. Inflammation of the kidneys may result if large quantities are consumed. **Treatment:** Rarely necessary, but fluids may be required to replace fluid losses due to vomiting.

Arum (Adam & Eve Plant, Black Calla, Caladium, Soloman's Lily): **Toxic Part:** Every part of the plant. **Signs:** Pain and swelling of the mouth. Acute swelling of the pharynx followed by salivation and pawing at the mouth. Edema of the lips, tongue and throat may be seen. **Treatment:** Analgesics may be necessary. Swelling may be treated with cool compresses. Severe swelling could hinder the animals inability to breath.

Codiaeum (Croton, Texas Croton): **Toxic Part:** Every part of the plant including the seeds produced after flowering. **Signs:** Animals may paw at the mouth, salivate, and vomit after ingestion. Tachecardia

(increased heart rate), diarrhea with or without blood, coma and death may follow. Treatment: Vomiting should be induced immediately or gastric lavage, followed by administration of activated charcoal. Symptomatic and supportive treatments should be provided as needed.

Dieffenbachia (Dumbcane): Toxic Part: Every part of the plant. Signs: Immediate pain in the mouth with salivation. Tissues of the mouth and throat may swell. Dyspnea (difficulty breathing) or painful respiration may be noted. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may be seen. Treatment: Symptomatic and supportive treatment should be given. Water or milk should be used to rinse the mouth. Antihistamines may be useful as well as fluid therapy.

Epipremnum (Devil's Ivy, Pothos, Taro Vine, Variegated Philodendron): Toxic Part: The entire plant including the roots. Signs: Pain and swelling of the mouth. Salivation and pawing at the mouth. Edema of the lips and tongue. Treatment: The mouth should be rinsed with lots of water or milk. Antihistamines and analgesics may be necessary.

Euphorbia (Poinsettia, Christmas Flower): Toxic Part: The leaves, stems and sap. Signs: Severe irritation of the mouth. Retching and pawing at the mouth. Vomiting, diarrhea, temporary blindness, renal (kidney) failure, and intestinal cramping may occur. While this plant has always been considered highly toxic, Illinois Animal Poison Control reports that ingestion rarely causes a problem.

Hedera helix (English Ivy, Yedra): Toxic Part: Every part of the plant. Signs: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, excitement, dyspnea (difficulty breathing), and convulsions. Treatment: Symptomatic and supportive.

Phoradendron (Mistletoe): Toxic Part: The entire plant especially the berries. Signs: May be delayed for several hours after ingestion. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea are common. Central nervous systems signs such as delirium, ataxia (loss of muscle coordination), seizures, and

coma are possible depending on amount ingested. Treatment: Vomiting should be induced immediately, followed by activated charcoal. A cathartic is also recommended. Fluid therapy may be necessary. Cardiac effects need to be treated symptomatically.

Lillium (Easter Lily, Tiger Lily, etc.): Toxic Part: The entire plant is toxic to cats. No proven toxicity to dogs. Water the plants have been in is also toxic. Signs: Nonspecific with acute renal failure within 24 to 48 hours. Treatment: No specific treatment. Vomiting should be induced followed by activated charcoal and a cathartic. Fluid therapy is necessary. Mortality is high.

Philodendron (Philodendron, Heart leaf plant, Sweetheart plant): Toxic Part: The entire plant including the roots. Signs: Pain and swelling of the mouth, salivation and pawing at the mouth, drooling, edema of the lips, tongue and throat. Treatment: Rinse mouth with lots of water or milk. Antihistamines or analgesics may be necessary.

Ilex (Holly): Toxic Part: The leaves and berries. Signs: Gastrointestinal distress and central nervous system depression. Poisoning by ingestion is rare. Treatment: Supportive and symptomatic. **Rhododendron (Azalea, Rhododendron):** Toxic Part: Every part of the plant including the nectar from the flower. Signs: Gastrointestinal disturbances 6 hours after ingestion. Salivation, nausea, and vomiting. Epiphora, bradycardia, weakness, collapse, stupor, coma, convulsions, and death may result. Treatment: Vomiting should be induced immediately followed by administration of activated charcoal at 2 -3 hour intervals. Fluid therapy is required. Monitoring the heart is advised.

Spathiphyllum (Peac Lily, Spathe flower, White anthurium): Toxic Part: Every part of the plant. Signs: Pain and swelling of the mouth, acute inflammation of the pharynx, salivation and pawing at the mouth, edema of the lips, tongue and throat. Treatment: Rinse mouth with lots of water or milk. Antihistamines and analgesics may be necessary.

If an owner suspects that their pet has consumed any of the above

plants, they should not try to render any treatment on their own, but get their pet to the veterinarian as soon as possible. Once again the owner should bring the entire plant with them for identification, if possible.