

Top 10 Plants Poisonous To Pets

Tips from Pet Poison Helpline to Help Keep Your Pet Safe!



Every day, Pet Poison Helpline receives dozens of phone calls from dog owners and cat owners saying, "My cat ate a lily!" or "My dog ate a plant. Is it poisonous?" Some of the most poisonous plants for dogs and cats are reviewed below. While there are thousands of species of plants and flowers, only a small percentage of plants are truly dangerous and poisonous to your pet. Make sure you know which plants are most deadly to avoid your dog or cat from getting into these poisonous flowers and poisonous plants!

Autumn Crocus



There are two Crocus plants: one that blooms in the spring (Crocus species) and the other in the autumn (Colchicum autumnale). The spring plants are more common and are part of the Iridaceae family. These ingestions can cause general gastrointestinal upset including vomiting and diarrhea. These should not be mistaken for Autumn Crocus, part of the Liliaceae family, which contain colchicine. The Autumn Crocus is highly toxic and can cause severe vomiting, gastrointestinal bleeding, liver and kidney damage, and respiratory failure. If you're not sure what plant it is, bring your pet to their veterinarian immediately for care. Signs may be seen immediately but can be delayed for days.

Azalea



In the same family as rhododendrons, azaleas can have serious effects on pets. These plants contain grayanotoxins which disrupt sodium channels affecting the skeletal and cardiac muscle. All parts of the plant are considered poisonous, and as little as ingestion of 0.2% of an animal's body weight can result in poisoning. Eating even a few leaves can result in vomiting, diarrhea and excessive drooling; without immediate veterinary attention, the pet could fall into a coma and possibly die. The overall prognosis is fair with treatment.

Cyclamen



The cyclamen is a beautiful houseplant commonly sold in supermarkets. It is also called the Persian violet and Sowbread. Cyclamen contains irritating saponins, and when any part of the plant (especially the tubers or roots) are chewed or ingested by dogs and cats, it can result in clinical signs of drooling, vomiting and diarrhea. With large ingestions, these plants can result in cardiac problems (e.g., abnormal heart rate and rhythm), seizures and death.

Daffodils



These flowers contain lycorine, an alkaloid with strong emetic properties (something that triggers vomiting). Ingestion of the bulb, plant or flower can cause severe vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and even possible cardiac arrhythmias or respiratory depression. Crystals are found in the outer layer of the bulbs, similar to hyacinths, which cause severe tissue irritation and secondary drooling. Daffodil ingestions can result in more severe symptoms so if an exposure is witnessed or symptoms are seen, we recommend seeking veterinary care for further supportive care.

Dieffenbachia



Popular in many homes and offices, *Dieffenbachia* species contain insoluble crystals of calcium oxalate called raphites. Chewing or biting into the plant releases the crystals which penetrate tissue resulting in injury. When dogs or cats ingest insoluble calcium oxalate-containing plants, clinical signs may be seen immediately and include pawing at face (secondary to oral pain), drooling, foaming, and vomiting. Moderate to severe swelling of the lips, tongue, oral cavity, and upper airway may also be seen, making it difficult to breathe or swallow.

Kalanchoe



Kalanchoe is a common, beautiful houseplant with hundreds of flowers (which range from yellow, red, pink, etc.). All parts of the plant are generally considered toxic – even the water in the vase has been reported to cause toxicosis. Clinical signs from ingestion include cardiovascular signs (e.g., abnormal heart rhythm and rate), electrolyte abnormalities (e.g., a life-threatening high potassium level), gastrointestinal signs (e.g., nausea, drooling, vomiting, etc.), or central nervous system signs (e.g., dilated pupils, tremors, seizures). In severe cases, an expensive antidote, digoxin-specific Fab fragments, can be used for severe, life-threatening cases.

Lilies



There are dangerous and benign lilies out there, and it's important to know the difference. Peace, Peruvian, and Calla lilies contain oxalate crystals that cause minor signs, such as tissue irritation to the mouth, tongue, pharynx, and esophagus – this results in minor drooling. The more dangerous, potentially fatal lilies are true lilies, and these include Tiger, Day, Asiatic, Easter and Japanese Show lilies – all of which are highly toxic to cats! Even small ingestions (such as 2-3 petals or leaves) can result in severe kidney failure. If your cat is seen consuming any part of a lily, bring your cat (and the plant) immediately to a veterinarian for medical care. The sooner you bring in your cat, the better and more efficiently we can treat the poisoning. Decontamination (like inducing vomiting and giving binders like activated charcoal) are imperative in the early toxic stage, while aggressive intravenous fluid therapy, kidney function monitoring tests, and supportive care can greatly improve the prognosis.

Oleander



Oleander is an outdoor shrub, popular for its evergreen qualities and delicate flowers. All parts of the plant are generally considered toxic – even the water in the vase has been reported to cause toxicosis; however, the leaves and flowers are extremely toxic if ingested and can cause severe vomiting, slow the heart rate and possibly even cause death.

Sago Palm



Very popular in warmer climates, this household and outdoor plant can be very harmful to pets. All parts of sago palm are considered poisonous, with the seeds (nuts) being the most toxic part of the plant. Sago palm contains cycasin, which is the primary active toxic agent resulting in severe liver failure in dogs. Ingestion results in acute gastrointestinal signs (e.g., drooling, inappetence, vomiting, diarrhea) within 15 minutes to several hours after ingestion. Central nervous system signs (e.g., weakness, ataxia, seizures, tremors, etc.) and severe liver failure can be seen within 2-3 days post-ingestion.

Tulips and Hyacinths



Tulips contain allergenic lactones while hyacinths contain similar alkaloids. The toxic principle of these plants is very concentrated in the bulbs (versus the leaf or flower), so make sure your dog isn't digging up the bulbs in the garden. When the plant parts or bulbs are chewed or ingested, it can result in tissue irritation to the mouth and esophagus. Typical signs include profuse drooling, vomiting, or even diarrhea, depending on the amount consumed. There's no specific antidote, but with supportive care from the veterinarian (including rinsing the mouth, anti-vomiting medication, and possibly subcutaneous fluids), animals do quite well. With large ingestions of the bulb, more severe symptoms such as an increase in heart rate and changes in respiration can be seen, and should be treated by a veterinarian. These more severe signs are seen in cattle or our overzealous, chowhound Labradors.

This is only a partial list of poisonous plants. For a more complete list of plants poisonous to cats and dogs, visit our website at: www.petpoisonhelpline.com/poisons.

If you suspect your pet has ingested any of these items or any other questionable substance, call Pet Poison Helpline or your veterinarian for assistance. Accurate and timely identification of the suspected substance is very important. Having the container, package, or label in hand will save valuable time and may save the life of your pet.

About Pet Poison Helpline: Pet Poison Helpline is a service available 24 hours, seven days a week for pet owners, veterinarians and veterinary technicians that require assistance treating a potentially poisoned pet. Staff can provide treatment advice for poisoning cases of all species, including dogs, cats, birds, small mammals, large animals and exotic species. As the most cost-effective option for animal poison control care, Pet Poison Helpline's fee of **\$39.00** per incident includes follow-up consultation for the duration of the poison case. Pet Poison Helpline is available in North America by calling 800-213-6680. Additional information can be found online at www.petpoisonhelpline.com.

Safe Gardening

The Pet Health Care Library

Gardening is a relaxing pastime enjoyed by many people, and many people allow pets in their garden. The garden shops and catalogs are full of gorgeous garden shrubs and flowers. They tell us how to water and how much sunshine is needed, but rarely do they tell us if the plant is safe in case your pet chews it up.

Your dog or cat is probably having visions of digging through or chewing up the plants. We'll leave the fencing and reprimanding up to you, but just to be on the safe side, how about planting only non-toxic plants? If unplanned periodic demolition of the garden by the family dog (or even the cat) is a fact of life, it is good to know the plants she is chewing up are non-toxic. It may not help the garden any, but knowing your pet isn't going to get sick because of it is one less thing to worry about. It's good to know what is considered safe should the family pet get frisky and start chewing and digging in the flower beds.



Illustration by MarVistaVet

How Dangerous is a Toxic Plant?

In the past we listed plants as either safe or toxic. This seems straight-forward but it turns out that there is more to it, so to be more specific:

Safe Plants: Can be chewed up or eaten with no ill effects of any kind.

Toxic Plants: Will not actually be dangerous to your pet but will give your pet a very unpleasant upset stomach or oral chemical irritation if eaten or chewed. The resulting discomfort may require medical treatment in order to feel better.

Poisonous Plants: Can potentially kill your pet or cause serious damage to their body if your pet eats or chews them.

Catnip

Catnip was brought to America by early colonists and was considered to be a commercial crop. Numerous medicinal properties have been ascribed to catnip and it has been used in teas, soaks, and poultices. Today its uses are largely confined to feline entertainment, as its active ingredient, cis-trans-nepetalactone, is a mild hallucinogen. Rubbing, rolling, and other merry-making actions are produced, though one should be careful as aggressive behavior is often made worse by catnip indulgence.

Response to catnip is inherited genetically as a dominant trait, which means that not all cats will be affected. Furthermore, kittens under age six to eight weeks are not able to respond.

Catnip is felt to be a safe and non-addictive recreational drug for cats but there is some thinking that overdose can produce seizures. For this reason, it is best not used in cats with a history of seizures. Chronic exposure to catnip may cause an apparent loss of mental faculty and

possibly personality change. Also, it is not a good idea to put catnip in a carrier or box for transportation because by the time the cat arrives, some unpleasant mental changes may be in progress making the cat more aggressive and more stressed than she would be had no hallucinogens been involved.

Catnip can be a fun garden plant if the climate is right but can quickly turn into a weed problem if one is not careful. Catnip should be considered an occasional treat for cats able to respond to it.

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center

The ASPCA offers [a large database of toxic and non-toxic plants](#), with photos, to dogs, cats, and horses. You can see a list that affects only one of those three species, or view all of them. This list contains plants that have been reported as having systemic effects on animals and/or intense effects on the gastrointestinal tract. Please note that the information contained in the ASPCA plant lists is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a compilation of the most frequently encountered plants. If you think that your animal is ill or may have ingested a poisonous substance, contact your local veterinarian or their 24-hour emergency poison hotline.

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (link to <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/>)
1-888-426-4435



Catnip plant (Nepeta cataria)
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