



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Poisonous Plants and our Pets (July 10, 2021)

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Our homes are considered safe havens for our family and pets. Dogs and cats do not normally ingest plant material, however, when bored (usually when their owners are absent), or when curious puppies and kittens are exploring their environment, the ingestion of potentially dangerous/poisonous plants may lead to an expensive emergency trip to the veterinarian.

Some plant poisonings in pets are due to common foods (onions, garlic, grapes, raisins, avocados and Macadamia nuts) which are eaten by people with no adverse effects. The following discussion on potentially poisonous plants to your pets is by no means all-inclusive. Pet owners should be familiar with the plants in their home and yard and have some basic knowledge as to any harmful effects these plants may have on their inquisitive dog, cat, or even young children.

Marijuana (*Cannabis sativa*) has become one of the most common poisonings in dogs. The flowers, buds, and leaves contain the most THC (the toxic alkaloid responsible for marijuana's affects) found in the plant and is the cause of most animal intoxications. Clinical signs of poisoning in pets often occur one to three hours after ingestion. Intoxicated animals often present with depression, weakness, disorientation with staggering, falling, tremors, and dilated pupils. Some animals may become anxious and hyperexcitable. Excessive drooling, followed by vomiting, panting, increased heart rate, along with diarrhea and/or urinary incontinence are commonly observed. If the animal has ingested significant quantities of THC, the animal may go into a stupor or coma. Recovery from toxicity often takes 48 to 72 hours with some intoxicated animals requiring extensive hospitalization and supportive therapy.

Many plants in the Lily family are toxic to both dogs and cats. The Easter Lily, Calla Lily, Tiger Lily, and Peace Lily are very poisonous to cats. Clinical signs are observed within two hours after ingestion of the plant material, and include vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite, and weakness. As the toxicity progresses, affected cats have increased thirst with increased urination due to kidney failure, which can progress to multiple organ system failure leading to coma and death. Dogs are less susceptible to the toxic effects of lilies, but may develop the clinical signs of vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain and loss of appetite. Dogs tend to recover with minimal issues or hospitalization.



Tulips (member of the Lily family) are very toxic to dogs, but less toxic to cats. In dogs, the bulb (which is the most toxic part of the plant) is most commonly ingested due to their round ball-shaped appearance. Once ingested, clinical signs often start out as excessive drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, and depression with weakness. This is soon followed with abdominal pain, trouble breathing, and heart issues (a fast heartbeat and arrhythmias). Often, dogs will need supportive care at a veterinary treatment facility in order to recover from tulip toxicity.

Sago palms (*Cycas revoluta* and other *Cycas* species of palms) can be very toxic to dogs. All parts of the plant are highly toxic and can be fatal. For some unknown reason, dogs find the plant very palatable to eat and enjoy chewing on all parts of the plant. Dogs often develop clinical signs about three hours after ingestion of plant material but, in some cases, clinical signs may not develop for up to three days after ingestion. Affected animals often develop vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, depression, weakness, and staggering. As the toxicity progresses, liver damage becomes extensive, usually requiring extensive veterinarian care to prevent the animal from lapsing into a coma and dying.



Lantana (*Lantana camara*) is a colorful drought tolerant plant common in gardens. All parts of the plant are toxic, with the berries, flowers, and leaves being the most toxic part of the plant. The toxic alkaloids found in the plants lead to gastrointestinal upset when ingested in small amounts. Ingestion of larger amounts often causes liver damage and failure. Intoxicated animals often develop clinical signs 2 to 4 hours after ingestion of the plant, and can include abdominal swelling, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, weakness and staggering. As the toxicity progresses, the animal develops liver failure.



Most common house plants are only mildly toxic to adult pets, mainly because most are unpalatable and bitter to taste. However, young dogs and cats like to explore and taste their surroundings which makes them very vulnerable to toxic issues. The most common plants involved are Japanese, Chinese and Jade Rubber plants (*Crassula argentea*), Philodendrons (Swiss cheese plant, Heartleaf and Fiddle leaf philodendrons), Asparagus ferns (*Asparagus aethiopicus*) and Chinese (Philippines) evergreen (*Aglaonema* species). Clinical signs often appear rapidly after ingestion of the plant material and include gastrointestinal issues with prominent mouth and stomach irritation. Excessive drooling, swelling of the lips, face and tongue, difficulty swallowing, vomiting and diarrhea are often observed in affected animals. Animals recover quickly after the irritant is removed with only a few animals needing significant veterinary care afterwards.

It is important to have some knowledge about the plants in your yard and home to understand any toxic issues that may arise with your pet if they ingest plant parts. If you observe your animal ingesting a plant and then demonstrates clinical signs of toxicity, you should immediately contact with your veterinarian or poison control center. The plants discussed in this article are only a few of the more common plants involved in causing issues with your pet that may require veterinary attention.

Remember all pets are curious and may eat a plant that may be toxic, or at the very least irritating. Young animals are most susceptible to poisonings and should be monitored and directed away from investigating or eating potentially toxic plants. This will keep you from a potentially expensive emergency visit to your veterinary clinic or veterinary emergency center and keep your pet safe and happy.

The Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions at a few select locations in the next few months!

Visalia Farmer's Market - Saturdays, 8-11 am, 2100 W. Caldwell Ave (behind Sears Building)

Hanford Farmer's Market - 4th Thurs, May - Sept., 5-8 pm, 7th ST. and Irwin Downtown Hanford

Questions? Call us:

Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30

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