

Plants Poisonous to Pets

by Kathi Joye

Although we have had puppies in the house before, our current youngster can't resist lunging at, and chomping off, parts of plants that are hanging off trails or walkways as he goes by them. This is typical of young pets (and kids) as they explore the world using all of their senses... including taste. Clearly, I needed to familiarize myself with plants that could be poisonous to puppies. My research led me to a plethora of information about plants toxic to pets, but more importantly, I found some excellent websites to keep handy in case this puppy manages to chew on some dangerous plants.



Lily ingestion can cause kidney failure, especially in cats.

A large number of plants commonly found in yards and in homes contain some amount of natural toxins, which can range from mildly toxic to life threatening when pets eat them. In some cases, the entire plant is toxic to pets; in others, only some parts of the plant are toxic. Most bulbs and seeds are very toxic to pets; bulbs and seeds should be stored away from them. To be on the safe side, plant litter (such as trimmed flowers, stems and leaves) should be discarded appropriately.



Daffodils can cause convulsions in pets when eaten.

Plant toxicity varies by species; something that is fine for humans (like grapes) can be lethal to certain pets. If you are aware that certain plants are toxic, don't allow your pet unsupervised access to the area in which these plants grow. As a general rule, puppies tend to eat plants more indiscriminately than kittens do.

The Veterinary Medicine Teaching Hospital (VMTH) at UC Davis indicates that there are 12 plants that are responsible for the **majority** of pet poisonings that they see. They are: lilies (*Lilium spp.*); lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*); anemone plants (family Ranunculaceae); aloe vera plants (*Aloe spp.*); amaryllis (family Amaryllidaceae); asparagus fern (family Liliaceae); daffodils (*Narcissus spp.*); philodendrons (*Philodendron spp.*); jade plants (*Crassula ovata*); chrysanthemums (*Chrysanthemum spp.*); cyclamen (*Cyclamen spp.*); and cycads, including sago palms (*Cycas spp.*).

Effects of these plants can be found at http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/ccah/health_information/plants_pets.cfm. If your pet has eaten any part of the plants listed above, contact your vet immediately rather than waiting for symptoms to appear.

VMTH also states that there are many other highly toxic plants but these are rarely ingested by pets. They include angel's trumpet, castor bean, Daphne, death camas, foxglove, Jimson weed, oleander, poisonous hemlock, and yews. A few other plants that make the highly toxic list on other websites include azalea, jasmine, St. John's wort, periwinkle, delphinium, lantana, rhododendron, elderberry, lupine and most bulb plants. Since most seeds are poisonous to pets, keep them from eating acorns, almonds and other



Chrysanthemums can have adverse GI effects on pets and cause muscle incoordination.

nuts and refrain from feeding your pets fruit with the seeds still intact.

There are a number of websites that are highly informative about this topic. They include: www.library.illinois.edu/vox/toxic; www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/poisonous_plants.pdf, which lists toxic plants and the parts that are toxic; www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants, which contains a comprehensive list of toxic plants by name, specific species toxicity and photos of the plants; and www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/, which allows you to select a plant by common or scientific name that then links you to photos and information about that plant's toxicity.

Kathi Joye is a Maser Gardener who raises puppies for Guide Dogs for the Blind.