

Garden Toxins for Your Pets

Spring is right around the corner, and with that comes garden preparation. It's important to keep your pets in mind while you plan your garden, even if they don't have direct access to the garden itself. Cut flowers and various vegetables can still pose a threat when brought inside the home, not just while in the ground. Therefore, it's a good idea to know what is considered dangerous should your pets decide to dig up or nibble on the fruits of your labor.

Let's first start off with those plants that have the potential to be fatal if consumed in large enough amounts (sometimes even small!). Garlic, onion and chives can cause gastrointestinal irritation and red blood cell damage. Landscape shrubs such as azaleas and sago palms can lead to vomiting, diarrhea, heart disease, bleeding disorders and liver failure. And although beautiful, daffodils, ANY type of lily, fox glove, oleander and castor bean plants can cause severe heart problems, neurologic symptoms and renal failure. All of which can result in death as the worst case scenario.

There are quite a few other plants that certainly may upset your pet's stomach or cause irritation when chewed, but should not result in death. Aloe, cosmos, begonias, gardenias (oh, but they smell so good!), carnations and geraniums are a few of those plants. Again, although not typically fatal, the resulting discomfort may require medical treatment in order for your pet to feel better faster.

We should also note that the stems, peels, fruit and seeds of citrus plants can cause oral irritation and possibly even some nervous system depression when ingested in significant amounts. This is due to the essential oil content (citric acid) located in all parts of the plant. So keep those sweet treats to yourself this coming summer!

The ASPCA offers an extensive database on toxic and non-toxic plants to dogs, cats and horses- including identification photos. Please note that the information contained in the ASPCA plant list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather a compilation of the most frequently encountered plants. If you think that your animal may have ingested a poisonous substance, contact your local veterinarian or call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435.