

Poisonous Plants in the Landscape

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While most of us are familiar with common poisonous plants that cause dermatitis (skin irritations) such as poison ivy or poison oak, we fail to recognize common ornamental plants in the landscape that may cause internal poisoning when ingested. Although most adults would not intentionally eat the leaves or fruit of ornamental plants in the landscape, young children or pets sometimes do.

The purpose of this publication is to familiarize you with some of the common landscape plants known to have poisonous properties when ingested. You may be surprised to learn just how many of our common plants, such as azaleas, hydrangeas, boxwood and English ivy, are known to have poisonous properties.

Please note, however, that the term “POISONOUS” used in this publication does not imply that the plant is fatal. Some plants may be only mildly toxic and may cause stomachache or mild irritation of the mouth and throat when ingested. There are also a number of variables that determine how severe the poisoning symptoms may be, such as the age, weight, and health status of a person in relationship to the quantity of the plant ingested, as well as the form that the plant was in at the time of ingestion (i.e., cooked versus raw, ripe fruit versus unripe fruit, etc.).

It is not the intent of this publication to discourage you from planting any of the plants on the list, but to make you aware of their potential hazard, when used in landscapes frequented by young children, domestic animals or adults with mentally challenged adult. As the saying goes, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Prevention is the best medicine when it comes to toxic plant poisoning.

Internal poisons are a group of chemically different substances that, when ingested:

- Act on the brain, causing narcotic reactions and other mental disturbances.
- Affect the spinal cord resulting in paralysis and convulsions.
- Act as heart depressants and stimulants.
- Irritate the digestive tract and nervous system.

To help prevent plant poisonings, follow these safety tips:

- Know the names of all the plants in your landscape. If you need help identifying a plant, take a piece of it to a nursery, florist, or your county extension agent.
- Label all of your plants with their names so you can identify a plant that has been eaten.
- Keep plants, seeds, and bulbs out of the reach and sight of children and pets.



- Do not eat wild plants or mushrooms, even if they are growing in your landscape. Cooking poisonous plants does not make them safe to eat.
- Keep weed and insect killers in a locked cabinet, out of the reach of children and pets. Never put them in bottles used for drinking.
- Keep children and pets away from lawns newly sprayed with garden chemicals.
- Teach your children to never put any part of a plant into their mouths.

⚠ What To Do in a Poison Emergency ⚠

In the event of a poison emergency call the Georgia Poison Center. Keep these numbers near your telephone.

Call 24-Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week:

In Metro Atlanta Call: 404-616-9000

Outside Metro Atlanta Call: 1-800-222-1222

Teletype line for the deaf and hearing impaired (TDD): 404-616-9287

If a poisoning occurs and the person is having trouble breathing, seizures, or will not wake up, **CALL 911** (or your local emergency number) immediately.

Be prepared to give the attending physician:

1. The name of plant, if known, or description (save uneaten parts).
2. How long ago the plant was eaten.
3. How much and which parts of the plant were eaten.
4. The age of the individual.
5. The symptoms of the individual.

If hospitalization is required, take a portion of the suspect plant with you for positive identification.



Florida Anisetree
(*Illicium floridanum*)



English Ivy
(*Hedera helix*)



Elephant Ear
(*Colocasia esculenta*)



Trumpet Honeysuckle
(*Lonicera sempervirens*)



Japanese Honeysuckle
(*Lonicera japonica*)



English Yew
(*Taxus* spp.)

The following table lists common ornamental plants known to be toxic when ingested. While this is not a complete list, it contains many plants commonly found in home landscapes in Georgia.

Ornamental Plants Reported To Be Toxic When Ingested by Humans

Plant Name	Botanical Name	Toxic Plant Part	Symptoms
Air Potato	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>	raw fruit	abdominal pain, nausea
Algerian Ivy**	<i>Hedera canariensis</i>	all parts	diarrhea, nervousness, labored respiration, convulsions
Allamanda	<i>Allamanda</i> spp.	all parts	nausea, high temperature, dryness of the mouth
Amaryllis	<i>Amaryllis</i> spp.	bulbs and seeds	gastrointestinal problems, vomiting, diarrhea
American Arborvitae**	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	leaves	low blood pressure, convulsions
Angel's Trumpet**	<i>Datura</i> spp.	all parts	blurring of vision, delirium
Anisetree**	<i>Illicium floridanum</i> , <i>Illicium anisatum</i>	leaves	abdominal pain, vomiting, convulsions, death
Azalea	<i>Rhododendron</i> spp.	all parts	nausea, vomiting, weakness, dizziness, breathing difficulty, coma
Barberry	<i>Berberis</i> spp.	all parts	depressant action on the heart muscle
Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	bark, seeds	nausea, weakness, depression
Boxwood	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	leaves	gastric, vomiting
Buckeye	<i>Aesculus</i> spp.	all parts	digestive irritant, nausea, vomiting
Caladium	<i>Caladium bicolor</i>	all parts	burning in mouth and throat, vomiting
Calla Lily	<i>Zantedeschia</i> spp.	all parts	burning and inflammation of the mouth and throat
Castor Bean	<i>Ricinus communis</i>	seeds	burning in mouth and throat, gastric and intestinal problems
Century Plant	<i>Agave americana</i>	leaves	vomiting, diarrhea
Cherry (all species)	<i>Prunus</i> spp.	leaves, bark, seeds	gasping, nervous disorder
Clematis	<i>Clematis</i> spp.	all parts	gastrointestinal irritation
Crinum Lily	<i>Crinum</i> spp.	bulb	vomiting, diarrhea
Delphinium**	<i>Delphinium</i> spp.	all parts	digestive upset, nervous excitement or depression
Elderberry	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	root, bark, stem, leaves	Has caused nausea and vomiting in children who have used stems as toys. Raw berries may cause nausea. Fruit commonly made into pies, jelly and wine— not harmful when cooked.
Elephant Ear**	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>	all parts	intense burning and irritation of the tongue
English Ivy**	<i>Hedera helix</i>	leaves, stems, fruits	headache, fever, anxiety, breathing difficulty, coma
Eucalyptus**	<i>Eucalyptus</i> spp.	leaves	nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, respiratory difficulty
False Indigo**	<i>Baptisia</i> spp.	all parts	paralysis
Firethorn	<i>Pyracantha</i> spp.	berries	stomach ache, blistering of tongue, vomiting
Four O'Clock	<i>Mirabilis jalapa</i>	root, seeds	vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
Ginkgo (female)	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	fruit	violent stomach pain, kidney disorders
Gloriosa Lily	<i>Gloriosa superba</i>	all parts	numbness of lips, tongue and throat, nervous system paralysis
Holly	<i>Ilex</i> spp.	berries	vomiting, diarrhea
Honeysuckle, Japanese and Trumpet**	<i>Lonicera japonica</i> , <i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	all parts	diarrhea, pupil dilation, irregular heartbeat, respiratory failure, coma
Hydrangea, Oakleaf Hydrangea, Bigleaf Hydrangea, Smooth	<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i> , <i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i> <i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	leaves, bark	gastric, intestinal, convulsions
Impatiens, balsam	<i>Impatiens</i> spp.	stem, leaves, root	vomiting, diarrhea

Continued on next page.

Plant Name	Botanical Name	Toxic Plant Part	Symptoms
Iris	<i>Iris</i> spp.	underground stems	severe digestive tract discomfort
Jack-in-the-Pulpit	<i>Arisaema</i> spp.	all parts	mouth and throat irritation, vomiting
Juniper	<i>Juniperus</i> spp.	berry-like seeds	kidney damage
Lantana**	<i>Lantana</i> spp.	fruit	gastric, vomiting, diarrhea, circulatory collapse
Lily-of-the-Valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>	all parts	nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, irregular heartbeat and pulse, mental confusion
Lilies** (Rain Lily, Atamasco Lily, Easter Lily)	<i>Zephyranthes</i> spp.	all parts	dizziness, stomach pain, collapse, fatal to livestock
Mahonia	<i>Mahonia</i> spp.	all parts	depressant action on the heart muscle
Mimosa	<i>Albizia</i> spp.	all parts	intestinal irritation
Morning Glory	<i>Ipomoea</i> spp.	seeds, root	hallucinations, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle tightness
Mountain Laurel**	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	leaves, twigs, flowers	gastric, paralysis, convulsions
Oleander**	<i>Nerium oleander</i> L.	all parts	Dizziness, irregular heart beat, nausea, convulsions, death. This is one of the most toxic ornamental plants in the Southeast.
Ornamental Tobacco**	<i>Nicotiana</i> spp.	all parts	weakness, diarrhea, abdominal pain, paralysis
Periwinkle (vine)	<i>Vinca minor</i>	all parts	intestinal irritation
Periwinkle (annual)	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	all parts	hallucinations, damage to liver, kidney, nervous system
Plumbago	<i>Plumbago</i> spp.	leaves, stems	stomach pain
Privet	<i>Ligustrum</i> spp.	fruit	nausea, headache, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, low blood pressure
Sago Palm	<i>Cycas revoluta</i>	seeds, roots, trunk pith	headache, vomiting, stomach disorders
Sweet shrub	<i>Calycanthus floridus</i>	seeds	affects central nervous system, spasms, increased heart rate
Trumpet Creeper (Chalice Vine)	<i>Campsis radicans</i>	all parts except fruit	gastric irritation, dilated pupils, numbness in hands
Virginia Creeper (Woodbine)	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	berries, leaves	nausea, bloody vomiting, abdominal pain, kidney damage, headache
Wisteria	<i>Wisteria</i> spp.	Pods, seeds	stomach pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting
Yew**	<i>Taxus</i> spp.	berries, foliage	foliage more toxic than berries, death can be sudden without symptoms
** reported to be fatal when consumed in quantity.			

Resources:

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