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. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Toxic Plant Part</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Potato</td>
<td>Dioscorea bulbifera</td>
<td>raw fruit</td>
<td>abdominal pain, nausea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algerian Ivy**</td>
<td>Hedera canariensis</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>diarrhea, nervousness, labored respiration, convulsions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allamanda</td>
<td>Allamanda spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>nausea, high temperature, dryness of the mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaryllis</td>
<td>Amaryllis spp.</td>
<td>bulbs and seeds</td>
<td>gastrointestinal problems, vomiting, diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Arborvitae**</td>
<td>Thuja occidentalis</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>low blood pressure, convulsions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel’s Trumpet**</td>
<td>Datura spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>blurring of vision, delirium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anisetree**</td>
<td>Illicium floridanum, Illicium anisatum</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>abdominal pain, vomiting, convulsions, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azalea</td>
<td>Rhododendron spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>nausea, vomiting, weakness, dizziness, breathing difficulty, coma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barberry</td>
<td>Berberis spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>depressant action on the heart muscle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Locust</td>
<td>Robinia pseudoacacia</td>
<td>bark, seeds</td>
<td>nausea, weakness, depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxwood</td>
<td>Buxus sempervirens</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>gastric, vomiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckeye</td>
<td>Aesculus spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>digestive irritant, nausea, vomiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caladium</td>
<td>Caladium bicolor</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>burning in mouth and throat, vomiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calla Lily</td>
<td>Zantedeschia spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>burning and inflammation of the mouth and throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castor Bean</td>
<td>Ricinus communis</td>
<td>seeds</td>
<td>burning in mouth and throat, gastric and intestinal problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Century Plant</td>
<td>Agave americana</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>vomiting, diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry (all species)</td>
<td>Prunus spp.</td>
<td>leaves, bark, seeds</td>
<td>gasping, nervous disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clematis</td>
<td>Clematis spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>gastrointestinal irritation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crinum Lily</td>
<td>Crinum spp.</td>
<td>bulb</td>
<td>vomiting, diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delphinium**</td>
<td>Delphinium spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>digestive upset, nervous excitement or depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderberry</td>
<td>Sambucus canadensis</td>
<td>root, bark, stem, leaves</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Ivy**</td>
<td>Hedera helix</td>
<td>leaves, stems, fruits</td>
<td>headache, fever, anxiety, breathing difficulty, coma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucalyptus**</td>
<td>Eucalyptus spp.</td>
<td>leaves</td>
<td>nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, respiratory difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False Indigo**</td>
<td>Baptisia spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>paralysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firethorn</td>
<td>Pyracantha spp.</td>
<td>berries</td>
<td>stomach ache, blistering of tongue, vomiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four O’Clock</td>
<td>Mirabilis jalapa</td>
<td>root, seeds</td>
<td>vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginkgo (female)</td>
<td>Ginkgo biloba</td>
<td>fruit</td>
<td>violent stomach pain, kidney disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloriosa Lily</td>
<td>Gloriosa superba</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>numbness of lips, tongue and throat, nervous system paralysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holly</td>
<td>Ilex spp.</td>
<td>berries</td>
<td>vomiting, diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeysuckle, Japanese and Trumpet**</td>
<td>Lonicera japonica, Lonicera sempervirens</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>diarrhea, pupil dilation, irregular heartbeat, respiratory failure, coma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrangea, Oakleaf Hydrangea, Bigleaf Hydrangea, Smooth</td>
<td>Hydrangea quercifolia, Hydrangea macrophylla Hydrangea arborescens</td>
<td>leaves, bark</td>
<td>gastric, intestinal, convulsions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatiens, balsam</td>
<td>Impatiens spp.</td>
<td>stem, leaves, root</td>
<td>vomiting, diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Iris spp.</td>
<td>underground stems</td>
<td>severe digestive tract discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack-in-the-Pulpit</td>
<td>Arisaema spp.</td>
<td>all parts</td>
<td>mouth and throat irritation, vomiting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

** reported to be fatal when consumed in quantity.

**Resources:**


extension.uga.edu

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