

# Lovely Plants can be Ugly Plants

Spring is in the Air...

As spring showers wane and temperatures ascend, our neighborhoods burst into life with colorful flowers and blooms. Life is abuzz with activity, but our pursuit of greener lawns and cheerful gardens may be the root of many allergies and potential dangers. Your Poison Control Center recommends that you invest the time to learn about plants that could pose dangers to children and pets, before investing in beautifying your lawn and garden.



## 10 Dangerous Plants in Your Garden



- 1) **Oleander** (*Adelfa*, *Olean*, *Aiwa*, *Rose-bay*) - Extremely poisonous. Affects heart and digestive system. Has caused death in children who ingested the leaves. A few leaves can kill a human being. Toxic parts: Leaves, branches, nectar of flowers.
- 2) **Jessamine** (*Carolina jessamine*, *yellow jessamine*, *Cestrum*) - Poisoned children who sucked the nectar from flowers. May cause depression followed by death through respiratory failure. Honey from its nectar also thought to be fatal. Toxic parts: Flowers, leaves.
- 3) **Daphne** - A few berries can cause burning or ulceration in digestive tract causing vomiting and diarrhea. Death can result. This plant is considered especially dangerous, particularly for children. Toxic parts: Berries (commonly red, but other colors in various species).
- 4) **Autumn Crocus** (*Meadow saffron*, *Naked lady*) - Burning pain in mouth, gastrointestinal irritation. Children have been poisoned by eating flowers. Toxic parts: All parts, especially bulbs.
- 5) **Foxglove** (*Digitalis*) - One of the sources of the drug digitalis. May cause dangerously irregular heartbeat, digestive upset and mental confusion. Convulsions and death are possible. Toxic parts: All parts, especially leaves, flowers, seeds.
- 6) **Aconite** (*Monkshood*) - Restlessness, salivation, nausea, vomiting, vertigo. Although people have died after eating small amounts of garden aconite, poisoning from it is not common. Toxic parts: Roots, flowers, leaves.
- 7) **Iris** (*Blackberry lilies*, *Snake's-head Iris*, *walking iris*) - Severe digestive upset from moderate amounts of cultivated or wild irises. However, acidity usually prevents large consumption. Toxic parts: Underground rhizome, also developed leaves.
- 8) **Lily-of-the-Valley** (*Our Lady's Tears* - according to legend, Eve wept when she and Adam were expelled from the Garden of Eden. The flowers sprang from her tears.) - Produces glycoside like digitalis, used in medicine to strengthen the beat of a weakened heart. In moderate amounts, can cause irregular heartbeat, digestive upset and mental confusion. Toxic parts: Leaves, flowers, fruit (red berries).
- 9) **English Ivy** (*common ivy*) - Excitement, difficult breathing and eventually coma. Although no cases reported in US, European children have been poisoned. Toxic parts: Berries, leaves.
- 10) **Wisteria** (*water wisteria*) - Pods look like pea pods. One or two seeds may cause mild to severe gastrointestinal disturbances requiring hospitalization. However, with treatment, recovery occurs in 24 hours. No fatalities recorded. Toxic parts: Seeds, pods.

Special Guest Appearance:

- 11) **Dieffenbachia** (*Dumbcane*) - Intense burning and irritation of mouth, tongue, & lips. Death from dieffenbachia has occurred when tissues at back of tongue swells and blocks air passage to throat. Toxic parts: All parts.

# Cases and Facts

- **2 Toddlers Died From Oleander Poisoning, Coroner Says**  
...Autopsies found no evidence of trauma to either boy and test results showed the presence of oleandrin in the boys' stomachs, urine and bloodstreams. (L.A. Times 7/26/00)  
<http://articles.latimes.com/2000/jul/26/local/me-59440>
- **Digitalis** can cause an irregular heartbeat as well as digestive discomfort and confusion. May result in convulsions or death. **Foxglove, Oleander, and Lily-of-the-Valley** contain **Digitalis**.
- In 2007, the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) National Poison Data System (NPDS) reported 1,371 cases of cardiac glycoside overdose (**Digitalis**), of which 788 involved children younger than 6 years, and 229 involved children aged 6-17 years. Of all adult and pediatric patients, 1,279 cases (93% were accidental). (Clinical Toxicology Vol. 46 Issue10, December 2008, Table 22A)
- **Autumn Crocus** is toxic to cats, dogs, and horses.  
<http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/autumn-crocus.html>
- We report a case of acute intoxication of a 21-year-old man admitted to our Emergency Department after the ingestion, in order to sleep, of three homemade *Aconitum napellus* (**Aconite**) capsules...The authors stress that clinicians must be aware of possible occurrence of acute poisoning with *Aconitum napellus* in European countries and in the United States as herbal medicine is becoming increasingly popular. (Clinical Toxicology (Phila). 2005;43(7):873-6.)  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16440517>



**Foxglove**  
<http://www.freefoto.com/images/>



**Aconite**  
<http://www.alpinchallenge.info/images-august/bluc%20flowers%201.jpg>



**Oleander**  
<http://biology.clc.uc.edu/graphics/steincarter/florida/Oleander%2003%20big.JPG>



**Lily-of-the-Valley**  
<http://www.northshoreanimal.net/lily-of-the-valley.jpg>

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides pose serious dangers to kids & pets if they are ingested, inhaled or absorbed through the skin.
- Although curious children are the primary victims of poisonous plants, adult poisonings have occurred after ingestion of homemade teas and remedies made from plants in their gardens and foraged from the wild.
- Dieffenbachia (Dumb Cane) and Philodendrons are the most common plant exposures reported to poison control centers.

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