

# Common Household Hazards for Pets

## Introduction

Our pets are a part of our family. They play with us, eat with us, sleep with us and share our home with us. We sometimes forget they are a different species from us and this can get our pets into trouble. It is up to us to keep our pets safe in our environment. There are plants that when our curious pet decides to chew on that can harm them. There are foods that are safe for us to eat, but toxic for our pets and there are medications that we don't think twice about taking, but when accidentally eaten by our pet can harm or even kill them. Pet proofing your home is an important part of being a pet caretaker. Knowing what is toxic or harmful to your pet is the first step.

The second step is to know who to call and where to go if your pet should have an emergency. Do not wait until the emergency arrives to look for an emergency clinic number or the number to Animal Poison Control. I will give you the number and web address to the ASPCA Poison Control Center now and I want you to call your veterinarian and ask them how they handle after hours emergencies. If they do not take calls after hours, ask them to recommend a Veterinary Clinic for those emergencies at night and on weekends and holidays. Now, take both those numbers and the Poison Control number and place it on the refrigerator or tape it inside the cabinet door where you keep your medications.

## Animal Poison Control Center

As the premier animal poison control center in North America, the APCC is your best resource for any animal poison-related emergency, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you think that your pet may have ingested a potentially poisonous substance, make the call that can make all the difference: A \$60 consultation fee may be applied to your credit card.

**(888)426-4435**

# Common Toxic Household Plants

## Introduction

Dogs and Cats are curious creatures and will seek out things to chew on. Any plant that is eaten by our pets can cause some irritation and occasional vomiting. Some plants are more toxic or poisonous than others. Some plants, such as the Poinsettia, have gotten the reputation of being more toxic than they really are. The following plants are the most common household plants that can cause a problem if your pet chews or ingests the plant or bulb. If you come home and find one or these plants shredded, take your pet to your veterinarian for assessment and treatment.

## 1. Lilies

Lilies are lovely and fragrant, but just a small amount consumed by your cat can lead to kidney damage. The toxic substance that causes the damage has yet to be identified. The lily family includes the Easter lily, Asiatic and Oriental Lilies and Calla Lilies. Lilies are very popular in flower arrangements, especially the very fragrant Stargazer Lily, so it is best to keep your flower arrangements out of reach of your cat.



## 2. Sago Palm

I must admit that I have Sago Palms in my landscaping and I have to remember not to let Jake out when I am gardening around them. All parts of the Sago Palm are toxic but the seeds or seed pods (nuts) are the most toxic. When a dog eats just one or two seeds, it can lead to vomiting, diarrhea, depression, seizures and eventual liver failure. This is not a plant you want in your backyard if your dogs are free to roam. Even with supportive care, I have had several dogs die from eating this plant.



## 3. Mistletoe

With the Holidays, we sometimes will adorn our house with a few sprigs of mistletoe. Be aware that accidental ingestion of mistletoe can result in vomiting, diarrhea, cardiovascular collapse, difficulty breathing, and erratic behavior. In humans it can cause hallucinogens.



## 4. Amaryllis

Also around the holidays, we often give or receive Amaryllis. This is another plant that needs to be kept from your pet. The *Amaryllis* species contain toxins that can cause vomiting, depression, diarrhea, abdominal pain, hypersalivation (excess drooling), anorexia (not eating) and tremors.



## 5. Tulips and Daffodils

The flowers and plants of the *Narcissus and Tulipa* family which includes, tulips, daffodils, and paper whites are also toxic to pets. They cause gastrointestinal upsets, with vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, as well as depression, seizures and heart abnormalities



## 6. Azalea and Rhododendron

Here in Texas, we love our Azaleas. They have beautiful spring time flowers and are often given as gifts for the holidays. Azaleas and pets, however, do not mix. The toxic substance is a grayantoxin that causes vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, weakness, coma, low blood pressure, depression, heart collapse and sometimes, death.



## 7. Oleander

Oleanders are often used as border plants. They can become quite large and have lots of blooms. But the leaves carry a heart toxin very similar to Digitalis, a cardiac glycoside. Digitalis is helpful in the right dosage if you have heart failure, but in pets, horses and humans it can cause heart problems and death.





## 8. Castor Bean

The Castor Bean Plant is also used for landscaping, but the beans are not something you want to mess with. They contain Ricin, an extremely toxic substance that causes burning of the mouth and throat, vomiting, diarrhea, kidney failure, convulsions and death.



## 9. Cyclamen

Another popular plant that is toxic to our pets is the Cyclamen. The toxin is a teripenoid saponins and can cause drooling, vomiting and diarrhea. If your pet eats a large amount of the tubers, the toxin can also affect the heart, cause seizures and result in death.



## 10. Kalanchoe

The Kalanchoe is another popular plant given as gifts. The toxic compound is Bufodienolides, the same toxin that is in the toxic Bufo or Cane toads. These toxins cause vomiting; diarrhea and can often affect the heart.



## 11. Autumn Crocus

The Autumn Crocus is a bulb that is sometimes naturalized in fields making a spectacular first spring appearance. But this is another plant you must keep from your pet. The toxic substance is colchicine along with other alkaloids. These toxins cause oral irritations, bloody vomiting, diarrhea, shock, multiple organ damage and even bone marrow suppression.



## 12. Pothos

The Pothos is a common household plant and common in gift baskets. Keep away from curious puppies and kittens that may want to teeth on this plant. The leaves contain a substance that causes irritation and swelling of the mouth and intestinal tract.



## 13. Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemums are another popular plant. Chrysanthemums contain the compound, pyrethrum, which is an insecticide. These plants are often planted along side garden vegetables and plants to deter insects, but when ingested by our pets, can cause drooling, vomiting, depression, tremors and loss of coordination.





## 14. English Ivy

English Ivy often times covers walls and fences and is also used in flower arrangements and gift baskets. This delicate ivy contains triterpenoid saponins and when your pet decides to chew on this plant can cause vomiting, stomach pain, drooling and diarrhea.



## 14. Schefflera

The Schefflera is another common household plant that does not mix with pets. The leaves contain calcium oxalate crystals and cause oral irritation, intense burning of the mouth, lips and tongue, excessive drooling, difficulty in swallowing and vomiting.



## 16. Peace Lily

A favorite plant of mine is the Peace Lily. This plant is often used for weddings, funerals and gifts but can be hazardous for your pet. This plant also contains the calcium oxalate crystals that burn the mouth and intestinal tract.



## 17. Yew

The toxic component in the Yew is taxine. Taxine causes muscle tremors, difficulty in breathing, seizures and can result in acute heart failure and sudden death.



## 18. Marijuana

I mention marijuana because I see this toxicity more than all the above. In small dogs, breathing in the smoke can cause problems. Marijuana causes disorientation, tremors, weakness, depression, difficulty in breathing, incoordination and some times hyper excitation. Sometimes the dog will ingest the marijuana when baked in the “magic brownies”. Now we not only have the marijuana to deal with, but the added chocolate toxicity.

