



PLANT POISONING

The danger of plant poisoning is small in relation to the other dangers of life. Records from poison control centers across the United States record few plant poisoning deaths in any year. However, as with other dangerous materials, precautions and safety must be taught, especially to young children.

PROTECTING YOUNG CHILDREN

Just as young children are taught the dangers of automobiles, fire, electricity, rattlesnakes, bees, and household chemical products, they must be taught that they cannot eat leaves, berries, flowers, or other plant parts not served to them as food. Small children, because of their curiosity, commonly put whatever they can reach into their mouths. It is the parent's responsibility to protect children against poisoning by teaching them not to eat or drink medicines, insecticides, cleaning solvents, shoe polish—and plants.

The wrong approach is to consider removing all plants which might be dangerous if eaten by a toddler. Everyone should realize that many very commonly seen plants are dangerous to eat.

COMMON POISONOUS PLANTS

Leaves of such common plants as tomatoes, potatoes, peaches, cherries, and rhubarb are considered dangerous if eaten. Many plants used in landscaping, such as daffodils, holly, lily-of-the-valley, English ivy, primrose, and rhododendrons, cause sickness or possibly death if eaten in large enough amounts.

Lists of plants which are known to be dangerous are never complete. The list given below may not include the plant involved in a particular emergency. In addition, only seeds, roots,

berries, or flowers may be seen at the time of the emergency, making plant identification very difficult. Further, plants are often more dangerous at one stage of growth than another. Similarly, there are biological differences in people—age, weight, health, and sensitivity to the plant material they are touching, inhaling, chewing, or swallowing.

Therefore, lists of potentially poisonous plants are useful only as indicators. They serve only to warn us that common plants in our surroundings may be dangerous if we are careless enough to eat them. The degree of danger of most plants is really not known. Of the thousands of common plants, relatively few taste good enough to be chosen as food.

Some wild plants are safe to eat. Hikers, backpackers, and others who travel in the wilderness may want to learn what these plants are.

Here is a brief list of plants considered to be poisonous. However, it is not known how much plant material is dangerous, nor is it always known precisely what plant part or stage of growth is dangerous. *Moreover, this list does not imply that any plant not on the list is safe.*

Flowering Plants

Autumn Crocus
Bleeding Heart
Daffodil
Foxglove
Iris
Larkspur
Lilly-of-the-Valley
Monkshood
Primrose
Star-of-Bethlehem
Sweet Pea

House Plants

Amaryllis
 Caladium
 Dieffenbachia

Shrubs and Vines

Azalea
 Daphne
 English Ivy
 Laurel
 Magnolia
 Rhododendron
 Wisteria
 Yew

Trees

Black Locust
 Cherries (wild and cultivated)
 Elderberry
 Goldenchain
 Holly
 Horsechestnut
 Oak
 Peach

Garden Plants

Rhubarb
 Potato
 Tomato

Wild Plants

Buttercup
 Jimson Weed (thorn apple)
 Nightshade
 Poison Hemlock
 Skunk Cabbage
 Water Hemlock

FIRST AID IN EMERGENCIES

In spite of education and precautions, accidents still happen. *Getting medical advice is always wise, especially if nothing was done about the situation until symptoms of sickness appear.*

Call the Poison Control Center for advice or take the patient to a doctor or hospital emergency room. Always take along the suspected plant material for examination.

Flowers and fruit or seeds are particularly useful in identifying plants. If possible take an entire plant, pulling or digging the root if needed. The more material you take, the easier it will be to identify the plant.

More often the emergency involves seeing a child chewing or just putting questionable plant material into his mouth. *If you suspect the plant of being hazardous, force the child (or adult) to vomit.* Syrup of ipecac may be given to cause vomiting. It is available at all drug stores and at all 7-11 stores in Washington State. This will eliminate the emergency if vomiting is induced soon after the plant material is eaten.

FURTHER READING

Poisonous Plants

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