



Garden Clubs are GREAT Places to Grow

MEDICINE, POISON OR JUST A TASTY TREAT?

The difference may be in the amount consumed.



For centuries, various species of azalea and rhododendron were the curse of herdsman all over the world. Cattle, sheep, and goats died from eating the leaves. Yet, given in tiny doses, the same leaves can be effective in lowering blood pressure.

There are several potentially poisonous common house plants. Many are not fatal but can cause severe digestive problems, pain and discomfort. The most toxic plant parts are listed below and these should be avoided. Plants marked with an * are potentially fatal.

- Azalea, *Rhododendron* (some species), all parts
- Bird of Paradise, *Strelitzia reginae*, pods & seeds
- Caladium (some species), all parts
- Cacti (avoid eating any cacti with white or colored sap)
- Crown of Thorns, *Euphorbia milii*, sap
- Cyclamen, *Cyclamen persicum*, bulb
- *Dieffenbachia, *Dieffenbachia* (some species), all parts
- *Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, all parts
- English Ivy, *Hedera helix*, leaves
- Euphorbia (all species), includes Pencil tree and milk bush, sap
- Hyacinth, *Hyacinth orientalis*, bulb;
- Hydrangea, *Hydrangea* (some species), all parts
- Iris, *Iris* spp. leaves and rhizomes
- *Jerusalem Cherry, *Solanum pseudocapsicum*, all parts, unripe fruit
- Lily (many members of the Lily family are potentially poisonous. Avoid eating bulbs unless identified as non-toxic)
- *Mistletoe, *Phoradendron serotinum*, berries
- *Oleander, *Nerium oleander*, leaves twigs, flowers
- Philodendron, *Philodendron* (some species)
- *Rosary Pea, *Abrus precatorius*, seeds (used in jewelry)
- Rubber Tree, *Ficus elastica*, sap
- Sedum, *Sedum* (some species), all parts

Toxic Plants Found in Our Vegetable Gardens

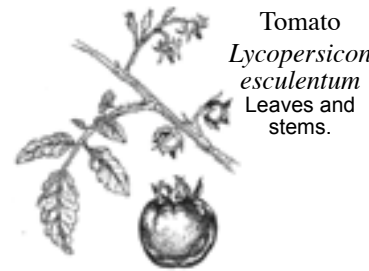
Eating the wrong part of a vegetable, fruit or herb at the wrong time can be a mistake.

VEGETABLES & HERBS

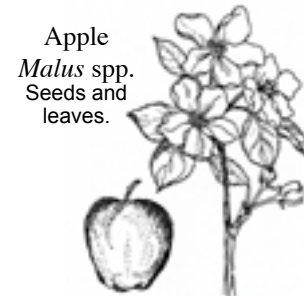
- Asparagus - Berries and eating green shoots raw may cause dermatitis.
- Eggplant - All but fruit.
- Elderberry - All parts.
- Fava Bean - Raw or half cooked beans.
- Horse Bean - Raw or half cooked beans.
- Potato Foliage - Eyes and sprouts can be fatal.
- Lima Bean (Java Bean) - Uncooked bean.
- Rhubarb - Leaves and uncooked stems.
- Rosemary - Leaves in some species.
- Sage - Leaves in some species.
- Tomato Plant - Leaves and stems.
- Wild Onion - (also cultivated onion) - all parts especially once they begin to decay.
- Wild Parsnip - Underground roots and foliage



Fava Bean
Vicia faba
Seeds affect only some people of Mediterranean origin.



Tomato
Lycopersicon esculentum
Leaves and stems.



Apple
Malus spp.
Seeds and leaves.



Potato
Solanum tuberosum
Green skin on tuber, leaves and stems.

FRUIT AND NUT TREES

- Apple - Seeds, leaves and bark.
- Apricot - Inner seed.
- Avocado, (Alligator Pear) - Leaves, bark seeds, pit, unripe fruit and stems.
- Balsam Pear - Seeds, outer rind of fruit.
- Black Walnut - Hulls and bark.
- Buckeye Horse - Chestnut Buds, nuts, leaves, bark, seedlings, and honey.
- Blackthorn - Fruit and bark.
- Cashew - Shells contain a poisonous oil
- Cherry (Wild and Cultivated) - twigs, leaves, seed pits.
- Fig (Ficus) - Milky sap in leaves and fruit.
- Nectarine - Seed Inner pit only.
- Oak Trees - Leaves and acorns.
- Peach - Inner seed, leaves and bark.
- Pear - Seeds, leaves and bark.
- Plums - Leaves, inner seeds and bark.
- Sorghum - All parts.
- Walnut - Outer green hulls.
- Wild Black Cherry (Choke Cherry, Rum Cherry) - All parts. Withered leaves are poisonous.

A Few Words in Closing...

There are no common characteristics of form, color, smell or taste, that distinguish a poisonous plant from a non-poisonous plant. But as a general rule of thumb, plants with a bitter taste, funny smell, milky sap or red seeds or berries may be poisonous.

There are many internet sites that provide valuable information about toxic plants. The UC Extension service also has resource material available.

And, of course, garden clubs are always great places to learn about what's going on in the garden.

M. Lucas 2004

California Garden Clubs, Inc.



Grow With Us

Extremely Toxic

- Castorbean
- Foxglove
- Water Hemlock
- Poison Hemlock
- Tree tobacco
- Pigweed
- Jimsonweed
- Cherry
- Yew
- Red Maple
- Easter Lily
- Oleander
- Rosary Pea



Moderately Toxic

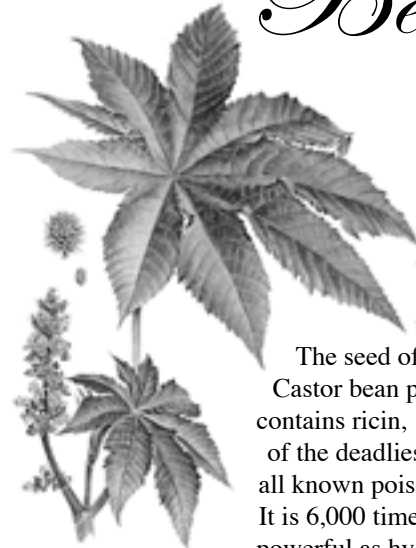
- Dumbcane (Aroid Family)
- Bulbs
- Lupine
- Lantana
- Agapanthus
- Wisteria
- Holly
- Nightshades
- Naked-lady lily
- Larkspur
- Mexican Elderberry
- Sweet pea
- Euonymus
- Milkweed
- Horsetail
- Privet
- Spurges
- Lantana
- Rue: Herb-of-grace
- Black Walnut
- Red Oak
- Arum



Lupine sp.
Easily identified
by its distinctive
leaves.



Beautiful...
but Deadly



Castor Bean
Ricinus communis

The seed of the Castor bean plant contains ricin, one of the deadliest of all known poisons. It is 6,000 times as powerful as hydrogen cyanide. It is a poison of choice used by modern terrorists.



English Ivy
Hedera helix
All parts of the ivy plant are toxic. Children have been poisoned by the berries. Vine clippings can sicken animals.

Most people are vaguely aware that some plants can be poisonous. In fact, some of Nature's most beautiful plants are quite deadly. A surprisingly large number of the world's plants contain toxic chemicals that can kill any creature that eats enough of them. Scientists are not certain why plants manufacture these substances. They seem to play no part in the growing and fruiting process. The toxins are an incidental by-product of that process, but have become a protection against predators. Some plants such as eucalyptus can even poison the soil around them to either kill or retard all nearby growth that could compete for precious nutrients.

Toxic effects of plants vary with the species, health status, and age of the individual(s). Time of year, humidity, growth conditions, growth stage, and other factors also play a role in the hazards posed by toxic plants.

Some plants are known by different names. If you are ever in doubt, you should check with your local nursery.

For instance calendula has a variety of names such as "Pot Marigold" and "Marsh Marigold". It is a deadly plant and has killed pets.