



Out in the open: Top 4 outdoor plants poisonous to dogs and cats

As spring and summer finally approach, so do the risks of dogs and cats being accidentally poisoned by potentially dangerous plants. According to the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center outdoor and indoor plants represented almost 5% of the calls to ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center in 2015. Here's what you need to know to keep your pets safe.

SAGO PALM

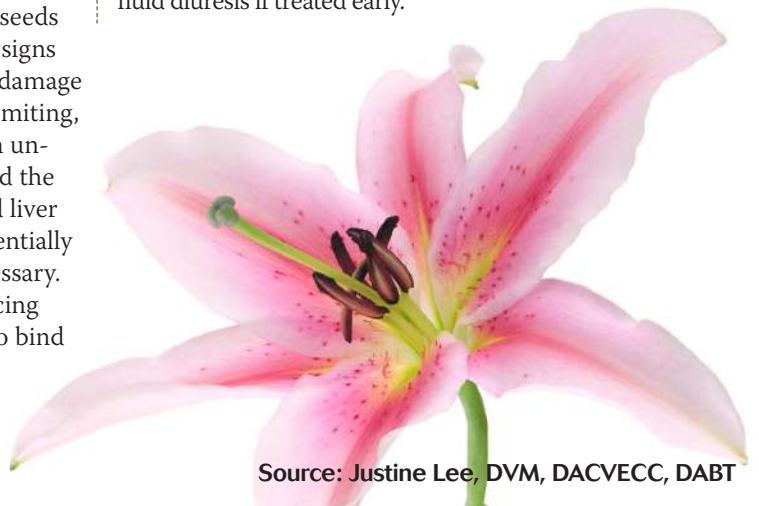
This outdoor landscaping plant is often found growing in the hot, humid temperatures of the southern United States. This plant can also be found in the house



as small bonsai plants or houseplants. All parts of the plant are poisonous, with the seed being the most dangerous. Unfortunately, as little as one to two seeds of a female sago palm plant can result in clinical signs of poisoning.¹ Exposure to sago palm can cause damage to the gastrointestinal tract (seen as anorexia, vomiting, diarrhea), the central nervous system (seen as an unsteady wobbly walk, tremors, seizures, coma) and the liver (seen as jaundice, black tarry stool, elevated liver enzyme activities).¹ This plant is considered potentially deadly in dogs, and immediate treatment is necessary. That treatment includes decontamination (inducing vomiting and administering activated charcoal to bind the poison) and hospitalization for intravenous fluids and administration of liver protectants, medication and supportive care.¹

LILIES

These beauties lurk outside, but you also might bring them into the house as fresh cut flowers from the garden or from a florist bouquet. Unfortunately, "true" lilies (from *Lilium* and *Hermercallis* species) are deadly to cats.² Examples of true lilies include the common Easter, tiger, Japanese show, stargazer, rubrum and day lily. As little as two to three leaves or petals (even the pollen or water from the vase) can be deadly to cats, resulting in severe acute kidney injury.² Clinical signs of poisoning include vomiting, not eating, abnormal urination, lethargy and progressive kidney damage. Treatment includes aggressive decontamination (inducing vomiting, which can only be safely done by a veterinarian; administering activated charcoal to bind the poison), anti-vomiting medication and aggressive intravenous fluids and hospitalization for 48 hours for successful treatment. Recent studies have found a 100% survival rate with aggressive decontamination and fluid diuresis if treated early.³



Source: Justine Lee, DVM, DACVECC, DABT



CARDIAC GLYCOSIDE-CONTAINING PLANTS

Several types of plants contain chemicals called cardiac glycosides, including dogbane, foxglove, milkweed, kalanchoe, lily of the valley and oleander.⁴ In fact, these plants led to the discovery of important heart medications that are used in both human and veterinary medicine.



Unfortunately, when accidentally ingested by dogs or cats, these glycoside-containing plants can potential result in life-threatening poisoning.

Signs of poisoning include gastrointestinal signs (nausea, drooling, vomiting), profound cardiovascular signs (a very slow or rapid heart rate, arrhythmias), electrolyte abnormalities or central nervous system signs (dilated pupils, tremors, seizures).⁴ Treatment includes decontamination, if appropriate, along with intravenous fluids, heart and blood pressure monitoring, heart medications and supportive care.

BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

While blue-green algae is a rare plant poisoning in dogs, it can be fatal with just a few licks. Cyanobacteria (known as blue-green algae), are microscopic bacteria that are found growing on top of freshwater or brackish pools of water.⁵⁻⁷ This type of algae blossoms during humid, hot summer conditions.⁵⁻⁷ Thankfully, most algae blooms are nontoxic; however, the toxic type is impossible to identify without analysis by a diagnostic laboratory.



Cyanobacteria contains the toxins microcystins and anatoxins that can result in severe liver failure and neurologic signs, resulting in acute death within hours of exposure.⁵⁻⁷ As a result, always be careful to keep your pets away from any water with algae on top. Even with aggressive treatment (including fluid therapy, plasma transfusions, liver support, dextrose supplementation and anti-seizure medication, etc.),⁵⁻⁷ the prognosis is grave to poor with this terrible toxicant.

When in doubt, if you suspect your cat or dog got into a poisonous plant, contact the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at **888-426-4435**. You can also download their free app. While most plant ingestions in dogs and cats typically just result in mild gastrointestinal signs, some plant ingestions can be deadly without treatment and immediate attention by a veterinarian is important for best outcome.

References

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