

## Take Note: Can Cause Liver Failure and Death Within Hours

Induces poisoning in dogs and cats faster than you'd imagine. In one plant, all parts are poisonous and potentially deadly - especially the seeds. So if you suspect anything, please seek immediate veterinary treatment. Don't dilly dally or you'll regret it for years.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

### STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Spring has sprung, and that means it's time to give some thought to the potential pet-related hazards posed by the greenery you're planning to plant in your garden or decorate your home with
- Common outdoor plants that cause poisoning in dogs and cats include the sago palm, lilies, plants containing cardiac glycosides and blue-green algae
- Indoors, common toxic plants include plants from the Araceae family, plants containing either soluble or insoluble calcium oxalates, kalanchoe, the corn plant/dragon tree and spring flower bulbs
- If you suspect or know your pet has sampled a potentially poisonous plant, err on the side of caution by calling your vet, the local emergency animal hospital or a 24/7 pet poison hotline

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Tis the blooming season, which means it's time for a quick review of which plants are pet-friendly, and which you should steer clear of if you have furry family members at home.

Veterinary journal dvm360 and Dr. Justine Lee have compiled a list of the most common indoor and outdoor plants poisonous to dogs and cats.<sup>1</sup>

### Top 4 Outdoor Plants Poisonous to Pets

1. **Sago palm** — The sago is a landscaping palm commonly found in warm, humid climates. It's also sometimes found indoors as a small bonsai or houseplant. All parts of this palm are poisonous, and especially the seeds. Just one to two seeds from a female sago can cause symptoms of poisoning in pets.

This plant can damage your dog's or cat's GI tract (signs are loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea), central nervous system (unsteady gait, tremors, seizure, even coma) and liver (jaundice, black tarry stool).

The sago is potentially deadly, so if your pet (most often a dog) ingests any part of it, you must seek immediate veterinary treatment.

Your pet will need to be hospitalized for decontamination (inducing vomiting, which can only be safely done

by a veterinarian, and administering activated charcoal to bind the poison), IV fluids, administration of necessary medications and supportive care.

2. **Lilies** — Lilies from the liliaceae and hemerocallis species (called “true” lilies) are deadly to kitties. These include the Easter, tiger, Japanese show, stargazer, rubrum and day lily.

Just two to three leaves or petals, or even the pollen or water from a vase holding the lilies, can result in severe acute kidney failure and death.

Signs of poisoning include vomiting, lack of appetite, abnormal urination, lethargy and progressive kidney damage. Treatment typically involves a 48-hour hospital stay, aggressive decontamination, anti-vomiting meds and IV fluids.

With immediate treatment, especially aggressive decontamination and IV fluids, the vast majority of cats can survive this type of poisoning.

3. **Plants containing cardiac glycosides** — This includes dogbane, foxglove, milkweed, kalanchoe, lily of the valley and oleander. The good news is these plants have been instrumental in the development of life-saving heart medications for both humans and animals.

The bad news is accidental ingestion of these substances by a cat or dog can be life-threatening.

Signs of poisoning involve the gastrointestinal (GI) tract (drooling, vomiting), the cardiovascular system (very slow or rapid heart rate, arrhythmia), electrolyte imbalances (e.g., high potassium levels) and central nervous system signs (dilated pupils, tremors, seizures).

Immediate veterinary intervention is required, and will include decontamination, IV fluids, heart and blood pressure monitoring, heart medications and supportive care.

4. **Blue-green algae** — Blue-green algae poisoning is fortunately rare, but just a tiny amount (a few licks) can be fatal. Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, grow on top of freshwater or brackish bodies of water. Typically, the algae blossoms during warm, humid weather.

The toxins found in cyanobacteria can cause severe liver failure and neurologic signs and can cause death within a matter of hours. Keep your pet away from any water with algae floating on it, because it's impossible to know if it's the deadly kind without laboratory analysis.

Sadly, even with aggressive treatment including IV fluids, blood transfusions and appropriate medications, the prognosis is poor for pets who consume blue-green algae.

## Top 5 Indoor Plants to Keep Out of Reach of Your Pet

1. **Plants from the Araceae family** — These include the philodendron, pothos, peace lily, calla lily, dumb cane, arrowhead vine, mother-in-law's tongue, sweetheart vine, devil's ivy, umbrella plant and elephant ear.

These are common houseplants and contain insoluble calcium oxalate crystals. If your pet chews on one of them, it can cause severe mouth pain. Signs your dog or cat may have sampled one of these plants include drooling, pawing at the mouth, a swollen muzzle or lips and occasionally, vomiting.

Fortunately, these plants aren't considered deadly, so if your pet chews one, give him some milk or yogurt to minimize damage from the calcium oxalate crystals. Keep a close watch on him, and if his symptoms don't subside or get worse, call your veterinarian.

2. **English shamrock, rhubarb (leaves) and tropical star fruit** — These houseplants contain soluble calcium oxalates, which are very different from insoluble calcium oxalate plants.

Fortunately, pet poisonings involving these plants are rare, but when it happens it's a life-threatening emergency because ingestion causes blood calcium levels to plummet, and can also cause calcium oxalate crystals to form in the kidneys, causing acute kidney failure.

Signs of poisoning include drooling, lack of appetite, vomiting, lethargy, tremors and abnormal urination. If you know or suspect your pet has ingested one of these plants, call your veterinarian right away. Blood tests and intravenous (IV) fluids will be necessary.

3. **Kalanchoe** — Kalanchoe plants are absolutely beautiful but unfortunately, they are also absolutely deadly if your dog or cat nibbles on one because they contain cardiac glycosides.

Signs of poisoning involve the gastrointestinal (GI) tract (drooling, vomiting), the cardiovascular system (very slow or rapid heart rate, arrhythmia), electrolyte imbalances (e.g., high potassium levels) and central nervous system signs (dilated pupils, tremors, seizures).

Immediate veterinary intervention is required, and will include decontamination, IV fluids, heart and blood pressure monitoring, heart medications and supportive care.

4. **Corn plant/dragon tree** — Corn plants contain saponins, which are anti-nutrients that interfere with absorption of essential nutrients. If your pet should sample a corn plant, it can cause dilated pupils, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea and lethargy. This is a much more benign type of poisoning than some others, but you'll still want to keep this plant out of your dog's or cat's reach.
5. **Spring flowers** — Certain spring bulbs, including daffodils, hyacinth and tulips, can cause mild vomiting or diarrhea in pets who ingest them. If a massive amount of bulbs are eaten, they can actually cause an obstruction in your pet's stomach or intestines. Complications can include an elevated heart and respiration rate, and much less commonly, a drop in blood pressure and tremors or seizures.

The greens and flowers themselves are generally thought to be safe if your dog or cat nibbles on them — it's the bulbs that pose the greatest danger. If your pet ingests the bulbs, he'll be treated with decontamination, fluid therapy and anti-vomiting meds if necessary.

Remember, even if you only suspect your pet has sampled a toxic plant, it's better to be safe than sorry. Contact your veterinarian, the nearest emergency animal hospital, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435, or the Pet Poison Helpline at 855-764-7661.

## Sources and References

[dvm360, May 26, 2016](#)

<sup>1</sup> [dvm360, May 26, 2016](#)

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