

# PREVENT POISONING FROM PLANTS

Information from the  
**Virginia Poison Center**  
Richmond, VA



Ingestion of a plant is one of the most common poisonings reported to the American Association of Poison Control Centers. In 2001, more than 105,000 incidents of plant exposures were reported to U.S. poison centers. Most cases happened to children five years old and younger. You can help to prevent small children from being exposed to poisonous plants by following these common-sense steps:

First, IDENTIFY all houseplants. If someone eats a leaf or bloom from a plant, it will be important to know the name of the plant so the correct treatment can be given. Get a greenhouse or garden shop to help you find the common and scientific names for all plants in your home. Or look for this information in a plant reference book with clear photographs. Put a label with each plant's name(s) in or on the pot. When you buy plants, be sure to write their names down, and label the pot as soon as you get them home.

Next, find out if any of your plants are considered toxic, or poisonous. You can look up this information in books, or call the poison center at 1 (800) 222-1222 for assistance. Remember that even a non-poisonous plant can be a problem, causing a child to choke if pieces of it are swallowed.

Identifying outdoor plants is also important, but more difficult because of the much larger variety in the average yard. Try to determine the names of most of the plants in the areas where children may play. A garden center, the county's cooperative extension agent or a knowledgeable neighbor may be able to offer information.

If you have young children in your home, you should discard all plants considered poisonous. This is the best way to prevent a problem!

Closely supervise children outdoors, and teach them to never put berries or other plant parts into their mouths. Store packages of seeds and bulbs separately from foods, and well out of reach. Many plant bulbs are very poisonous.

In rainy weather, be alert for mushrooms, which can spring up overnight. Eating even small amounts of some mushrooms can be very harmful. Remove all wild mushrooms daily --- before allowing small children into the yard.

**IF YOU SUSPECT THAT EVEN A SMALL PIECE OF A PLANT MAY HAVE BEEN INGESTED, CALL THE POISON CENTER IMMEDIATELY.**

The experts there will tell you what steps to take, and most of the time you can safely treat the patient without needing to go to the doctor's office.

Do NOT wait to see if the child gets sick... some plants cause delayed or unseen damage.

Do NOT give old-fashioned remedies such as milk, and do NOT try to cause vomiting.

Do NOT assume that a plant must be safe for children if birds and animals can eat it without harm.

**POISONOUS PLANTS**

**This is a list of SOME poisonous plants. Consult the poison center for ALL ingestions.**

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Botanical Name</b>	<b>Poisonous Part(s)</b>
Azalea	<i>Rhododendron</i> species	All parts
Bittersweet	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Leaves, fruit
Choke cherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	Seed, leaves, bark
Crocus	<i>Colchicum autumnale</i>	All parts, esp. bulb
Cyclamen	<i>Cyclamen</i> species	Tuber, root
Daffodil	<i>Narcissus</i> species	All parts, esp. bulb
Nightshade	<i>Atropa belladonna</i>	All parts, esp. berry
Dumb cane	<i>Dieffenbachia</i> species	All parts
English ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	Leaves, berry
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Leaves, seed
Holly	<i>Ilex</i> species	Leaves, berry
Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea</i> species	Leaves, roots
Iris	<i>Iris missouriensis</i>	Bulb, leaves, stem
Jequirity bean	<i>Abrus precatorius</i>	All parts, esp. seed
Jimsonweed	<i>Datura stromonium</i>	All parts, esp. seed
Lily of the valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>	All parts
Mistletoe	<i>Phoradendron flavescens</i>	All parts, esp. berry
Pokeweed	<i>Phytolacca americana</i>	All parts, esp. root
Rhubarb	<i>Rheum rhabarbarum</i>	Leaves
Yew	<i>Taxus</i> species	All parts



The experts at the Virginia Poison Center are available twenty-four hours daily to provide fast treatment advice in case of poisoning. There's never a charge for our confidential services.

