

## Companion Animal Toxicities

### Toxic Plants

The first year is a potentially perilous one for puppies and kittens. They experiment with placing anything they can reach into their mouths. In a study headed by Melanie Morgan 122 cats were filmed and 36% of them were seen to eat house hold plants when they were left unattended. Symptoms such as seizures, coma, diarrhoea, vomiting, hyper-salivation, severe tissue swelling, symptoms of liver failure and heart failure are common. Some plants are so toxic that the Inca Indians used to use them on the tips of their arrows to paralyse prey. So what are the common offenders? Well there are many, the common raisin for example, innocuous to humans, is toxic to dogs. Excessive drinking may be the first sign seen as a result of raisin toxicity; this is usually as a result of ricin induced kidney failure. The top ten most common toxicities in dogs are listed in the table below.

- ▶ Human Medications
- ▶ Insecticides
- ▶ People Food
- ▶ Rodenticides
- ▶ Veterinary Medications
- ▶ Plants
- ▶ Chemical Hazards
- ▶ Household Cleaners
- ▶ Heavy Metals
- ▶ Fertilizer

This is the first of a series of educational article on pet toxins and will deal with just the house plants that are toxic to pets.

Toxic plants can be grouped according to where they have an effect on the body.

Plants that cause tissue damage include Schefflera, Epipremnum, Brassia, Caladium, Asparagus (ferns) and Dieffenbachia.



Toxic plants causing gastro intestinal signs include Cyclamen, Hydrangea, Colchicum, Hedera and Clivia.



Toxic plants that cause gastro-intestinal signs that progress to neurological signs include Brunfelsia pauciflora, Cannabis, Tulips, Narcissus, Ricinus, Compositae, Amaryllis, Aloe, Taxus and Macadamia.

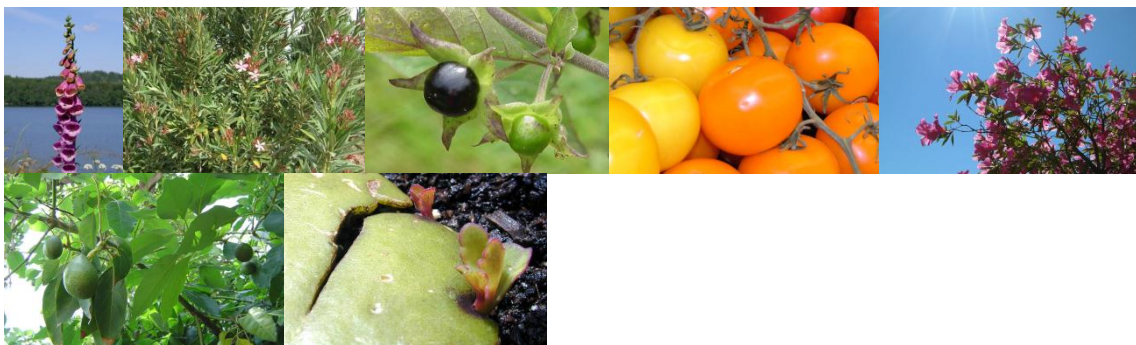


Toxic plants that cause kidney failure include Liliium, grapes, and raisins.



Toxic plants that affect the lungs include apples, apricots, plums and cherries. It is the leaves and stems of these plants that are toxic because they contain prussic acid and hydro-cyanide.

Toxic plants that affect the heart include Digitalis, Nerium, Atropa, Lycopersicon, Azalea, Rhododendron, Persea and Kalanchoe.



Toxic plants that cause liver failure include Senecio, Crotalaria, Cycas, Melia azedarach, Blue green algae, Citrus oils including tea tree oil and Gyromitrin, Amantine and Phalloidin mushrooms.



Most plant toxicities are diagnosed according to clinical signs and a history of contact with the offending plant. There are no available antidotes and therefore treatment is decontamination and symptomatic. Some plant toxicities, such as Cycad seed toxicity, may induce irreversible damage to organs, in this case liver failure, months after ingestion. The best treatment is avoidance.

(Vets for Pets)

Watch out for our next article on rodenticide and pesticide toxicities.