

Beware: The Top Five Harmful Plants for Dogs

Many plants can harm your dog if she eats a flower or chews on a stem. The ASPCA names the top five.

Lilies, azaleas, oleander, sago palm and castor bean are the five most dangerous plants to companion animals, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and awareness is the key to avoiding accidental ingestion.

As part of National Poison Prevention Week, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center issued the following information on each type of plant:

1. Lilies rank as the No. 1 dangerous plant. Forty-five percent of its harmful plant ingestion calls involve lilies. They are common in gardens and floral bouquets. The part of the lily that is poison is unknown, but small amounts can cause kidney damage, especially in cats.
2. Azaleas are found in the wood and mountain regions of the eastern and western U.S. and appear commonly in landscaping. Azaleas contain grayanotoxins, which can cause vomiting, drooling, diarrhea, weakness and central nervous system depression. Severe azalea poisoning can lead to coma and death from collapse of the cardiovascular system.
3. Oleander is a common landscaping plant. All parts of the flower are considered toxic. It contains cardiac glycosides that cause gastrointestinal tract irritation, abnormal cardiac function, hypothermia and death.
4. Sago palm is a popular ornamental plant that is found in the southern U.S. All parts of the plant are considered toxic, but the seeds have the most toxins. Ingestion can produce vomiting, diarrhea, depression, seizure and liver failure.
5. Castor Bean, another popular ornamental plant, is found in the southern U.S. The seeds, leaves and stem of the plant contain ricin, a toxic protein that produces abdominal pain, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst, weakness and loss of appetite. Severe cases lead to dehydration, muscle twitching, tremors, seizures, coma and death.

The ASPCA website contains a complete list of plants that are not pet-friendly.