

# Guide to Poisonous Plants

By Heather Thomas, Illustrations by Chiara Thomas

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## What You Don't Know... May Kill Your Child!

It is difficult to believe that many of the colorful fruits and blossoms of some of the most common plants growing around our homes may be deadly as well as beautiful.

John M. Kingsbury, in his book *Poisonous Plants of the United States & Canada* states that more than 700 species of plants are known to have caused death or illness, and the list is still growing. Since poisonous plants are almost everywhere, trying to get rid of all the wild ones would be like trying to bail out the ocean with a teaspoon.

Each year, an estimated 12,000 children will be poisoned by eating these plants. A Seattle study showed that 10 percent of 100 child-poisoning cases were of children who had eaten toxic plants, and that in the majority of these cases, parents had no idea that the plants were dangerous.

It is essential that children learn to leave fruits and berries alone and to keep all parts of plants out of their mouths. Learn to recognize poisonous plants in your neighborhood. In the event of suspected poisoning, call **POISON CONTROL** immediately (**800-222-1222**). While everyone does not react to poisonous substances in the same way, plant poisoning symptoms range from a deep sleep to a plain headache, vomiting, or convulsions which can lead to death.

## **PLANTS CAN POISON**

<b>HOUSE PLANTS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Caladium	all parts	nausea, burning & swelling of mouth which may make breathing difficult, death may occur
Dieffenbachia (Dumb cane), Elephant Ear	all parts	intense burning and irritation of the mouth and tongue - death may occur if base of tongue swells enough to block the air passage of the throat
English Holly	berries	in large amounts, nausea, diarrhea, nervous depression, possibly death
English Ivy	leaves, berries	stomach pains, labored breathing, coma, if large amounts eaten
Hyacinth, Narcissus, Daffodil	bulbs	nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, may be fatal
Mistletoe	all, ESPECIALLY berries	FATAL - both children & adults have died from eating the berries
Oleander	all parts	EXTREMELY POISONOUS - affects the heart, produces severe digestive upset and has caused death
Philodendron	all parts	swelling of tongue and throat, difficulty breathing, sometimes death
Poinsettia	leaves	FATAL - one leaf can kill a child
Rosary Pea, Castor Bean	seeds, foliage	FATAL - a single rosary pea seed has caused death, one or two castor bean seeds are near the lethal dose for an adult - burning in mouth, convulsions

<b>FLOWER GARDEN PLANTS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Autumn Crocus, Star-of-Bethlehem	bulbs	vomiting and nervous excitement
Bleeding Heart (Dutchman's Breeches)	foliage, roots	may be poisonous in large amounts, has proved fatal in cattle - nervous symptoms, convulsions
Daisy	all	these plants may cause minor serious illness such as vomiting or diarrhea, call poison control if ingested - juice may cause skin rash or irritation
Delphinium, Larkspur	young plants, seeds	upset stomach, twitching muscles, nervous symptoms, paralysis and death
Foxglove (digitalis)	leaves, seeds, flowers	one of the sources of the drug digitalis, used to stimulate the heart - in large amounts causes dangerously irregular heart beat and pulse, usually digestive upset and mental confusion, convulsion and death
Iris	underground stems	severe, but not usually serious, digestive upset

<b>FLOWER GARDEN PLANTS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Lily, Calla	all	juice/sap of these plants contain oxalate crystals - these needle-shaped crystals can irritate the skin, mouth, tongue & throat - can cause throat swelling, breathing difficulties, burning pain and stomach upset - juice, sap or thorns of these plants may cause skin rash or irritation
Lily-of-the-Valley	leaves, flowers	irregular heart beat and pulse, usually accompanied by digestive upset and mental confusion - large amounts can cause death like digitalis
Marigold	all	juice, sap or thorns of these plants may cause skin rash or irritation
Monkshood	all, ESPECIALLY roots	digestive upset and nervous excitement, juice in plant parts FATAL
Sweet Pea	seeds	these plants may cause minor serious illness such as vomiting or diarrhea, call poison control if ingested

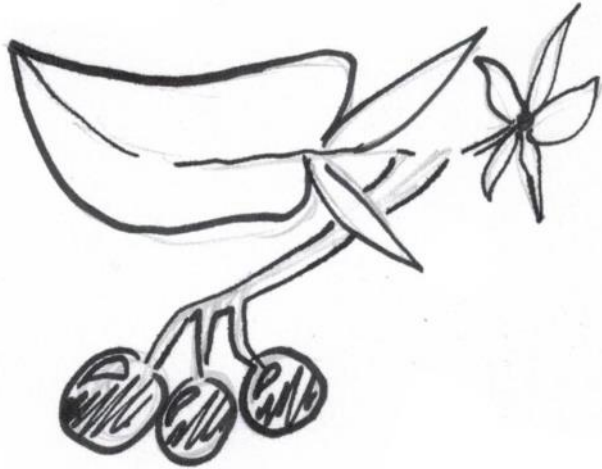
<b>VEGETABLE GARDEN PLANTS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Potato	foliage, green parts of vegetables	can create nervous disorders and stomach upset, paralysis and death
Rhubarb	leaf blade	FATAL - large amounts of raw or cooked leaves can cause convulsions, coma, followed rapidly by death
Tomato	leaves, stems	digestive upset, nervous disorders - large quantities can be FATAL

<b>ORNAMENTAL PLANTS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Daphne	leaves, bark, ESPECIALLY berries	FATAL, a few berries can kill a child - burning in mouth, convulsions, coma, death
Golden Chain	all, ESPECIALLY bean-like capsules in which seeds are suspended	severe poisoning - excitement, staggering, convulsions and coma, may be fatal
Hydrangea	buds, leaves, branches	severe digestive upset; gasping, convulsion, at times death
Jade	all	these plants may cause minor serious illness such as vomiting or diarrhea, call poison control if ingested - juice may cause skin rash or irritation
Jessamine	berries	FATAL - digestive disturbances and nervous symptoms

<b>ORNAMENTAL PLANTS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Juniper	all	these plants may cause illness such as vomiting or diarrhea, call poison control if ingested
Lantana Camara (Red Sage)	all, ESPECIALLY green berries	FATAL - affects lungs, kidneys, heart & nervous system, grown in moderate climates, florists' potted plants & ornaments
Laurels, Rhododendron, Azaleas	all parts	FATAL, produces nausea and vomiting, depression, difficulty breathing, prostration and coma
Pampas Grass	all	major toxicity - these plants may cause serious illness or death, if ingested call poison control immediately
Privet	berries, leaves	severe digestive disturbances, kidney damage, fatal
Wisteria	seeds, pods	mild to severe digestive upset, many children are poisoned by this plant
Yew	berries, foliage, bark	FATAL - foliage more toxic than berries in large amounts, death is usually sudden without warning symptoms

<b>TREES AND SHRUBS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Elderberry	shoots, leaves, bark	Causes nausea & digestive upset - children have been poisoned by using pieces of the pithy stems for blowguns
Horsechestnut, California Buckeye	all parts	nausea, twitching, muscles - sometimes paralysis and death
Myrtle	all	major toxicity - these plants may cause serious illness or death, if ingested immediately call poison control
Oaks	foliage, acorns	affects kidneys gradually, symptoms appear only after several days or weeks, takes a large amount for poisoning, children should not be allowed to chew on acorns
Wild & Cultivated Cherries, Peaches	twigs, foliage and seeds	FATAL - contains a compound that releases cyanide when eaten, gasping excitement, and prostration are common symptoms that often appear in minutes

<b>PLANTS IN YARDS, FIELDS, AND WOODS</b>	<b>TOXIC PARTS</b>	<b>SYMPTOMS</b>
Bittersweet	leaves, seeds, roots	vomiting, diarrhea, chills, convulsions, and coma
Buttercups	all parts	irritant juices may severely injure the digestive system - paralysis from large amounts
Jack-in-the-Pulpit	all parts, ESPECIALLY roots	like dumb cane, contains small needle-like crystals of calcium oxalate that cause intense irritation and burning of the mouth and tongue
Jimson Weed (Thorn Apple, Angel's Trumpet)	all parts	abnormal thirst, distorted sight, delirium, incoherence and coma, common cause of poisoning, has proved fatal
Mayapple	apple, foliage, roots	contains at least 16 active toxic principles, primarily in the roots - children often eat the apple with no ill effects, but several apples may cause diarrhea
Milkweed	all	these plants may cause minor serious illness such as vomiting or diarrhea, call poison control if ingested - juice may cause skin rash or irritation
Moonseed	berries	blue, purple color, resembling wild grapes - contains a single seed (true wild grapes contain several small seeds) - may be fatal
Morning Glory	seeds	large amounts may cause death following severe mental disturbances
Mushrooms (Western Destroying Angel, Death Cap, Green-Spored Parasol, Western Jack-O'Lantern, Flower Pot Parasol, Deadly Galerina and others)	all parts	can be fatal, one or two bites of poisonous types can cause death
Nightshade	all parts, ESPECIALLY unripe berries (green in color)	FATAL - intense digestive disturbances and nervous symptoms
Poison Hemlock	all parts	FATAL - resembles a large wild carrot or parsnip, stomach pains, vomiting, paralysis
Poodle-Dog Bush	leaves	causes blisters for weeks if comes in contact with skin
Sagebrush	all	juice, sap or thorns of these plants may cause skin rash or irritation
Silver Lupine	all, ESPECIALLY ripe seeds	varies according to amount of toxic elements in plants, breathing difficulty and death
Stinging Nettle	leaves	plant is covered in thin needle-like hairs, inject toxins when touched, itchy/bumpy skin



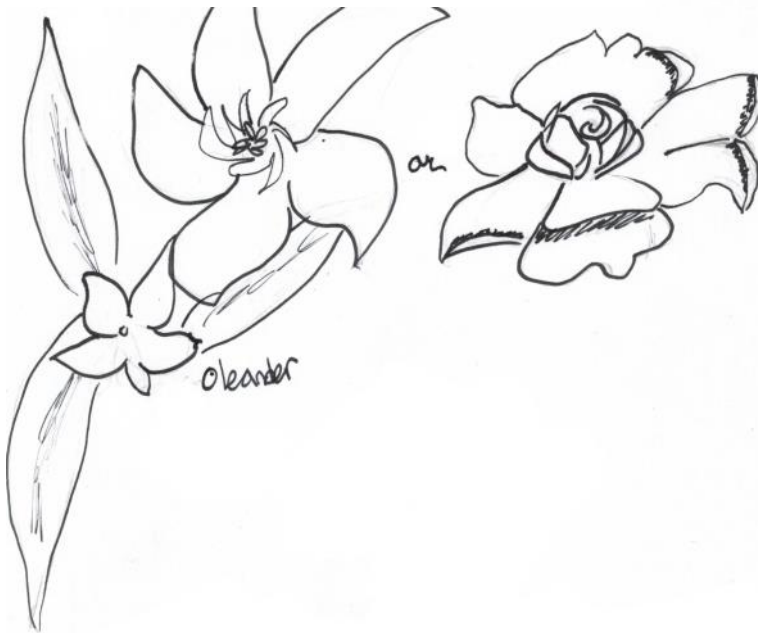
Nightshade



Buttercup



yew



oleander

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**The *Guide to Poisonous Plants* has been a long time coming for author Heather Thomas. As a three year old child Heather actually ate green Nightshade berries, mistaking them for peas fresh from the pod. She had to have her stomach pumped and happily survived. Afterwards her mother organized the original version of the guide for their hometown in Maine.**

**This updated version is larger than the original and covers plants on both the East & West Coast. The guide features original artwork by Heather's eleven year old daughter.**



**About the Author:**

San Luis Obispo based Heather Thomas is the author & creative mastermind behind sloCooking. What started as a project to keep this modern mom busy while a toddler (now 11) napped has turned into much more. For the past eleven years Thomas and her husband owned & operated Two Cooks Catering in San Luis Obispo, CA – they closed the business in 2016.

Thomas embraced the opportunity to go back to writing and re-branded her blog sloCooking in early 2017. She posts weekly recipes, tips and cooking information in addition to creating special kitchen related downloads for her subscribers.

She graduated from the University of Redlands with a degree in Creative Writing & Philosophy, and continued her education at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles with a post graduate degree in Marketing. She lives in San Luis Obispo with her husband, daughter, two cats & a Doxie mix.

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