



Overview

Hundreds of common houseplants and garden plants are toxic to dogs and cats. Toxicity ranges from mild GI irritation to acute kidney failure, cardiac arrest, or death. Many toxic plants are in everyday homes and gardens without owners realizing the risk. This guide covers the most clinically significant species.

■ If you are unsure whether a plant is toxic and your pet has ingested it, call ASPCA Animal Poison Control: (888) 426-4435 (fee may apply) and go to an ER.

Warning Signs of Plant Toxicity

■ Vomiting or diarrhea (especially if bloody)

■ Drooling or pawing at the mouth

■ Difficulty swallowing or breathing

■ Tremors or seizures

■ Sudden weakness or collapse

■ Irregular heartbeat

■ Decreased urination (kidney failure)

What's Happening in the Body

Different plants cause different types of organ damage. Lilies cause direct tubular necrosis in the kidney — even small exposures are fatal to cats within 24–72 hours without treatment. Sago palms contain cycasin, which causes liver failure. Cardiac glycosides (foxglove, oleander, lily of the valley) disrupt the heart's electrical system. Oxalate crystals (pothos, philodendron) cause intense burning and swelling of the mouth and throat.

High-Risk Plants — Know These

■ The plants below are among the most dangerous. This is not a complete list — always verify with ASPCA Poison Control or your vet.

DEADLY — Cats

- All true lilies (Easter lily, Tiger lily, Asiatic lily, Day lily) — acute kidney failure



- Sago palm — liver failure, seizures (all parts, especially seeds)
- Lily of the valley — cardiac arrhythmia
- Autumn crocus — multi-organ failure

DEADLY — Dogs

- Sago palm — liver failure (all parts)
- Xylitol-containing plants (not common but note: some nut plants)
- Autumn crocus — organ failure
- Yew — cardiac arrest (berries and foliage)

SEVERELY TOXIC — Both

- Oleander — cardiac glycosides, heart failure
- Foxglove (Digitalis) — cardiac toxicity
- Rhubarb leaves — oxalate, kidney failure
- Azalea / Rhododendron — cardiovascular and neurological
- Castor bean — ricin, multi-organ failure

MODERATELY TOXIC — Both

- Pothos, Philodendron — oral irritation, swelling
- Dumb cane (Dieffenbachia) — severe oral burning
- Aloe vera — GI upset, muscle tremors
- Snake plant / Mother-in-law's tongue — GI upset
- Peace lily — oral irritation, drooling
- Tulip / Daffodil bulbs — GI upset, cardiac effects

■ When to See a Veterinarian

■ **THIS IS A VETERINARY EMERGENCY — GO NOW.** If your pet is showing any of the signs described in this guide, stop reading and drive directly to your nearest 24-hour emergency vet. Do not wait until morning. Do not call first. **Go immediately.**

When you go, bring a photo or sample of the plant. Early decontamination (inducing vomiting) is most effective within 1–2 hours of ingestion.

■ Prevention

- Remove all true lilies from any home with cats — zero tolerance
- Check every houseplant using the ASPCA toxic plant database before purchasing
- Keep bouquets out of reach — florists commonly include toxic species like lilies



- Secure compost bins — decaying plants and fungi are often toxic
- Teach children not to let pets chew on plants

■ Final Summary

For cats especially, one lily petal can mean kidney failure within 72 hours. Never assume a small amount is safe — call Poison Control and go to an ER.

■ **THIS IS A VETERINARY EMERGENCY — GO NOW.** If your pet is showing any of the signs described in this guide, stop reading and drive directly to your nearest 24-hour emergency vet. Do not wait until morning. Do not call first. **Go immediately.**

■ **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center:** (888) 426-4435 — 24/7, fee may apply. Save this number now. [asPCA.org/apcc](https://www.asPCA.org/apcc)

■ **Pet Poison Helpline:** (855) 764-7661 — 24/7, fee may apply. [petpoisonhelpline.com](https://www.petpoisonhelpline.com)

■ Related XVC Guides:

- [Chocolate Toxicity](#) · [Xylitol Poisoning](#) · [Common Household Toxins](#)
- [When to Go to the Emergency Vet](#) · [NYC Emergency Vet Hospitals](#)



This resource may be shared for personal, educational, or non-commercial use provided it remains unmodified and Xavier's Veterinary Care is credited as the original source. Commercial reproduction or resale without written permission is prohibited. For diagnosis & prescriptions, consult a licensed veterinarian.
© 2026 Xavier's Veterinary Care.