

# Poisonous Outdoor Winter Plants

Many common outdoor plants are potentially toxic to pets. Plants have been used for their medicinal and toxic properties for thousands of years. Many of these plants have beautiful flowers and foliage or desirable growth habits. If pet owners are unaware of the potential danger, there can be tragic consequences.

**Aconitum (Monkshood, Aconite, Friar's Cap, Wolfsbane, Bear's Foot, Helmet Flower):** Toxic Part: All parts of the plant including vase water. Signs: Heart dysrhythmias and death can occur. Irritation of the mucous membranes, salivation, nausea, and vomiting are common after ingestion. Treatment: Supportive therapy.

**Arisaema (Green Dragon, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Wakerobin):** Toxic Part: Every part of the plant. Signs: Pain and swelling of the mouth, swelling of the pharynx, salivation, pawing at the mouth and drooling. Treatment: Analgesics may be necessary.

**Baptista (Wild Indigo, False Indigo, Prairie Indigo):** Toxic Part: Every part of the plant. Signs: Nausea and vomiting. Hypoventilation and respiratory arrest. Treatment: Induced vomiting or gastric lavage, followed by administration of activated charcoal. Intubation may be necessary.

**Digitalis (Foxglove, Fairy Bells, Fairy Glove):** Toxic Parts: Every part of the plant including vase water. Signs: Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, salivation, and irritation of the mucous membranes after ingestion. Pulse may become rapid and weak. Heart abnormalities may contribute to ataxia (loss of muscle coordination), hypotension (low blood pressure), shock, collapse, and death. Pupils may become dilated. Treatment: Induced vomiting or gastric lavage, followed by administration of activated charcoal and a cathartic. Treatment is the same as for digitalis overdose.

**Hemerocallis (Day Lily):** Toxic Part: Every part of the plant is toxic to

cats. Unknown as to dogs. Signs: Non-specific signs followed by acute renal (kidney) failure within 24 - 48 hours. Treatment: Gastric lavage followed by administration of activated charcoal. Fluid therapy. High mortality.

**Ipomoea (Morning Glory, Blue Star, Flying Saucers, Heavenly Blue, Pearly Gates, Wedding Bells):** Toxic Parts: The seeds formed after flowering are the source of hallucinogenic compounds. Signs: Animals may appear confused, ataxic, restless, or disoriented. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, hypotension, and mydriasis (gross dilation of the pupil) may be seen. Treatment: Gastric lavage followed by activated charcoal and a cathartic. Anticonvulsant therapy may be needed.

**Lobelia (Cardinal Flower, Asthma Flower, Eyebright, Indian Tobacco):** Toxic Parts: Every part of the plant. Signs: Nausea, vomiting, weakness, hypothermia, mydriasis, salivation, diarrhea, anorexia, shock and death. Treatment: Symptomatic and supportive.

**Nicotiana (Tobacco, Flowering Tobacco):** Toxic Parts: Every part of the plant. Contact with foliage may irritate the skin. Signs: Quick onset of excitability or hyperactivity. Salivation, vomiting, diarrhea, urination and lacrimation (active tear ducts). Muscle twitches and tremors, tachypnea (rapid -shallow breathing) followed by bradypnea (slow breathing). Tachycardia (increased heart rate), collapse, coma, and death may follow. Treatment: Gastric lavage followed by activated charcoal and a cathartic. Mechanical ventilation and oxygen therapy may be needed.

**Ranunculus (Buttercup, Crowfoot):** Toxic Part: Every part of the mature plant. The leaves of immature plants (ones that have not yet flowered) can be boiled and eaten as greens. Signs: Blisters in the mouth, mucous membrane irritation, hemorrhagic (bleeding) gastroenteritis. Treatment: Oral irritation is symptomatic. Ingestion should have gastric lavage followed by activated charcoal and a cathartic. Induced vomiting or emetics should be avoided due to mucous membrane irritants. Fluid therapy may be indicated. Analgesics

for pain may be necessary.

Pet owners should not offer any treatment on their own. If ingestion of a toxic plant is suspected, the pet owner should see their veterinarian as soon as possible. Bring the entire plant or a diagnostic portion of the plant if possible for identification.