

What's in Your Yard May Harm Your Pet

By Sarah Surritt

What can I do to make sure I'm maintaining a healthy garden environment for my dogs while also teaching them to not ruin everything?

It's very important to know what plants are harmful to animals and make sure that we prevent our pets from chewing and eating them. Keep in mind, as lovely as many plants and flowers are, some plants are poisonous to pets if ingested. Since you are new to your home and yard, I recommend you take some time to get to know the plants already there. Make sure that any of the harmful ones are not accessible and are out of reach to your pets. You may also consider getting rid of them completely. Many plants and flowers if ingested can be toxic to animals. Some may cause death. One might think a few flower petals to be harmless if swallowed, however, just a few petals, leaves, seeds or even parts of the bulb of certain plants and flowers can actually be fatal to pets!

You might be surprised to hear that some of your favorite Valentine's Day or birthday flowers or the arrangements themselves could be poisonous to your furry friends. Here are just a few examples with the symptoms for each.

- Autumn Crocus: Severe vomiting. Gastrointestinal bleeding. Liver and kidney damage. Shock.
- Azalea: Vomiting. Diarrhea. Drooling. Coma and death.
- Oleander: Severe vomiting. Abnormal heart rate. Shock. Weakness. Death.
- Lily: Highly toxic to cats. Severe kidney failure.
- Daffodil Bulbs: Severe vomiting. Diarrhea. Abdominal pain. Abnormal heart rate. Changes in respiration.
- Sago Palm: Vomiting. Bloody stools. Damage to the stomach lining. Severe liver failure. Death.
- Hyacinth/Tulip Bulbs: Severe vomiting. Diarrhea. Drooling.
- Kalanchoe: Vomiting. Diarrhea. heart arrhythmias. Neurologic signs.
- Cyclamen: Severe vomiting. Drooling. Diarrhea. Heart arrhythmias.
- Snail and slug baits: Nervousness. Hyper-excitability. Drooling. Tremors. Rapid heart rate. seizure.

NOTE: Baits & Fertilizers. Keep all pest baits, blood meal, bone meal, insecticides and fertilizers away from pets.

What should you do if your pet does reach a plant that is on the poisonous list? First, be sure to write down the number to the Pet Poison Helpline and call it immediately if you suspect that one of your pets has swallowed something poisonous: 800-213-6680. You'll want to try your best to not panic. Gather the material you suspect might be toxic. Even though you may not see any symptoms, don't hesitate to call the emergency hotline. Sometimes animals can appear normal for a few hours or days with no symptoms after being poisoned. You can access a complete list of poisonous plants for pets at <http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/>.

There are several other ways to be ready to manage such scary incidents should one occur. It's recommended by the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center that you invest in an emergency first-aid kit for your animals. Here are some suggestions on what to purchase and include in your kit:

- Fresh bottle of hydrogen peroxide 3% - to induce vomiting
- Turkey baster, bulb syringe or large medicine syringe (to administer peroxide)
- Saline eye solution
- Artificial tear gel (to lubricate eyes after flushing)
- Mild grease-cutting dishwashing liquid (for bathing your animal)
- Forceps (to remove any stingers)
- Muzzle (to protect against fear or excitement-induced biting)
- Adhesive tape
- Roll of gauze
- Latex Gloves
- Extra nylon leash
- Antibiotic ointment
- Can of your pet's favorite wet food
- Bag of your pet's favorite treats
- Pet carrier or crate

For management purposes you might put up a fence to prevent your dog or cat from getting to plants harmful to them. Some homeowners build separate dog runs or section off areas of the backyard that are 100% dog friendly.

Remember it's up to us to manage our dogs and guide them properly. Be a good leader for your dog by reinforcing their positive actions. Instead of shouting at them, take a moment to think about what you might do differently so the action won't happen again. Remove any poisonous plants immediately! You might also consider walking your dog out into the backyard on his leash if you have a particular area in which you would prefer to have him explore or eliminate.

If you find you've left your dog outside for too long and you come home to your favorite plant chewed up into pieces, your pup may be trying to tell you he's bored. Invest in some higher value chew toys, treat dispensing toys or a dog walker to break up his time alone. Be a garden guardian to your dogs and keep the poisonous plants out of your home and yard!

Keep it pawsitive!