

Safety Corner

By Roy Downs

Many poisonous plants are so common and seemingly harmless that you would not suspect their toxic qualities. The pretty mountain laurel plant, for example, was used by the Delaware Indians to make a suicide potion. Rhododendron contains a poison that has shown up in the honey made by bees that have visited these plants. The popular Christmas flower, the poinsettia, is full of an acrid burning juice so lethal that a child who has consumed as little as one leaf of the plant might die.

The most dangerous of all plants in the back yard vegetable garden is rhubarb. Its stalk, commonly used in baking and cooking, of course is not toxic, but the leaf blade contains oxalic acid which may crystallize in the kidneys, causing damage.

You can never know all the plants which may be poisonous. The only safeguard, authorities agree, is to keep all plants away from very small children who may nibble on them, and to teach children never to eat or put in their mouths any plant or berry not commonly used as food. Adults should not make "medicinal" concoctions from plants or chew on any parts of unknown plant species. If part of a dangerous plant is ingested, a physician should be contacted immediately for advice. The local poison control centre may also be a source of advice. Remember that it is not advisable to induce vomiting, for some plants contain corrosive juices that could severely damage tissue of the digestive tract during vomiting. A partial and by no means comprehensive list of plants dangerous to human health follows:

Plant	Toxic Part	Symptoms
Buttercups	All parts	Irritant juices severely injure digestive system.

Plant	Toxic Part	Symptoms
Nightshade	All parts, especially unripe berry	Fatal. Intense digestive disturbances and nervous symptoms.
Jimson Weed (Thorn Apple)	All parts	Abnormal thirst, distorted sight, delirium, incoherence and coma. Common cause of poisoning. Has proved fatal.
Laurels, Rhododendron, Azaleas	All parts	Fatal. Produces nausea and vomiting, depression, difficult breathing, prostration and coma.
Yew	Berries, Foliage	Fatal. Foliage more toxic than berries. Death is usually sudden without warning symptoms.
Plants in Wooded Areas		
Jack-in-the-Pulpit	All parts, especially roots	Contains small needle-like crystals of calcium oxalate that cause intense irritation and burning of the mouth and tongue.
Mooneeed	Berries	Blue, purple color, resembling wild grapes. Contains a single seed. (True wild grapes contain several small seeds). May be 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.
Ornamental Plants		
Wisteria	Seeds, Pods	Mild to severe digestive upset. Many children are poisoned by this plant.
Jessamine	Berries	Fatal. Digestive disturbances and nervous symptoms.
Black Locust	Bark, Sprouts, Foliage	Children have suffered nausea, weakness and depression after chewing the bark and seeds.
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.
Elderberry	All parts, especially roots	Children have been poisoned by using pieces of the pithy stems for blowguns. Nausea and digestive upset.
Twigs, Foliage		Fatal. Contains a compound that releases cyanide when eaten. Gasping, excitement, and prostration are common symptoms that often appear within minutes.
Trees and Shrubs		



RECENTLY HIRED as program supervisor-secretary with Milton Parks and Recreation Committee is Debbie Kelly. A graduate of a two year course at Mohawk College, Debbie will work in a dual role. She will act as secretary and will be involved in developing programs especially for women and girls. Programs that will be considered for the fall range include Jazznastics, fitness programs, arts and crafts activities and basket weaving. The programs offered will reflect the interest shown by the community.

(Photo by B. Burt)

Champion

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