



List of poisonous food plants and other poisonous plants

Many food plants possess toxic parts, are toxic unless processed, or are toxic at certain stages of their life. Notable examples include:

Poisonous Food Plants

Apple (*Malus domestica*). Seeds contain cyanogenic glycosides; in most species, the amount found in a single fruit won't kill a person; but it is possible to ingest enough seeds to provide a fatal dose.

Cassava (*Manihot esculenta*) Toxic in the unprocessed form.

Cherry (*Prunus cerasus*), as well as other species (*Prunus* spp) such as peach (*Prunus persica*), plum (*Prunus domestica*), almond (*Prunus dulcis*), and apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*). Leaves and seeds contain cyanogenic glycosides.

Chocolate. Contains theobromine at levels toxic to dogs and cats.

Indian pea (*Lathyrus sativus*). A legume grown in Asia and East Africa as an insurance crop for use during famines. Contains oxalyl, diaminopropionic acid (ODAP), a neurotoxin causing wasting and paralysis if eaten over a long period.

Kidney Bean or Common Bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*). Contains the lectin phytohaemagglutinin, which causes gastric upset. Toxicity removed by thorough cooking.

Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*). Contains myristicin.

Lima Bean or Butter Bean (*Phaseolus lunatus*). Raw beans contain dangerous amounts of linamarin, a cyanogenic glucoside.

Onions and Garlic. Onions and garlic (genus *Allium*) contain thiosulphate, which in high doses is toxic to dogs, cats and some other livestock.

Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*). Foliage and green-tinged tubers are toxic, containing the glycoalkaloid solanine, which develops as a result of exposure to light. Causes intense digestive disturbances, nervous symptoms, and in high enough doses, death.

Rhubarb (*Rheum rhaponticum*). Leaf blades, but not petioles, contain oxalic acid salts, causing kidney disorders, convulsions, coma. Rarely fatal.

Tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*). Foliage and vines contain alkaloid poisons which cause digestive upset and nervous excitement.

Other Poisonous Plants

Aconitum (Aconite, wolfsbane, monkshood) (*Aconitum napellus*). The poison is concentrated in the unripe seed pods and roots, but all parts are poisonous. Causes digestive upset, nervous excitement. The juice in plant parts is often fatal.

Adenium obesum. Also known as **Sabi Star**, **Kudu** or **Desert-rose**. The plant exudes a highly toxic sap which is used by the Akie and Hadza in Tanzania, to coat arrow-tips for hunting.

Autumn crocus. The bulbs are poisonous and cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea. Can be fatal.

Azalea. (*Azalea* ssp.) All parts of the plant are poisonous and cause nausea, vomiting, depression, breathing difficulties, coma. Rarely fatal.



Bittersweet Nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*). All parts are poisonous, containing solanine and causing fatigue, paralysis, convulsions, and diarrhea. Rarely fatal.

Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra cucullaria*)/Dutchman's breeches. Leaves and roots are poisonous and cause convulsions and other nervous symptoms.

Black Locust. Pods are toxic.

Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*). All parts of the plant except the ripe fruit contain the toxin glycoalkaloid solanine.

Blue-Green Algae (*Anacystis cynea* and *Anabaena circinalis*)

Angel's Trumpet (*Brugmansia*). All parts of the plant contains the tropane alkaloids scopolamine and atropine. Often fatal.

Caladium / Elephant Ear. All parts of the plant are poisonous. Symptoms are generally irritation, pain, and swelling of tissues. If the mouth or tongue swell, breathing may be fatally blocked.

Castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*). The phytotoxin is ricin, an extremely toxic water-soluble protein, which is concentrated in the seed. Also present are ricinine, an alkaloid, and an irritant oil. Causes burning in mouth and throat, convulsions, and is often fatal.

Cerbera Odollam. Colloquially known as the suicide tree, the nut contains cerberin, which stops the heart.

Cocklebur (*Xanthium* spp.). Seedlings and seeds are poisonous to livestock.

Daffodil (*Narcissus* (genus)). The bulbs are poisonous and cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Can be fatal. Stems also cause headaches, vomiting, and blurred vision.

Daphne (*Daphne* sp.). The berries (either red or yellow) are poisonous, causing burns to mouth and digestive tract, followed by coma. Often fatal.

Darnel / Poison Ryegrass (*Lolium temulentum*). The seeds and seed heads of this common garden weed may contain the alkaloids temuline and loliine. Some experts also point to the fungus ergot or fungi of the genus endoconidium, both of which grow on the seed heads of rye grasses, as an additional source of toxicity.

Datura / Nightshade. Contains the alkaloids scopolamine and atropine. Datura has been used as a hallucinogenic drug by the native peoples of the Americas and others. Incorrect dosage can lead to death.

Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*). All parts of the plant contain the toxic alkaloid atropine. The young plants and seeds are especially poisonous, causing nausea, muscle twitches, paralysis; often fatal.

Deathcamas / Black Snakeroot. All parts of the plant are poisonous, causing nausea, severe upset.

Delphinium. Contains the alkaloid delsoline. Young plants and seeds are poisonous, causing nausea, muscle twitches, paralysis, often fatal.

Doll's Eyes. Berries are highly poisonous, as well as all other parts.

Dumbcane / Dieffenbachia. All parts are poisonous, causing intense burning, irritation, and immobility of the tongue, mouth, and throat. Swelling can be severe enough to block breathing, leading to death.

Elderberry. The roots are considered poisonous and cause nausea and digestive upset.



European Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The berries cause gastroenteritis.

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). The leaves, seeds and flowers are poisonous. Contain cardiac, other steroid glycosides which cause irregular heartbeat, general digestive upset and confusion. Can be fatal.

Giant Hogweed is a phototoxic plant. Its sap can cause phytophotodermatitis (severe skin inflammations) when the skin is exposed to sunlight or to UV-rays. Initially the skin colours red and starts itching. Then blisters form as in burns within 48 hours. They form black or purplish scars, which can last several years. Hospitalisation may become necessary. Presence of minute amounts of sap in the eyes can lead to temporary or even permanent blindness.

Gifblaar (*Dichapetalum cymosum*). Well-known as a livestock poison in South Africa; this plant contains the metabolic poison fluoroacetic acid.

Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*). All parts of the plant contain the relatively simple alkaloid coniine which causes stomach pains, vomiting, and progressive paralysis of the central nervous system. Can be fatal; it is the poison that killed Socrates. Not to be confused with hemlock trees (*Tsuga* spp), which are not edible but are not nearly as toxic as the herbaceous plant *Conium*.

Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*). Carrot-like roots poisonous to livestock. henbane. Seeds and foliage poisonous.

Horse-chestnut. All parts of the plant are poisonous, causing nausea, muscle twitches, and sometimes paralysis.

Ivy. (*Hedera helix*) The leaves and berries are poisonous, causing stomach pains, laboured breathing, possible coma.

Holly. Berries cause vomiting, nausea, and diarrhea.

Hyacinth. The bulbs are poisonous, causing nausea, vomiting, gasping, convulsions, and possibly death.

Jequirity. The seed is highly poisonous.

Jerusalem Cherry. (*Solanum* spp.). All parts, especially the berries, are poisonous, causing nausea and vomiting. It is occasionally fatal, especially to children.

Jimson Weed / datura / thorn apple / stinkweed / Jamestown weed (*Datura stramonium*). All parts of the plant are poisonous, causing abnormal thirst, vision distortions, delirium, incoherence, coma. Often fatal. A significant grazing livestock poison in North America.

Laburnum. All parts, especially the seeds, are poisonous, causing excitement, staggering, convulsions, coma; occasionally fatal.

Larkspur (both *Delphinium* and *Consolida* spp. Young plants and seeds are poisonous, causing nausea, muscle twitches, paralysis. Often fatal.

Lilies. Most are poisonous, especially to cats.

Manchineel (*Hippomane mancinella*). All parts of this tree, including the fruit, contain toxic phorbol esters typical of the Euphorbiaceae.

Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*). Green portions of the plant, unripe fruit, and especially the rhizome contain the non-alkaloid toxin podophyllotoxin, which causes diarrhea, severe digestive upset.

Monkshood. All parts of the plant are highly poisonous. Ancient warriors used it to poison their enemies' water supplies. Used in the past for killing wolves. Causes burning, tingling, and numbness in the mouth, then the intestine, followed by vomiting; death by asphyxiation.

Moonseed. The fruits and seeds are poisonous, causing nausea and vomiting. Often fatal.



Mother of Millions (*Kalanchoe tubiflora*). These plants are deadly to livestock, and there is every indication that they are toxic to humans.

Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). All parts of the plants are poisonous.

Oak. (*Quercus* spp). Most species' foliage and acorns are mildly poisonous, causing digestive upset, heart trouble, contact dermatitis. Rarely fatal. Consumed, after proper processing, as a staple in many parts of the world.

Oleander (*Nerium oleander*). All parts are toxic, containing nerioside, oleandroside, saponins, and cardiac glycosides, but especially the leaves and woody stems. They cause severe digestive upset, heart trouble, contact dermatitis. Very toxic. The smoke of burning oleander can cause reactions in the lungs, and can be fatal.

Ongaonga (*Urtica ferox*). Even the lightest touch can result in a painful sting that lasts several days.

Physostigma Venenosum. The famous ordeal beans contain the alkaloid physostigmine.

Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), **Poison-oak** (*T. diversilobum*), and **Poison sumac** (*T. vernix*). All parts of these plants contain a highly irritating oil with urushiol (actually not a poison, but an allergen). Skin reactions can include blisters and rashes. It spreads readily to clothes and back again, and has a very long life. Infections can follow scratching. As stated, this is an allergen, and the toxin will not affect certain people. The smoke of burning poison ivy can cause reactions in the lungs. Can be fatal.

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca* sp.). Leaves, berries and roots contain phytolaccatoxin and phytolaccigenin. Toxin in young leaves is reduced with each boiling and draining.

Privet (*Ligustrum* sp.). Berries and leaves are poisonous. Berries contain ligustrin and syringin, which cause digestive disturbances, nervous symptoms. Can be fatal.

Rhus Lancia / African Sumac (*Rhus lancia*). Closely related to poison ivy, all parts of this tree contain low levels of a highly irritating oil with urushiol (actually not a poison, but an allergen). Skin reactions can include blisters and rashes. It spreads readily to clothes and back again, and has a very long life. Infections can follow scratching. As stated, this is an allergen, and the toxin will not affect certain people. The smoke of burning rhus lancia can cause reactions in the lungs, and can be fatal.

Stinging Tree (*Dendrocnide excelsa*, Stinging tree) and similar species. The plant is capable of inflicting a painful sting when touched. The stinging may last for several days and is exacerbated by touching, rubbing, and cold. Can be fatal.

Strychnine Tree (*Strychnos nux-vomica*). The seeds of the strychnine tree usually contain about 1.5% strychnine, an extremely bitter and deadly alkaloid. This substance throws a human into intense muscle convulsions and usually kills within three hours. The bark of the tree may also contain brucine, another dangerous chemical.

Water Hemlock (*Cicuta* sp.). The root, when freshly pulled out of the ground, is extremely poisonous and contains the toxin Cicutoxin. When dried, poison is reduced to roughly 3 to 5 percent of that when fresh.

White Snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) All parts are poisonous, causing nausea and vomiting. Often fatal. Milk from cattle that have eaten white snakeroot can sicken, or kill, humans (milk sickness).

Yellow Jessamine. All parts are poisonous, causing nausea and vomiting. Often fatal. It is possible to become ill from ingesting honey made from jessamine nectar.

Yew (*Taxus baccata*). Nearly all parts of the Yew contain toxic taxanes, except the red fleshy aril surrounding the toxic seeds. Yew seeds are especially toxic if chewed. Several people have committed suicide by ingesting leaves and seeds.

Zantedeschia Aethiopica (Lily of the Nile or Calla lily) *Zantedeschia* is highly toxic and may be fatal if eaten.