

Question: My dogs like to hang out with me when I'm gardening. Occasionally I'll see them munching on a plant. Is this a problem?

Patricia K. Santa Margarita

By Maggie King Master Gardener

Today's gardeners are smart, conscientious people. We know the importance of using products and practices that minimize any harmful effects on our environment. We naturally avoid chemicals that could harm our precious pets. It does not come as naturally, however, to see our plants as potential hazards, but there are several common garden plants that can cause illness and even death to our pets if ingested.

It is commonly known that eating any part of the **oleander** plant can be fatal, but who would suspect an innocent looking lily plant of causing kidney damage in cats? Could the bulb of your beautiful Christmas **amaryllis** really cause vomiting, depression, anorexia and tremors? **Tulip** and **narcissus** bulbs can cause intense gastrointestinal problems, convulsions and heart abnormalities. Even the common and popular **chrysanthemum** can cause gastrointestinal problems and loss of coordination if enough of the plant is eaten.

Some popular plants that can be dangerous for your pets include clematis, helleborus, English ivy, Queen Anne's lace, holly and elephant ears.

We have mentioned just a few of the potentially harmful plants. The ASPCA has an excellent web site, <http://www.ASPCA.org>. It contains a wealth of information on the care of your furry companion, including lists of plants, household items, garden products and common foods that can be harmful to your pet. They have a list of the seventeen most common plants that are poisonous to animals-<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/poison-control/17-common-poisonous-plants.aspx>.

Hopefully your pets have better things to do than feed on your garden, but every animal, just like every human, has its own individual palate. If you do spot Fido swallowing your azalea plant, either check with your veterinarian or call the ASPCA Poison Control Center at **(888) 426-4435**. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As always, the Master Gardeners are happy to answer your gardening questions.

Photo by Cheryl A. Reynolds

