

Respect for Poisonous Plants in the Landscape

Poisonous plants are termed that way as they can inflict maladies such as allergic effects of itchy, irritated eyes, difficulty breathing, rashes or even coma if you come in contact with or ingest them. These plants and or their properties have been used throughout the ages for both medicine and poison.

To be poisoned by a plant or its parts, one would have to ingest the roots, seeds, bark, flowers, leaves or sap, touch any of these same parts, or inhale pollen from blooming flowers or smoke if the plant is burned.



Poinsettia Plants: *Contrary to popular belief, these plants are not poisonous.* If this plant is ingested, it may result in vomiting, stomach ache or diarrhea. Anything more severe than those symptoms are not to be expected.

If ingested, rinse mouth with water. If the sap gets on the skin, wash areas affected with soap and water. Plant contact may cause contact dermatitis, a slightly itchy rash.

There are some folks that may be more sensitive than others to this plant, so seek medical attention right away if a reaction is severe.



Brazilian Pepper Tree (*Schinus terebintifolius*) This exotic invader is a cousin to Poison Ivy. During the time it blooms, some folks may experience difficulty breathing, irritation of the eyes and the face may become inflamed. It has small red berries that attract and in turn are spread by birds, although if ingested by humans gastric upset and vomiting may occur.



Sago (*Cycas revoluta*) A very popular local landscape plant that appears to be a palm, yet it is not. It is a Cycad, a different type of plant. The female Sago produces large red

seeds that when ingested, usually cause severe gastric difficulties, paralysis or even induce a comatose state. In canines, these seeds cause liver failure and death, so keep your dogs away from these plants.



Oleander (*Nerium oleander*) This beautiful flowering plant can be groomed to be a shrub or tree and is a good choice for a natural screen or buffer. It should be used in areas that do not have small children or animals as it is toxic.

Protect your pets: If you are unsure, contact the Hillsborough County Extension Office: 5339 County Rd. 579 Seffner, FL 33584-3334 or check the web resources below with a list of plants in your landscape to determine if they are toxic to you and your pets. A local veterinarian described the symptoms of plant poisoning in pets: Most plant poisonings are due to ingestion. Symptoms include vomiting, anorexia, yellow mucous membranes (gums, whites of the eyes) and lethargy.

If you suspect someone has been poisoned, immediately call the local Poison Control Center at (800) 222-1222. Their website contains information on poisonous plants, insects and snakes.

<http://www.poisoncentertampa.org/poisonous-plants.aspx>

If you have toxic plants in your yard, prevent children and pets from ingesting seeds, fruit, leaves or any other plant parts. Do a bit of research to prevent any potential illness if you have children or pets.

Information provided for this article : Printed Materials Referenced: Cycads, David L. Jones, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993, Guide to the Poisonous and Irritant Plants of Florida, Fl. Extension Service, Circular 441, Poisonous Plants of the Southern United States, Florida Extension Service, Poisonous Plants around the Home, University of Florida, Bulletin 175D, Web Sites Referenced:;
<http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu>, <http://www.ansci.cornell.edu> <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/poinsettia-plants/AN01481> <http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/17-common-poisonous-plants.html> Photo credits: www.total-gardening.com online.com/articles/trees.aspx, www.wilkenspalms.com/sago.htm and Stormy Holloway, Sterling Management Services, Sun City Center, FL

