

## Houseplants Poisonous to Cats and Dogs

Terra Freeman  
Urban and Commercial Horticulture Agent  
UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County

Houseplants provide a plethora of benefits to our living spaces: improved air quality, reduced stress and anxiety, beauty, and increased overall wellbeing. If you live in a household with cats or dogs, it's important to know which houseplants can be harmful to your pets if ingested. Many of our common houseplants can have adverse effects on pets, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe.



Figure 1: Golden Pothos; Credit: ASPCA

With their ability to thrive in low-light conditions and the various attractive forms in which they are available, Philodendrons make lovely houseplants; however, all parts are poisonous. They contain insoluble calcium oxalate crystals which can cause severe reactions if ingested, including intense burning and irritation of mouth, tongue and lips; drooling; vomiting; difficult and painful swallowing; and loss of speech. Golden Pothos or Devil's Ivy (*Epipremnum aureum*) is another plant species containing insoluble calcium oxalate crystals that result in the same symptoms. Fortunately, many of these plants are well-suited for hanging baskets and can easily be kept of our reach of pets.

The Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum* spp.) is a popular houseplant due to its ability to thrive in low light conditions; however, like the philodendron, it contains insoluble calcium oxalates. Peace lilies can grow rather large and are not well-suited for hanging baskets. It's best to keep them in rooms where the critters don't go, or perhaps take this one to your office where you can enjoy it without the munching concerns.



Figure 2: Peace Lily; Credit: ASPCA

Shamrock Plant (*Oxalis* spp.) contains soluble calcium oxalates which can result in kidney failure, tremors, and salivation in cats and dogs. These plants grow in a variety of colors and is a fun species to collect, just be sure to place on higher shelves that are out of reach. Begonia's are another tempting collectors' plant, growing in a variety of patterns, colors, and textures; however, they share the same toxic element as the Shamrock plants. The fleshy root system contains the most toxic parts, so keep away from diggers.



Figure 4: Rex Begonia; Credit: ASPCA



Figure 3: Shamrock Plant; Credit: ASPCA

Jade plants (*Crassula argentea*) are popular succulents due to their ability to thrive with little water; however, ingestion can cause vomiting, depression, and incoordination in cats and dogs. Another popular albeit poisonous succulent is *Kalanchoe*, which can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and abnormal heart rate (this last symptom is rare) due to the toxic element bufodienolides.



Figure 6: Jade Plant; Credit: ASPCA



Figure 5: Kalanchoe; Credit: ASPCA

Desert Rose (*Adenium obesum*) has a unique growth pattern with its bulbous base and canopy-like branches, resembling a miniature tree with gorgeous trumpet-like flowers, making it an appealing houseplant for Floridians. Enjoy the beauty of your Desert Rose placed well out of reach of your furry critters, as it contains Cardiac glycosides which can cause vomiting, depression, diarrhea, anorexia, irregular heart beat, and even death.

Other common houseplants that contain toxic elements to pets include snake plant (*Sansevieria trifasciata*), dumb cane (*Dieffenbachia amoena*), Straight-margined Dracaena (*Dracaena marginata*), Arrow-head Vine (*Syngonium podophyllum*), Elephant Ears (*Alocasia* spp.) and Flamingo Plant (*Anthurium scherzerianum*).



Figure 7: Desert Rose; Credit: ASPCA

If separation of flora and fauna is not an option in your house, there are plenty of non-poisonous plants that can co-exist peacefully with your furry critters. The following are considered non-poisonous: Peperomia (*Peperomia spp.*), Climbing Begonia (*Cissus dicolor*), Ponytail Palm (*Beaucarnea recurvata*), Goldfish Plant (*Hypocyrta nummularia*), Hindu Rope Vine (*Hoya carnosa*), Silver Pink Vine (*Hoya pubcalyx*), Lipstick Plant (*Aeschynanthus humilis*), Polka Dot Plant (*Acantha*), Earth Star (*Cryptanthus bivattus minor*), Prayer Plant (*Calathea insignis*), Purple Passion Vine (*Gynura aurantica*), and Swedish Ivy (*Plectranthus australis*).

For more information, the ASPCA has a comprehensive website which lists names of houseplants and landscape plants, along with the level of toxicity for cats, dogs, and horses: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>.

**References:**

Photo credit and poisonous information references: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/dogs-plant-list>