



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Robin Antognoli 312/906-6146

Play it Safe from Poison this Spring

Illinois Poison Center experts warn of dangers from toxic plants, mushrooms and more

(CHICAGO) –Toxic plants can cause serious harm to people and pets, Illinois Poison Center (IPC) experts warn. As preparation for the spring planting season begins, the IPC urges gardeners and homeowners to use caution when selecting plants, trees and shrubs for their yards.

“Many people choose plants, shrubs and trees for their gardens and landscaping without knowing that they could be poisonous to their family and pets,” said Dr. Michael Wahl, managing medical director, IPC. “The IPC recommends that homeowners first find out which plants are potentially toxic to make an informed decision about using such plants in or around the home.”

While many plants are toxic, some of the most popular plants used in landscaping can be poisonous, which include Lily-of-the-Valley, azalea, rhododendron, amaryllis, foxglove, morning glory and buckeye.

Prevent Poisonings from Toxic Plants

The best way to protect family members from an accidental poisoning is to practice poison prevention. Experts recommend the following:

- Keep all houseplants out of children’s reach.
- Teach children never to put mushrooms, berries or any part of a plant (including leaves, flowers, stems, bulbs or seeds) into their mouths.
- Know the names of all plants in and around the house. Label each plant with the correct common and botanical name. Consult a local greenhouse, nursery or florist to identify unknown plants.
- Consult the IPC’s toxic plant list to find out which plants may be poisonous.
- Consider uprooting poisonous plants; replace them with plants that are non-toxic.
- Do not assume a plant is safe because birds or wildlife eat it. Some plants that birds and wildlife eat can be extremely dangerous to human beings.

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Add One/Toxic Plants

- Post the IPC phone number (1-800-222-1222) on or near all telephones, and in other convenient locations.

Symptoms of Plant Poisoning

Symptoms of plant poisoning vary depending on the type of plant involved. Some plants can cause skin rash or irritation, which may be serious and painful. Other plants, if eaten, can cause vomiting or diarrhea. Exposure to a small amount of some plants may cause more serious problems with the heart, kidneys or other organs. Some plants may even result in death. People should call the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 immediately if a plant poisoning is suspected.

First Aid for Plant Poisonings

- **In the mouth:** Remove any plant parts from the victim's mouth. Give a small amount of water to the victim to rinse out any remaining plant pieces.
- **On the skin:** Immediately wash any skin exposed to the plant with soap and water. Remove any clothing that touched the plant.
- **In the eyes:** Rinse eyes with lukewarm water for 15 minutes.

Other Poisoning Hazards

- **Mushrooms:** Many varieties of wild mushrooms can be toxic. Because it can be difficult to tell the edible varieties apart from those that are toxic, the IPC advises against picking and eating **any** wild mushrooms.
- **Lawn care products:** Fertilizers can irritate the skin and stomach. Fertilizers, like all potential poisons, should be kept out of the reach of children. After using fertilizer, make sure everyone, including pets, stays off the applied area for two days, or until it rains.
- **Pesticides:** Pesticides also are dangerous poisoning hazards, and are likely to be more toxic than lawn fertilizers. Pesticide poisonings can occur when people mix or dilute the pesticide, or breathe in some of the pesticide during application to plants and lawns. The IPC suggests wearing protective clothing when applying pesticides (gloves, glasses, long sleeves and pants). Do not apply pesticides outdoors on a windy day and keep children and pets away during pesticide application and until the product dries, or as directed on the label. Always store pesticides in the original containers, complete with labels that list ingredients, directions for use and first-aid steps in case of an accidental poisoning.

Consumers and health care professionals can obtain free poison prevention advice and treatment recommendations via the IPC's toll-free hot line, 1-800-222-1222. The IPC also

Add Two/Toxic Plants

publishes a toxic plant list, which is available to all Illinois residents on the IPC's Web site at www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org or by calling the hot line. Poison center experts also can provide information about plants that are not included on the toxic plant list; individuals should be prepared to give either the plant's common or botanical name.

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The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is the only certified, regional poison center in Illinois, serving more than 12 million residents in 102 counties – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – via a national, toll-free number, 1-800-222-1222.

Calling the toll-free hot line will connect callers with their designated local poison center at any time from anywhere in the United States; all calls placed in Illinois are routed to the IPC. Staffed by pharmacists, physicians, nurses and poison information providers, the IPC provides poison prevention information and treatment advice to the public and health care professionals on household products, alcohol or drug misuse, medication problems, bites and stings, occupational accidents and other poisonings.

The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, an association of more than 140 hospitals and health care organizations working together to improve the quality of health care services in the Chicago area.