The species shown on this poster are poisonous plants commonly found in Illinois. They were selected for inclusion by staff at the Illinois Poison Center as representatives of plants most frequently involved in poisoning incidents in our state. There are many other poisonous plants growing naturally in Illinois and cultivated in homes and gardens. Caution should be used when selecting plants for the home or garden. Although toxicity varies in poisonous plants, children, people with developmental disabilities and pets are at risk of eating large amounts of the plant(s). By ingesting more of the plant(s), the level of toxicity may be increased. Always wash your hands thoroughly after touching any of these plants, fresh or dried.

For more information and an expanded list of toxic plants, visit www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org.

For free poison prevention education training and materials, go to www.IllinoisPoisonCenter.org/outreach.

If you have questions and/or need treatment advice, contact the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Species List

**Toxic Wild Plants**
- nightshade
  - Solanum spp.
- jimsonweed
  - Datura spp.
- poison hemlock
  - Conium maculatum
- poison ivy
  - Toxicodendron radicans
- pokeweed
  - Phytolacca americana

**Toxic Garden/Landscaping Plants**
- azalea
  - Rhododendron spp.
- Canada yew
  - Taxus canadensis
- delphinium or larkspur
  - Delphinium spp.
- foxglove
  - Digitalis purpurea
- lily-of-the-valley
  - Convallaria majalis
- morning-glory
  - Ipomoea spp.
- rhododendron
  - Rhododendron spp.

**Toxic House and Holiday Plants**
- American holly
  - Ilex opaca
- dieffenbachia
  - Dieffenbachia spp.
- mother-in-law's tongue or snake plant
  - Sansevieria spp.
- philodendron
  - Philodendron spp.

This poster was made possible by:
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Education
Division of Natural Heritage
Illinois Poison Center

© 2002 Steven J. Baskauf
© 2008 Rob Curtis, The Early Birder
© 2008 Adele Hodde, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
© Dr. John Meade, Weed Scientist Emeritus, Rutgers Cooperative Extension

© 2008 Adele Hodde, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
© 2008 Michael Haddock
© 2008 Richard Day/Daybreak Imagery
© 2008 Stefan Bloodworth, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
© 2008 Adele Hodde, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
© 2003 Steven J. Baskauf
© 2008 Adele Hodde, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Vegetation only photo © 2008 Adele Hodde, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
In bloom photo © 2008 Richard Day/Daybreak Imagery

The Illinois Poison Center encourages people to learn the names of plants in and around their home. Label each plant with the correct common and botanical names. Consult a local greenhouse, plant nursery or florist to identify unknown plants. This information is critical in an emergency when it can be difficult to identify plants from a verbal description given over the telephone. Providing the correct plant name can help assure that accurate treatment advice is dispensed quickly.
Poisonous Plants

Poisonous Plants are substances that may cause illness or death. Poisonous can be chemicals present in nature, such as certain chemical elements or compounds. They can also be produced by living things. Poison that is injected by animals through bites or stings is known as venom.

Many plants are poisonous to humans and other organisms. These plants can be found growing wild or in gardens and greenhouses. Poisonous plants are also often used in holiday decorations. The poison in plants may be on the surface or within the tissues of the plants. Some parts of a plant may be more toxic than other parts, and some poisonous plants may be more dangerous during specific seasons. Timing may vary within individual plants of the same species, too.

Poison can affect people through contact with skin or eyes, through ingestion by eating and through inhalation. Not all people may react the same way to the same poison. If you suspect that someone has come into contact with a dangerous plant, immediately call the IL POISON CENTER 1-800-222-1222.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant may be poisonous.

Toxic Garden/Landscaping Plants

azalea and rhododendron

Rhododendron spp.

Description: This woody shrub is closely related and most noticeable for its clusters of showy flowers in spring. There are two native species in Illinois and thousands of cultivated varieties. Some varieties have evergreen leaves while others are deciduous. (Some leaves fall in the fall of the year.) Evergreen varieties tend to have smaller leaves than deciduous ones. Flower appears in spring for one to two weeks, and some azalea varieties bloom again in fall. The flower structure is different in azaleas than in rhododendrons (azaleas require more pollen) in each flower, but a rhododendron will have 10-15 petals in clusters.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of this plant are poisonous.

Toxin: maackiain

Symptoms: burning, tingling or numbness to the mouth, nausea, vomiting, low heart rate, low blood pressure, coma, seizures

Canada yew

taxus canadensis

Description: This evergreen shrub has needle-like leaves and is often planted around the foundation of buildings. Leaves are arranged in a spiral around the trunk. In toxic species are produced only on female plants, and each berry has a large pit inside. Canada yew does grow wild in northern Illinois but is rarely encountered.

Poisonous parts of the plant: The bark, needles and seed pit are poisonous.

Toxin: taxane

Symptoms: nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea and diluted pupil; cardiac rhythm disturbances and death may follow

A special note on evergreens: The yew is very poisonous. Other species, such as bald cypress, redwood, fir, spruce, and larch, contain taxotene. However, poisoning seldom result from these plants because large amounts of the toxin are not normally consumed.

delphinium or larkspur

Delphinium spp.

Description: The petals of pink or purple flower have the reddish-brown, toothed leaves. Each flower has a petaled projection that extends up and back. Two species grow wild in Illinois. Poisonous parts vary and are used in landscaping and gardens.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of this plant are poisonous.

Toxin: alkaloid

Symptoms: burning sensation to lips, tongue, fingers and toes that spreads through the body; vomiting, diarrhea, cardiac rhythm disturbances and respiratory paralysis may occur later

foxglove

Digitalis purpurea

Description: Foxglove has a two-year life cycle. It grows leaves in a rosette near the ground the first few leaves, then produces flower before dying in its second year. It blooms in early summer. The flowering stalk may be three to six feet tall and produce large blue, tubed flowers at the top. The flowers are spotted on the inside. The dried leaves are gray-green with small leaflets along the edges. The fruit is a capsule. Many varieties of this species are grown in gardens. A wide range of flower color is available.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of this plant are poisonous.

Toxin: cardiac glycosides similar to digoxin

Symptoms: nausea and vomiting, dizziness, slow heart rate, low blood pressure, cardiac rhythm disturbances

lily-of-the-valley

Convallaria majalis

Description: Lily-of-the-valley is a short, herbaceous plant that grows in tightly packed clumps. Leaves develop at the base of the plant. When flowering in spring, each flower stalk has five to 15 white, bell-shaped flowers that hang downward and are fragrant. The fruit is an orange-red berry.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant are poisonous.

Toxin: cardiac glycosides

Symptoms: nausea and vomiting, dizziness, slow heart rate, low blood pressure, cardiac rhythm disturbances

morning-glory

Ipomoea spp.

Description: Morning glories are herbaceous vines that may grow along the ground or on other structures, such as walls, buildings or other plants. Leaves are simple in shape and are ovate or heart-shaped. Many morning glories grow wild in Illinois, but many cultivated varieties are also poisonous.

Poisonous parts of the plant: Morning-glory seeds are poisonous.

Toxin: ergotoxins

Symptoms: hallucinations, dilated pupils, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, extreme irritability

Agency Resources

Illinois Poison Center
1-800-222-1222

More information regarding poisonous plants is available on our website. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources offers many publications that help teach and students learn what plants are present in the state and how to identify the plants that can cause oral and pulmonary, the “dumb canes” common name. These plants have large leaves, up to 20 inches in length, and may reach four feet in height. Leaves are dark green to yellow green with white- or green-striped markings.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant are poisonous.

Toxin: calcium oxalate

Symptoms: burning in the mouth and throat

mother-in-law’s tongue

Sansevieria spp.

Description: The rigid, upright leaves with sharp edges are characteristic of this plant. Leaves are green with dark green markings. Some species have yellow or green or red edges on the leaves.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant are poisonous.

Toxin: calcium oxalate

Symptoms: vomiting or nausea, burning in the mouth and throat

philodendron

Philodendron spp.

Description: Philodendrons are fan-growing plants with kidney, glossy leaves. Many species produce red, orange or yellow flowers. Leaf shapes and colors vary greatly. Leaf size ranges from three inches to three feet.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant are poisonous of red, orange or yellow flowers. Leaf size ranges from three inches to three feet.

Toxin: calcium oxalate

Symptoms: burning in the mouth and throat

American holly

Ilex opaca

Description: The evergreen American holly is said usually grows from 10 to 40 feet in height. In glossy, stiff leaves are two to four inches long and have multiple points on the edges. Easy white flowers are produced in clusters in May and June, and red (sometimes yellow) berries develop from them. Most people come in contact with American holly through holiday decorations.

Poisonous parts of the plant: The leaves and berries are poisonous.

Toxin: no specific toxin has been determined in the primary cause of symptoms, however, saplings are largely responsible for the gastrointestinal effects.

Symptoms: vomiting, diarrhea and mild dermatitis

dienffebachia

Dienfchbechia spp.

Description: Diefenbachia plants, also known as dumb-canes, are native to tropical areas. The left has an appearance like that of cane, and ingesting the toxin can cause oral and pulmonary, the “dumb canes” common name. These plants have large leaves, up to 20 inches in length, and may reach four feet in height. Leaves are dark green to yellow green with white- or green-striped markings.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant are poisonous.

Toxin: calcium oxalate

Symptoms: vomiting or nausea, burning in the mouth and throat

mother-in-law’s tongue

Sansevieria spp.

Description: The rigid, upright leaves with sharp edges are characteristic of this plant. Leaves are green with dark green markings. Some species have yellow or green or red edges on the leaves.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant are poisonous.

Toxin: calcium oxalate

Symptoms: vomiting or nausea, burning in the mouth and throat

philodendron

Philodendron spp.

Description: Philodendrons are fan-growing plants with kidney, glossy leaves. Many species produce red, orange or yellow flowers. Leaf shapes and colors vary greatly. Leaf size ranges from three inches to three feet.

Poisonous parts of the plant: All parts of the plant are poisonous of red, orange or yellow flowers. Leaf size ranges from three inches to three feet.

Toxin: calcium oxalate

Symptoms: burning in the mouth and throat

poison ivy

Toxicodendron radicans

“Leaves three, let it be a good advice. While not every leaf with three leaflets is toxic, poison ivy leaves do have three leaflets. The central leaflet is much larger than the other two leaves. The leaves are arranged alternately along the stem. Leaves are often shiny and may have bumps. Poison ivy grows in disturbed areas, woods and on the banks of streams and ponds. It is adaptable, though, and can be found shrubbery in most habitats, including urban areas. It is grown as a tree, a short evergreen plant or shrub. Green-white flowers are produced in a cluster at the base of the leaf. Minute fruit produce white berries that are often eaten by birds. Knowing how to identify this plant can help you to avoid it.”