

5 Popular Indoor Plants to Avoid Like the Plague

Houseplants and flowers are lovely for homes, but if you choose one of these five toxic beauties, you may be exposing your pet to toxins that can burn his mouth or cause seizures, arrhythmias, or worse. Select one of these 19 plants instead.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Indoor plants not only brighten the décor in your home, but they also improve the quality of the air you breathe by cleaning airborne toxins, increasing the oxygen level and adding moisture to the air
- There are many indoor plants that are toxic to dogs and/or cats, and these should be avoided entirely or placed in a location neither your dog nor cat can access
- Signs of poisoning include drooling, lack of appetite, vomiting, lethargy, tremors and abnormal urination
- Even if you only suspect your pet has sampled a toxic plant, it's better to be safe than sorry. Contact your veterinarian, the nearest emergency animal hospital, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center or the Pet Poison Helpline
- There are also many houseplants that are safe for homes with dogs and cats and are perfect for pet parents who want to take advantage of their beauty and health benefits

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If you're like a lot of pet parents, you'd love to fill your home with greenery, but are unsure which indoor plants are safe for dogs and cats. Whereas some pets are utterly uninterested in sampling houseplants, others — especially cats — can't resist a nibble or even a mouthful, so your concern is warranted.

Actually, if you have cats that like to sample your houseplants, provide them roughage that is more palatable and safer than houseplants. You can do this in the form of cat grass, which is wheatgrass, or by offering fresh sunflower sprouts.

In addition to adding beauty and color to your home, plants improve the air quality as well by removing toxins like carbon monoxide, formaldehyde and benzene from the air you and your family (including pets) breathe. These toxic compounds are released into the air each time you use chemical-based products inside your home.

Plants also increase the level of health-inducing oxygen in homes by absorbing the carbon dioxide exhaled into the air by both humans and pets and replacing it with oxygen.

“Oxygen is critical for good brain and muscle function,” veterinarian Dr. Cathy Alinovi tells PetMD. “Therefore, stagnant air can lead to tiredness and brain dizziness, and can even affect heart function. The good news is, safe indoor plants help clean the air and increase oxygen concentration while decreasing waste products.”¹

Plants can also raise the humidity level of indoor air by releasing moisture vapor. In nature, the roots of plants absorb groundwater, which then evaporates through the leaves in a process called transpiration. Indoor plants do the same each time they're watered. Moist air is a natural skin conditioner and airway cleanser beneficial to both people and pets.

5 Common Indoor Plants to Avoid

Before we discuss indoor plants that are safe for dogs and cats, it's important to know which to absolutely avoid, including these five:

1. **Plants from the Araceae family** — These include the philodendron, pothos, peace lily, calla lily, dumb cane, arrowhead vine, mother-in-law's tongue, sweetheart vine, devil's ivy, umbrella plant and elephant ear.

These are common houseplants and contain insoluble calcium oxalate crystals. If your pet chews on one of them, it can cause severe mouth pain. Signs your dog or cat may have sampled one of these plants include drooling, pawing at the mouth, a swollen muzzle or lips and occasionally, vomiting.

Fortunately, these plants aren't considered deadly, so if your pet chews one, give him some milk or yogurt to minimize damage from the calcium oxalate crystals. Keep a close watch on him, and if his symptoms don't subside or get worse, call your veterinarian.

2. **English shamrock, rhubarb (leaves) and tropical star fruit** — These houseplants contain soluble calcium oxalates, which are very different from insoluble calcium oxalate plants.

Fortunately, pet poisonings involving these plants are rare, but when it happens it's a life-threatening emergency because ingestion causes blood calcium levels to plummet and can also cause calcium oxalate crystals to form in the kidneys, causing acute kidney failure.

Signs of poisoning include drooling, lack of appetite, vomiting, lethargy, tremors and abnormal urination. If you know or suspect your pet has ingested one of these plants, call your veterinarian right away. Blood tests and intravenous (IV) fluids will be necessary.

3. **Kalanchoe** — Kalanchoe plants are absolutely beautiful but unfortunately, they're also absolutely deadly if your dog or cat nibbles on one because they contain cardiac glycosides.

Signs of poisoning involve the gastrointestinal (GI) tract (drooling, vomiting), the cardiovascular system (very slow or rapid heart rate, arrhythmia), electrolyte imbalances (e.g., high potassium levels) and central nervous system signs (dilated pupils, tremors, seizures).

Immediate veterinary intervention is required, and will include decontamination, IV fluids, heart and blood pressure monitoring, heart medications, and supportive care.

4. **Corn plant/dragon tree** — Corn plants contain saponins, which are antinutrients that interfere with absorption of essential nutrients. If your pet should sample a corn plant, it can cause dilated pupils, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea and lethargy. This is a much more benign type of poisoning than some others, but you'll still want to keep this plant out of your dog's or cat's reach.
5. **Spring flowers** — Certain spring bulbs, including daffodils, hyacinth and tulips, can cause mild vomiting or diarrhea in pets who ingest them. If a massive number of bulbs are eaten, they can cause an obstruction in

your pet’s stomach or intestines. Complications can include an elevated heart and respiration rate, and much less commonly, a drop in blood pressure and tremors or seizures.

The greens and flowers themselves are generally thought to be safe if your dog or cat nibbles on them — it’s the bulbs that pose the greatest danger. If your pet ingests the bulbs, he’ll be treated with decontamination, fluid therapy and anti-vomiting meds if necessary.

Even if you only suspect your pet has sampled a toxic plant, it’s better to be safe than sorry. Contact your veterinarian, the nearest emergency animal hospital, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435, or the Pet Poison Helpline at 855-764-7661.

Pet-Safe Indoor Plants

The following is a list provided by PetMD of a few plants that are safe for cats and dogs:²

Perennials	Herbs	Succulents	Palms	Ferns
African Violet	Basil	Blue Echeveria	Areca Palm	Boston Fern
Aluminum Plant	Cilantro	Christmas Cactus	Dwarf Palm	
Bamboo	Dill	Haworthia		
Friendship Plant	Lemon Balm	Hens and Chicks		
Spider Ivy	Rosemary			
Swedish Ivy	Sage			

For an extremely comprehensive list of both safe and unsafe plants, visit the ASPCA’s “**Toxic and Nontoxic Plant List — Dogs**” and “**Toxic and Nontoxic Plant List — Cats**.” The lists are in alphabetical order, and each entry links to a picture of the plant.

Sources and References

^{1, 2} [PetMD](#)
