

As your family and your pets spend more time in the yard during the warm spring and summer months, citronella candles become common fixtures to keep pesky mosquitoes away. It is important to keep these candles away from pets because if ingested they can cause gastrointestinal inflammation, resulting in vomiting and diarrhea. Keep these and all other mosquito repellents out of the curious reach of animals.



So, make sure your pets are in a safe, confined area during application of lawn and garden care products as well as while mowing the lawn. If you see any signs or symptoms that your pet has ingested a harmful yard care product, seek medical care as quickly as possible. The ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center can be reached at 1-888-426-4435 for 24 hour emergency assistance.

We know you love your pets and it's our hope that helping to keep you informed of the potential hazards involved with lawn and garden care assures your loved ones are healthy and safe.



*Castor Bean Plant*



*Foxglove*

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## KEEP YOUR PETS SAFE FROM SPRING-TIME GARDENING HAZARDS

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Spring-time is here and that means more outdoor lawn and garden time for many of your pets. Family pets are just as anxious as their owners to get outside after the long winter months. Now is the time to be mindful about keeping our pets safe in the lawn and garden. There are many products such as mulch, fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides, plants and vegetables that can be toxic if ingested by pets. Puppies and kittens are especially curious so extra care should be taken by their owners. Whether the outdoor project is large or small, there are some tips to help you keep your pets healthy and safe for the spring and summer months.

Mulch is widely used in gardens and many inquisitive pets will find this product appealing. Most mulch is safe, but there is one variety that pet owners need to be aware of. Cocoa bean mulch is made from cocoa beans used in the production of chocolate. This type of mulch has a rich chocolate aroma when fresh, making it very attractive to pets and desirable to taste. The toxins in cocoa bean mulch are theobromine and caffeine which cause increased breathing and heart rates in animals. Common symptoms of ingestion include vomiting, diarrhea, panting, hyperactivity, muscle tremors, increased body temperature or seizures. Treatment for an animal that has ingested cocoa bean mulch includes inducing vomiting to remove the chemical from the system, providing IV fluids and monitoring the heart rate.



Lawn and garden enthusiasts keep their yards lush and dense with fertilizer. Unfortunately, dogs and cats can eat the granules off the grass or get them on their paws. Different types of fertilizers have different levels of toxicity but most remain fairly low unless

large amounts are ingested. The most important advice is to read the label carefully to determine if it contains chemicals that may be harmful to pets. Gardeners who are pet owners should avoid fertilizers that contain herbicides or pesticides and look for formulas that contain manure as the main ingredient. It is always recommended that the lawn be watered thoroughly after applying fertilizer to help wash the granules into the soil and off the grass blades. A safe alternative for gardeners is to create a home-made fertilizer by composting. This can be done with almost any organic material.



Herbicides are used as weed killers and can be highly toxic if a pet ingests this chemical directly from the container. Toxicity levels are usually reduced after the chemicals are applied to the lawn. The safest bet for pet owners shopping for lawn and garden products is to look for products that are veterinarian or EPA certified. Products that contain inert ingredients (which are NOT required to be listed on the package) should be avoided. Inert ingredients are often carcinogens which are very harmful. A safe way to treat weeds in a small area of the yard is to make a weed killer with boiling water and vinegar and apply to plants with a spray bottle.

Another garden chemical for pet owners to be aware of is insecticides. These are used to decrease the number of damaging insects on plants and can be highly toxic to pets. To be effective, these products stay on the plant for several days after application. Pets need to be kept away so they do not lick the chemicals off the leaves of the plants. As a safer alternative, insects can be reduced with a simple spray of water. For a more serious insect problem, add a teaspoon of dish soap to a gallon of water and spray on the plants.

Garden maintenance products are not the only trouble spots in the yard for pets; certain plants and flowers can also be toxic. Many ornamental plants and flowers have bright flowers and leaves that pets want to consume. These can be dangerous and may cause vomiting or diarrhea. Others can cause organ failure and death. Some of the most highly toxic plants that pet owners should avoid all together include Castor bean, Oleander, Morning Glory, Japanese Yew, Jerusalem Cherry and Foxglove. A full list of common poisonous plants is available at [www.peteducation.com](http://www.peteducation.com) or by consulting a local plant nursery. Make sure you know if harmful plants are in and around your home!



*Japanese Yew*

Another area of concern pet owners may forget is the vegetable garden. Luckily, there are only a few vegetable plants that pose a problem for pets due to toxicity. These include onions, chives, and garlic. The bulbs, flowers and stems of the onion and garlic plants are poisonous and will cause breakdown of red blood cells and anemia in dogs and cats. Other symptoms that may arise from consumption of these vegetables are vomiting, diarrhea, discolored urine, weakness, liver damage, allergic reactions or asthmatic attacks. The leafy part of the potato plant and the green part of the potato skin can also be toxic if eaten in sufficient quantities. As far as fruits go, the pits or seeds are the main concern. Apple, plum, cherry, apricot and peach seeds contain cyanide which can cause fatal seizures in animals. Additionally, grapes pose a serious threat, as well.