

GROWING INDOOR PLANTS WITH PETS

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Whether you are a seasoned plant parent adding a furry newcomer to your family or a pet owner looking to add some greenery to your space, knowing which plants are potentially toxic and which are safe is vital to keeping a healthy household. While those who do not have pets are welcome to turn their homes into a tropical jungle with any assortment of plants, those who house both plants and pets will need to be more intentional about the greenery they bring indoors. There are many indoor plants that contain toxins that may cause upset stomach, skin irritation, vomiting, diarrhea, renal failure, or even death for pets. So, it is critical to know which plants to avoid to keep your pets healthy. In addition to plant selection, there are a few plant management and placement suggestions that can help your plants and pets coexist well in indoor spaces.

Integrating Indoor Plants and Pets

Introducing a plant into your home is much like introducing a new pet. Keep an eye on your pets to see how they interact with the new plants. Even when safe plants are introduced to the home, it may still be useful to manage your pet's interaction with them. Cat owners may notice their feline friends using plant pots as a litter box or knocking plant pots off shelves. Dog owners may notice their pups digging in the indoor plant media. To keep pets from knocking plants over, consider planting them in heavy ceramic pots and adding stones to the bottom of the pots to add extra weight. Add a layer of large pebbles to the top of the soil to prevent digging. When in doubt, move plants to an area that pets cannot access. If you notice your pet tends to munch on the plants, consider placing plants on an elevated surface or constructing an indoor greenhouse to give them their own space. Training your pets to leave your house plants alone may take some time, so patience is key.



While several houseplants are toxic to people and pets, there are an array of houseplants that are largely nontoxic. Certainly, this isn't a suggestion for making house plants a part of your pet's diet, but they should be low risk if ingestion occurs. These lists were compiled using a variety of sources, but they aren't exhaustive. Additionally, these lists focus on plants known to cause issues or be safe for dogs and cats, so they don't cover every type of indoor pet. Also, keep in mind that these recommendations are general, and dog or cat specific toxicity can occur. If you are unsure whether a plant is toxic, check the Animal Poison Control website at aspc.org or speak to a veterinarian. In the event your pet consumes a toxic plant, contact your veterinarian immediately and/or [Animal Poison Control](http://AnimalPoisonControl.com) at 888-426-4435. It is also important to note that just because a plant is reported to be non-toxic, it does not mean it will not cause mild irritation if consumed.

Indoor Plants Generally Considered Non-Toxic for Pets

Indoor Plant (Species and common name)	General Plant Information See W1128-A for more complete plant growing information tiny.utk.edu/W1128A
<i>Beaucarnea recurvata</i> (Ponytail Palm)	This plant prefers direct light but can tolerate indirect light as well. Water about once a month, as this plant stores water in its bulbous stem.
<i>Bromeliaceae</i> (Bromeliad)	Many bromeliads are epiphytic (not soil supported) with roots more for support than nutrition. Requires warm indoor temperatures (above 55F) with high humidity and light.
<i>Calathea and Maranta</i> spp. (Prayer plant)	Two related genera with many beautiful plant options. Can be a bit finicky but generally requires average temps and prefer high humidity.
<i>Chamaedorea elegans</i> (Parlor Palm, Fishtail palm)	Lower light needs can make these palms a good option in a range of settings. Bright indirect light is preferred and water when the top two inches of the soil is dry. Activates hunting instincts in cats; can be a hardier substitute for catnip or cat grass.
<i>Chlorophytum comosum</i> (Spider Plant)	Keep soil relatively moist. Average temperatures but should not be below 45F. Can be mildly hallucinogenic for some cats.
<i>Echeveria</i> spp.	In the Crassulaceae family with many common species. Indoor light is often a limiting factor. Average temperatures during growing period with cooler temps during rest period (55-60F). Water sparingly, especially during rest period.
<i>Fittonia</i> spp. (Nerve plant)	Small creeping tropical plant with fine leaves that have netted veins. Keep the soil moist. Average temps. Best in terrariums where humidity can be maintained.
<i>Haworthia</i> spp.	This succulent thrives in bright direct light and needs water about once every three weeks.
<i>Hoya</i> spp. (Wax Plant)	Climbing or trailing vines with thick leaves and star-shaped flowers. Allow the surface of soil to dry before watering. Average temps.
<i>Pachira aquatica</i> (Money tree)	Said to bring good luck and good finances into the home, the money tree does well in indirect sunlight and water every two to three weeks.
<i>Peperomia</i> spp.	Several species can be found with a range of shapes, sizes, and colors in foliage. Allow the surface of soil to dry before watering and do not overwater. Average temps.
<i>Phyllostachys aurea</i> (Golden bamboo)	Simple care. Prefers filtered indirect light.
<i>Pilea</i> spp. (UFO Plant, Friendship Plant)	A typically short and bushy plant that rarely flowers. Cool to average temps and prefers higher humidity (over 50 percent).
<i>Schlumbergera</i> spp. (Holiday cactus)	Medium indirect light and average indoor temperatures. Can be moved to shaded outdoor locations in summer. Medium water except during short rest after flowering. Short day plants, so don't use fall supplemental lighting.
<i>Streptocarpus</i> spp. (African violet)	Average temperature and humidity but not generally below 60F. Don't water leaves or use mist sprays. Use substrate that drains rapidly.

Indoor Plants Pet Owners Should Avoid

Plant	Specific Toxins	Pet Symptoms of Toxin Ingestion
<i>Amaryllis</i> spp.	Lycorine	Vomiting or diarrhea, sap can also cause a skin rash. Bulbs are thought to contain more lycorine than leaves.
<i>Aglaonema</i> spp. (Chinese Evergreen)	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Swelling of the mouth, difficulty swallowing or breathing, drooling.
<i>Aloe vera</i>	Saponins, anthraquinones	Leaf latex is considered to be the toxin rather than the interior gel. It is a purgative that can result in vomiting or diarrhea and mouth irritation.
<i>Asparagus densiflorus</i> (Asparagus fern, lace fern)	Sapogenin	Ingesting berries can cause vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain. Skin inflammation can also result from frequent exposure.
<i>Begonia</i> spp. (some exceptions)	Soluble calcium oxalates	Kidney failure, vomiting, salivation. These compounds are thought to be most concentrated in the tubers.
Cacti	Some toxins but also physical risks	Prickles can cause serious damage if swallowed. Some cacti can be mildly toxic.
<i>Caladium</i> spp. (Elephant Ear)	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Oral irritation, swelling of the mouth, drooling, difficulty swallowing or breathing.
<i>Colocasia</i> spp. (Elephant Ear, Taro, etc.)	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Swelling of mouth, drooling, vomiting.
<i>Crassula</i> spp. (Jade Plant)	Unknown	Vomiting, diarrhea, depression, lethargy, and cardiac abnormalities.
<i>Crocus autumnale</i> (Autumn crocus)	Colchicine and other alkaloids	Bloody vomit and diarrhea, lethargy, multi-organ shock.
<i>Cycas revolute</i> (Sago Palm) Cycads in general pose many of the same risks	Cycasin, B-methylamino-l-alanine	Liver failure, bloody stool, swelling, bruising, lethargy, increased thirst, bloody vomit. Seeds are especially dangerous.
<i>Cyclamen</i> spp.	Saponins	Vomiting, diarrhea, drooling. Ingestion of tubers could lead to heart rhythm issues and seizures.
<i>Dieffenbachia</i> spp. (Leopard Lily)	Insoluble calcium oxalates, proteolytic enzyme	Vomiting, swelling, difficulty swallowing and breathing.
<i>Dracaena</i> spp. (Corn Plant)	Saponins	Vomiting, dilated pupils in cats, anorexia, drooling.
<i>Epipremnum</i> spp. (Pothos)	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Mouth and stomach irritation, vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, difficulty swallowing.
<i>Eucalyptus</i> spp.	Eucalyptol (an essential oil)	Depression, lethargy, drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, weakness.
<i>Euphorbiaceae</i> (includes Poinsettia)	Latex sap diterpenoid euphorbol esters and saponin-like	Dermatitis, vomiting (while there can be irritation or vomiting, toxicity is often exaggerated).
<i>Ficus benjamina</i> (Rubber Tree)	Ficin, Ficusin	Ficin can interfere with proteins in dogs that repair tissue, Ficusin can cause photosensitivity, agitation Sap is a skin irritant; causes gastrointestinal upset and skin irritation.
<i>Hedera helix</i> (English Ivy)	Saponins (hederagenin)	Vomiting, abdominal pain, hypersalivation, diarrhea.
<i>Kalanchoe</i> spp. (Mother of Millions, Devils Backbone, etc)	Bufadienolides	Vomiting, diarrhea, abnormal heart rate is a rare symptom.
<i>Lilium</i> spp. (Spider lily, Asiatic Lily, Peace Lily, Flamingo Lily, etc)	Cardiac oxalate crystals, cardenolides	Vomiting, difficulty breathing, kidney failure. Cats are especially sensitive.
<i>Monstera</i> spp. (Swiss cheese plant, Monkey Mask)	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Oral irritation, bowel irritation, itching, vomiting.
<i>Nerium oleander</i> (Oleander)	Cardiac glycosides	Vomiting and diarrhea as well as different types of heart arrhythmias, changes in blood pressure and neurological effects.
<i>Philodendron</i> spp.	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Drooling, vomiting, excessive itching around the mouth.
<i>Sansevieria</i> spp. (Snake Plant)	Saponins	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.

<i>Schefflera</i> spp. (Umbrella Plant, Octopus tree, Parasol Plant)	Insoluble calcium oxalates, saponins	Intense burning of the mouth, oral itching, vomiting, difficulty breathing or swallowing.
<i>Syngonium podophyllum</i> (Arrowhead vine)	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Oral irritation, swelling around mouth, drooling, vomiting, difficulty swallowing.
<i>Strelitzia</i> spp. (Bird of Paradise)	Hydrocyanic acid	Vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy (Caused mostly by ingestion of fruits and seeds).
<i>Tradescantia</i> spp. (Wandering Dude, Inch Plant)	Insoluble calcium oxalates	Dermatitis.
<i>Yucca</i> spp. (Adam's Needle, Silk Grass)	Saponins	Vomiting.

References Used and Additional Reading

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