

Some common house and garden plants also happen to be toxic. They not only carry health risks, but also life-threatening hazards, especially if you are not careful while handling them.

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Plants provide visual interest to the home, purify the air, and may be edible or medicinal. Although some plants are edible, remember to be selective as many are poisonous. Samuel Kanya, a botanist working with KessBiosciences (U) Ltd, says some trees, plants or shrubs that grow around our homes may contain deadly poison which is a potential killer of man and animals.

Strychnine tree

"For example, a strychnine tree is a medium size tree that grows around people's homes. It has green berries that turn orange when ripe. Its berries are poisonous when consumed and can lead to death since they cause convulsions in the stomach," Kanya says.

Kanya says flowering plants such as ivys, daffodils, oleander, lantana camara and lilies-of-the-valley once ingested can cause serious problems including skin irritation and burning.

Jimsonweed

Kanya says jimsonweed is a robust annual plant with thick stems, large irregularly lobed, hairless leaves and large attractive white or pale purple flowers. It often grows on lands where their ripe seeds are harvested with grain from which they cannot easily be separated or as shrubs around the home.

"Its seeds may be accidentally eaten by children or deliberately as a dangerous prank among school children sometimes with fatal results. Poisoning may also result from the seeds contaminating grain and flour, or from leaves accidentally collected as wild spinach," Kanya says.

He explains that clinical signs of poisoning by the Jimsonweed include dryness of mouth, fluctuating pain in the abdomen, tremours, convulsions, respiratory paralysis and coma.



Toxic garden plants to avoid



Above: The poisonous rosary pea. NET PHOTO

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NUMBER OF ROSEMARY PEA SEEDS IT TAKES TO KILL AN ANIMAL.

are common among vegetation in homes are indigenous plants and are widely grown in the country as ornamental plants. However, one raw seed of castor plant is enough to kill a human in two days.

"Upon ingestion, a person will start feeling a burning session in the mouth, abdominal pain, and bloody diarrhoea and vomiting. The process is unstoppable and the final cause of death will be dehydration. Humans are the most sensitive to this seed though it can also lead to death of animals if they consume close to 10 seeds," he explains.

Kanya notes that with young children around, any good looking flower or plant in the home compound is likely to end up in their mouth. There are plant called dolls eyes which almost resemble the eye. The poison is concentrated in the fruit which has a sedative effect on the human cardiac muscles.

SURVIVAL TIPS

- Identify and label the plants in your yard.
- Wear gloves while gardening.
- Keep plants, seeds, fruits and bulbs stored out of reach of children.
- Teach children to keep plants out of their mouths.
- Do not eat wild plants.
- Avoid smoke from burning plants.
- Never chew on jewelry made from seeds, beans, or grasses from plants.
- First aid. Remove any contaminated



ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR QUALITY BUILDING MATERIALS

- Sanitary ware
- Concrete Blocks & Pavers
- Taps & Accessories
- Concrete Culverts & Kerbstones
- Floor & Wall tiles
- Cement
- Plumbing Materials
- Premix Plaster
- Complete Roofing
- Water Proofing chemicals
- Steel Trusses, Roof Tiles
- Agriculture & Landscape Irrigation systems
- Guttering systems