

## *Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian* **Plants, pets, and poisons**



**Roses and snapdragons grow well together, yet roses have thorns.**

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Often, animals eat larger amounts of the plant resulting in a greater problem.

As I went back to the drawing board to research a list of non-ruinous flowers, it became apparent that contradictions and confusion reign. In one report, a specimen was listed as safe, and in another, it was listed as dangerous. It became important to investigate the Scientific name as well as the Family name. For example, 1,000 species and over 10,000 hybrids of begonia, Scientific name: *Begonia* spp., Family: *Begoniaceae* are toxic, while climbing begonia known as *Rex Begonia*, Scientific name: *Cissus dicolor*, Family: *Vitaceae* are fine. The health, age, and size of the pet as well as how much they devour is a factor in whether your pet will be affected. A website that is helpful as a guide for plants that are toxic to dogs is the ASPCA. Visit



**Sword ferns are excellent for shade gardens.**

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/dogs-plant-list>.

After examining numerous sources and talking to experts, my recommendation is to check with your personal veterinarian before landscaping as your doctor knows your pet best. Many plants with no known toxicity could still cause an allergic reaction under the right conditions. The juice or sap from some plants contains oxalate crystals which are shaped like tiny needles that could result in irritation of the mouth, or in severe instances, cause swelling of the throat and breathing difficulties. Exposure to selected juice or sap could cause itching or burning dermatitis. Minor toxicity plants may not cause any symptoms or induce mild vomiting or diarrhea. Major toxicity plants could have serious effects on body organs such as the heart, liver, or kidney. Just as each human reacts individually to stimuli, so do animals. For this reason,



Photos Cynthia Brian

**Hollyhocks come in numerous colors and are hummingbird magnets.**

a consultation with your veterinarian is advised.

Of course, there are other circumstances as well. Roses are considered healthy to eat for people and pets if they have not been treated with pesticides, insecticides, or other chemicals. However, a puncture wound from a thorn could cause irritation and pain in both humans and animals. Does this mean that we don't plant roses?

It's summer and tomatoes, peppers and beans fill many potagers. I've witnessed several friends' pets navigating the garden munching the ripe juicy veggies straight from the vine. The leaves of tomatoes, peppers, and potatoes contain solanine which can cause gastrointestinal distress and a slow heart rate. The beans could cause additional gas while potatoes need to be cooked before eating. Do we not plant vegetables?

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