



THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
Cooperative Extension Service

100 POISONOUS PLANTS OF MARYLAND

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100
POISONOUS
PLANTS
OF
MARYLAND

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100 POISONOUS PLANTS OF MARYLAND

Introduction

This publication has a dual role of being a non-technical, fully illustrated guide for use by the public, while still being useful to experts in the field. It describes and illustrates the 100 most frequently grown or encountered potentially poisonous plants found in Maryland.

The plants are arranged into three general categories: **indoor houseplants**, **outdoor cultivated plants (garden plants)** and **wild outdoor plants**. Within each category, the plants have been arranged alphabetically by the most frequently used common name. Other common names also have been provided, along with the plant's scientific name. Where more than one species of a plant is listed, the symbol * indicates the illustrated species. Where appropriate, the plants are described briefly; the general frequency of the plant in Maryland is indicated, and the poisonous properties are included (along with the symptoms of poisoning). A brief definitions section is provided after this introduction.

Seven publications have been chosen as standard references, and these references are listed after the definitions. Since this is a nontechnical publication, anyone desiring more information on a plant is urged to consult these references listed by number at the end of the descriptive paragraph provided for each plant. Only those references that discuss the plant are listed with that particular plant. The references also will lead interested individuals to the other plant species found in our area that are potentially toxic. To find a particular plant quickly and easily, use the Index provided at the end of this publication.

This publication also may be used to aid in the *identification* of poisonous plants in the home and neighborhood so that poisonings may be prevented. Individuals concerned with the possibility of children or pets touching or eating poisonous plants should avoid planting or growing the plants listed here. Prevention is the best way to avoid poisoning. Experimentation with wild or unfamiliar plants as foods or medicines is discouraged and may be dangerous.

Despite the dangers, plant poisonings are rare, and even more rarely fatal. Most plants with poisonous properties taste intensely bitter and usually are avoided by animals and humans. Plants are relatively harmless in the home and garden. Certainly the yew and the azalea, while poisonous, will continue to be important landscape plants in our area and pose little danger. Likewise, the enjoyment of seeing a jack-in-the-pulpit or bloodroot in the spring far outweighs the need to eradicate these plants despite their potential ill effects if eaten.

No treatments for poisoning are indicated in this guide. Maryland residents and others can obtain information from the Maryland Poison Information Center at The University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, 636 West Lombard Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Cases of possible poisoning should be reported to them or your local doctor immediately. The Poison Center emergency numbers are: 301-528-7701 or 1-800-492-2414.

Definitions

Generally, technical terms are avoided in this publication. The use of a few terms is necessary, and these are defined below.

ACRID — with a sharp, unpleasant taste or aroma.

ALKALOID — an organic, nitrogen-bearing compound that is bitter and often has strong effects on the body; a basic rather than acidic compound.

ANOREXIA — loss of appetite.

ASPHYXIA — suffocation.

BRACT — a modified, usually colored leaf associated with flowers.

CARCINOGENIC — capable of stimulating cancerous growths.

CAUSTIC — with severely irritating properties to the skin or membranes; strong acids and lye are caustic.

CORM — a swollen underground stem, resembling a bulb.

CYANOGENIC — capable of producing hydrocyanic acid (HCN), causing cyanide poisoning.

DERMATITIS — inflammation of the skin; an allergic reaction.

ESCAPE — a garden plant growing where it was not planted.

GASTROENTERITIS — inflammation of the stomach and intestine.

GASTROINTESTINAL — relating to the stomach and intestines.

GLYCOSIDE or **CARDIAC GLYCOSIDE** — bitter substance having a stimulating, often damaging, effect on the heart.

HALLUCINOGEN — chemical inducing false perceptions that occur without true sensory stimuli.

HERB — any plant without woody tissues.

INFLAMMATION — reddening caused by irritation.

INGESTION — consumption; the act of eating.

POISONOUS PLANT — any plant capable of causing an irritating or harmful physical or medical reaction in humans and other mammals.

PURGATIVE — a laxative substance.

SAPONIN — a steroid glycoside that does not act on the heart; usually causes gastrointestinal upsets; often 'soapy' in water.

TOXIC — poisonous.

TOXIN — a poisonous substance.

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5. Perkins, K. D. and W. W. Payne. 1978. Guide to the Poisonous and Irritant Plants of Florida. Florida Cooperative Extension Service. Circular 441.
6. Reynard, G. B. and J. B. S. Norton. 1942. Poisonous Plants of Maryland in Relation to Livestock. Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station Technical Bulletin A-10.
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Indoor Houseplants



AMARYLLIS (*Amaryllis**, *Hippeastrum*)

Amaryllis and its close relatives sold under that name contain alkaloids that have been used medicinally, but also are toxic. The bulbs of the barbados-lily (*H. equestre*) can kill humans and animals in 2 to 3 hours. The common amaryllis or belladonna-lily has no record of human poisoning, but in animals it causes severe intestinal, cardiac, respiratory and nervous disorders and has caused death. The most harmful alkaloid constituent seems to be lycorine. Because of their very large and attractive flowers, the plants are often grown in homes. (1,2,4,5,7).



ARALIA (*Polyscias*)

The foliage of the aralia contains saponins that can cause an itching rash to many people. Ingestion of the leaves may cause stomach and intestinal disorders. Cases of poisoning in children have been reported. Children developed fevers, dilated pupils, loss of coordination and severe dryness of the mouth after eating the leaves. (2,5,7).



CROTON (*Codiaeum variegatum*)

All parts of the popular houseplant croton are toxic. This plant frequently is grown for its elongated, multicolored red, green, yellow and purple leaves. The bark and roots are acrid and are skin and mouth irritants. In rare instances, the leaves may cause an allergic dermatitis. The milky sap throughout the plant is caustic, as it is in many other members of the Spurge family of plants. (2,5).



CROWN-OF-THORNS (*Euphorbia milii*)

Crown-of-thorns, another member of the Spurge family, is a popular houseplant because of the brilliant red flower bracts and the decorative spines. The milky sap, found in all parts, is a severe external irritant to many people and animals. The sap can cause burning, inflammation, blistering and even temporary blindness. Internally it can cause inflammation and burning. Shock and death are possible. In addition, the sharp spines can cause painful physical injury. This plant was once called *Euphorbia splendens*. (1,2,5,7).

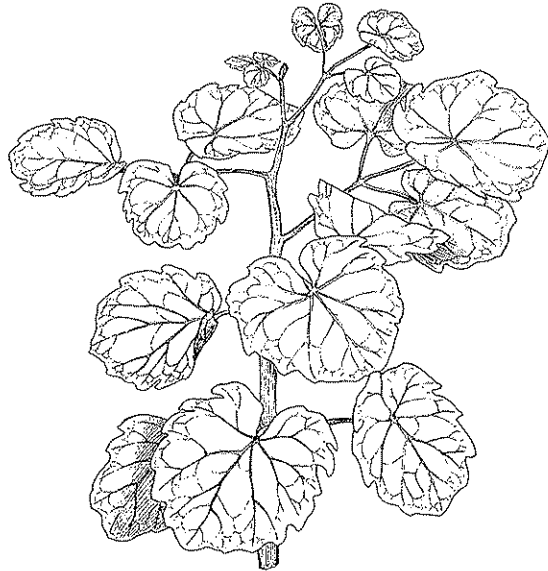
100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



AMARYLLIS



ARALIA



CROTON



CROWN-OF-THORNS





CUTLEAF PHILODENDRON *(Monstera deliciosa)*

All parts of the cutleaf philodendron, except the edible ripe fruit, contain calcium oxalate crystals that can cause severe burning and inflammation in the mouth, throat, stomach and intestinal linings. The juice of the plant may cause eye irritation and dermatitis to sensitive skin. Some people are allergic to the edible ripe fruit. The calcium oxalate crystals, similar in appearance and effect to slivers of glass, are found in most members of the Arum family to which the philodendron belongs. (2,5,7).



DUMB CANE (*Dieffenbachia*)

Like the common philodendron, this member of the Arum family contains calcium oxalate crystals that resemble slivers of glass, as well as possibly toxic proteins that cause severe mouth and throat burning and inflammation. Swelling of the tongue is common, preventing normal speech; hence the name 'dumb cane'. Eating even a small amount causes immediate pain and choking. The effects have caused people to suffocate and die. The sap is an irritant that can cause skin blistering. Nevertheless, this is one of the most popular houseplants. (1,2,5,7).



ELEPHANTS-EAR *(Alocasia, Caladium *, Colocasia)*

Elephants-ear is a general name applied to several closely related plants of the Arum family that have large showy leaves that look like elephant ears or large arrowheads. As in cutleaf philodendron and dumb cane, these plants contain calcium oxalate crystals that can cause sensitive skin and severe pain, burning and inflammation to sensitive body membranes, such as the mouth, throat and eyes. The crystals are concentrated in the underground corms, but are present in all parts of the plant. The powdered leaves have been used as an insecticide, and in some tropical areas the specially cooked leaves and corms are used as food. (1,2,5,7).



MOSES-IN-A-BOAT; BOAT-LILY *(Rhoeo spathacea)*

While Moses-in-a-boat is a popular and easily grown houseplant with colorful purple leaves, it can cause an itching and a burning rash and respiratory problems. Chewing the leaves or stem can cause burning and inflammation of the mouth and throat along with abdominal pain. The plant has been used medicinally in the American tropics. (2,5,7).

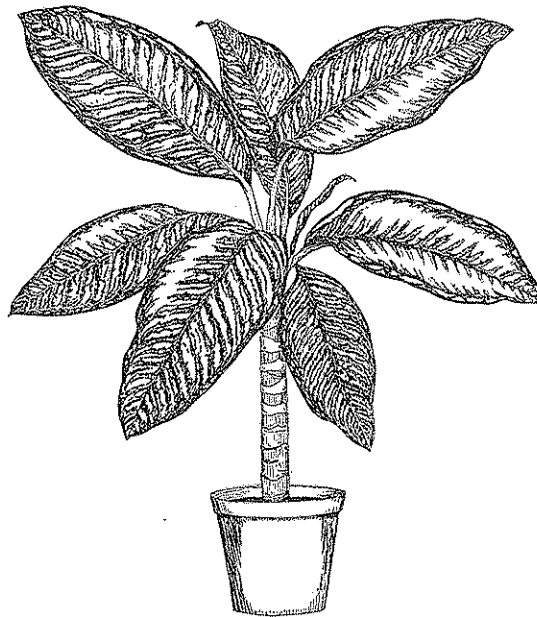
100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



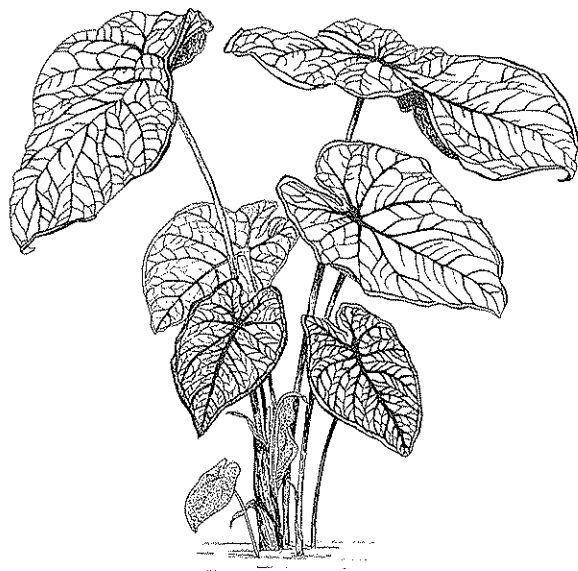
**CUTLEAF
PHILODENDRON**



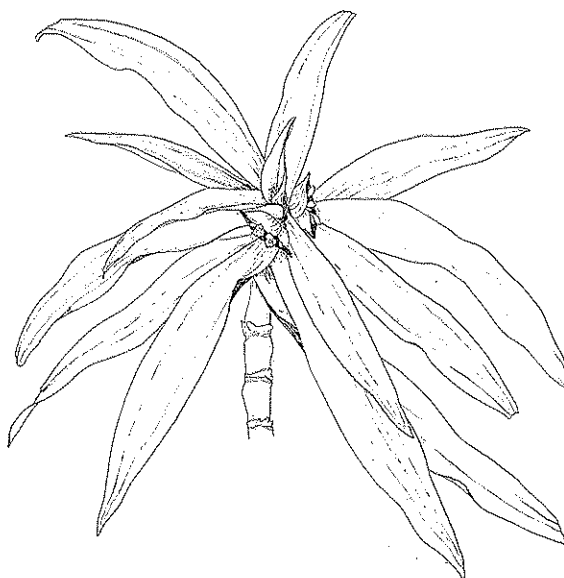
DUMB CANE



ELEPHANTS-EAR



**MOSES-IN-A-BOAT;
BOAT-LILY**



Indoor Houseplants



OLEANDER (*Nerium oleander*)

Oleander is a beautiful and popular but extremely poisonous greenhouse plant, occasionally used as a houseplant in Maryland. All parts of the plant are poisonous to humans and livestock. One leaf is said to be a fatal dose for an adult human, and only 20 grams will kill cattle or horses. Children have been poisoned by carrying the flowers in their mouths. People have died from eating food that was roasted on oleander stems. Honey made from oleander nectar is bitter and toxic. Contact with the leaves may cause dermatitis. The plant contains several poisonous chemicals including cardiac glycosides. Symptoms of poisoning include nausea, vomiting, decreased heartbeat, unconsciousness, respiratory failure and death. Several other members of the Dogbane family have similar properties (see dogbane under Outdoor Wild Plants). (1,2,4,5,6,7).



PHILODENDRON (*Philodendron*)

All parts of the philodendron contain calcium oxalate crystals, as in other members of the Arum family (see cutleaf philodendron, dumb cane, elephants-ear, jack-in-the-pulpit, skunkcabbage). Eating the plant causes intense burning and inflammation to the mouth and throat. The juice of the plant can cause skin and eye irritation. The plant reportedly was responsible for the death of a cat. (1,2,5,7).



POINSETTIA (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*)

The popular Christmas poinsettia is a member of the generally toxic Spurge family (see croton, crown-of-thorns) and has a milky sap that can cause severe external and internal burning and inflammation in some people. The seeds are poisonous, and eating any part of the plant can cause vomiting, diarrhea, delirium, shock and even death. In Hawaii, a 2-year-old child died after eating a poinsettia leaf. However, poisoning from this plant is rare, and it is not as poisonous as once believed. (1,2,5,7).



POTHOS (*Scindapsus [Pothos] aureus*)

This frequently used hanging basket plant has a clear watery juice that is a skin irritant, often causing dermatitis. The plant, another member of the Arum family like the philodendron (see cutleaf philodendron, dumb cane, elephants-ear, philodendron) also contains calcium oxalate crystals that can cause blistering and inflammation of internal and external membranes. It also causes severe diarrhea. (2,5).

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OLEANDER



PHILODENDRON



POINSETTIA



POTHOS





AUTUMN-CROCUS (*Colchicum autumnalis*)

All parts of the garden bulb autumn-crocus, in the Lily family, contain the chemical colchicine, which is a very strong and long-acting poison. Recovery from a dose is very slow. Symptoms develop 2 to 7 hours after ingestion, and include a burning throat, difficulty in swallowing, thirst, abdominal pains, vomiting, diarrhea, kidney damage, shock and collapse. Recovery may begin or a relapse may occur resulting in paralysis, respiratory or heart failure, or death. Even in recovery there may be temporary hair loss. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



AZALEA (*Rhododendron*)

The azalea, commonly used as a landscape plant in Maryland, contains the toxin andromedotoxin (also found in other members of the Heath family) that can cause severe poisoning. Soon after ingestion, humans and livestock show watering of the mouth, eyes and nose. After 2 to 6 hours, effects include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, slow pulse, respiratory difficulty, paralysis, coma and possibly death. The honey from the plant can be bitter and toxic. The same symptoms can occur from wild azaleas and other relatives (see mountain laurel, rhodendron). (1,2,3,4,5,7).



BLEEDINGHEART (*Dicentra spectabilis; D. eximia*)

All species of the common garden flower bleedingheart contain several toxic alkaloids. The tubers and foliage are exposed sometimes by erosion and eaten by children or livestock. Since the plant is very bitter, few cases of human poisoning have been reported. Symptoms of livestock poisoning include trembling, frothing at the mouth, vomiting, convulsions and great pain, but not death. (1,2,3,4,7).



BOXWOOD (*Buxus*)

The boxwood, a common shrub used in landscaping, contains toxic alkaloids such as buxine. The leaves are very bitter and, thus, are rarely eaten. However, there have been reported fatalities in sheep in Maryland, as well as fatalities of pigs, cattle and horses that have been allowed to feed on clippings, with death resulting in a day. Small amounts produce diarrhea and vomiting, and larger amounts can cause severe abdominal pain, convulsions and death. The effects on humans probably are similar. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



AUTUMN-CROCUS



AZALEA



BLEEDINGHEART



BOXWOOD





BUCKTHORN (*Rhamnus*)

The buckthorn, not commonly planted but sometimes an escape in Maryland, contains somewhat toxic glycosides in all of its parts. Some European species have been used as laxatives, but they also have caused severe stomach irritation with abdominal pain and diarrhea. (1,2,4,5,7).



CASTORBEAN; CASTOR-OIL PLANT (*Ricinus communis*)

The castorbean is an attractive, fast-growing ornamental sometimes planted in Maryland to make a quick border or hedge. Like other members of the Spurge family, it is a very poisonous and irritating plant. Among the toxic chemicals in the plant are ricin, ricinine and hydrocyanic acid. Eating any part of the plant, especially the seeds, can cause death through coagulation of the blood. Symptoms of poisoning include burning of the mouth, throat and abdomen; thirst; nausea; dull vision; and convulsions. Eye irritation, dermatitis and bronchial asthma are common and may result from merely handling a leaf. Often hospitalization is required. A few chewed seeds can cause death. The plant is killed by frost each year in Maryland. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



CHRISTMAS-ROSE; HELLEBORE (*Helleborus niger*)

The perennial Christmas-rose is grown for its showy white flowers, which may appear in midwinter. The rootstocks and leaves are poisonous when eaten and contain at least two very toxic glycosides — helleborin and helleborein. Contact with bruised parts of the herb may produce severe dermatitis in some people. Eating the plant may cause severe stomach and nervous illnesses. (1,2,4,7).



CHRYSANTHEMUM (*Chrysanthemum X morifolium*)

The leaves of the garden chrysanthemum or “mum” contain an irritant oil that can cause contact dermatitis in some individuals, especially in those who work with the plant frequently, such as florists. Otherwise, the plant is considered harmless. (2,5,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



BUCKTHORN



**CASTORBEAN;
CASTOR-OIL PLANT**



**CHRISTMAS-ROSE;
HELLEBORE**



CHRYSANTHEMUM





CYPRESS SPURGE *(Euphorbia cyparissias)*

The cypress spurge is a common garden plant that frequently becomes established in large, pale-green colonies along roadsides. Like many other members of the Spurge family, it has an abundant milky sap that contains poisonous chemicals that have caused cattle to collapse and die. Effects on humans are the same as those associated with croton, crown-of-thorns, poinsettia and castorbean. (1,2,3,4,7).



DAFFODIL (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*)

The popular garden daffodil and its close relatives the jonquil and narcissus have some toxic properties, as do other relatives in the Amaryllis family. Cattle and rabbits have died from respiratory failure within 24 hours after eating bulbs. The plants contain alkaloids such as lycorine, found in relatives like the amaryllis as well. The bulbs, petals and sap cause dermatitis to some people, especially gardeners or florists who handle the plant frequently. (1,2,4,5,7).



DAPHNE (*Daphne*)

The ornamental shrub daphne is grown for its extremely fragrant flowers that are produced early in the spring in Maryland. The bark, leaves and fruits are very poisonous. The bitter taste keeps most animals from eating the plant. Children have died from eating the bright red fruits. Mild cases of poisoning include severe burning of the lips, mouth and throat, followed by diarrhea and convulsions (1,2,4,7).



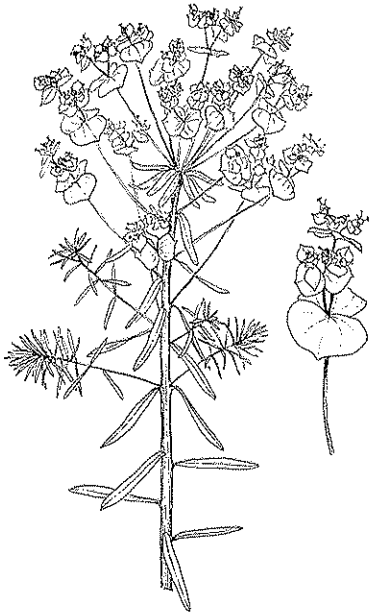
ENGLISH IVY (*Hedera helix*)

All parts of the English ivy, especially the leaves and berries, contain toxic saponic glycosides such as hederin. Susceptible persons may get severe allergic dermatitis within 48 hours after contact with the plant. Eating a large quantity of the plant may cause diarrhea, nervousness, convulsions and coma. Children have been poisoned by eating the berries, which are produced infrequently in Maryland. Animals have been poisoned by grazing on the leaves or by being fed the clippings. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

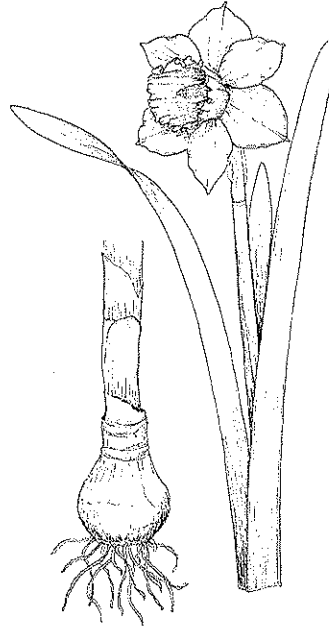
100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



CYPRESS SPURGE



DAFFODIL



DAPHNE



ENGLISH IVY





FOUR-O'CLOCK (*Mirabilis jalapa*)

The seeds and roots of the popular garden flower known as four-o'clock are reported to be laxative and a possible cause of stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhea. The root is the most laxative part of the plant. (2,5,7).



FOXGLOVE (*Digitalis purpurea*)

The common garden foxglove is a very attractive flowering plant with large pink-purple, spotted tubular flowers. The plant is the source of the powerful heart drug digitalis, a cardiac glycoside, which slows and strengthens the heartbeat. Overdoses of the drug or plant parts cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, abdominal pains, convulsions, irregular heartbeat and death in severe cases. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



HOLLY (*Ilex*)

Holly is a prized ornamental shrub; several wild species are found in Maryland. There are both evergreen and deciduous species, and the berries vary from red to yellow to black. In small amounts, the berries can cause nausea, vomiting, and a dazed condition, but there have been no recent reports of poisoning in Maryland. (2,4,5,7).



HORSECHESTNUT; BUCKEYE (*Aesculus*)

The horsechestnut and its relatives the buckeyes are attractive ornamental shade trees with showy flowers and large attractive nuts. In Maryland, cattle have died after eating the leaves and dried fruits, and the young growth, sprouts and mature nuts are all considered dangerous. These parts of the plant contain alkaloids, glycosides and saponins — especially the glycoside aesculin. There are reports from Europe of deaths among children who have eaten the nuts. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



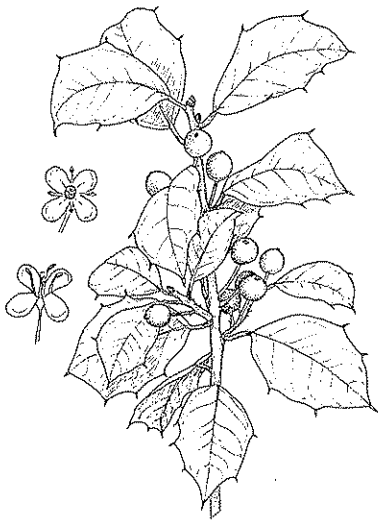
FOUR-O'CLOCK



FOXGLOVE



HOLLY



**HORSECHESTNUT;
BUCKEYE**





HYACINTH (*Hyacinthus orientalis*)

The hyacinth, a common spring garden flower, has been reported to cause contact dermatitis in susceptible individuals. The bulb has the greatest effect. Internally, it has caused vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pains in both humans and cattle. (1,2,5,7).



HYDRANGEA (*Hydrangea*)

The hydrangea is a popular ornamental shrub with large attractive clusters of white, pink or blue flowers. The leaves and flower buds produce hydrocyanic acid, which can cause cyanide poisoning if eaten. Ingestion of the leaves and buds has caused nausea, vomiting and diarrhea in people. Animal symptoms of poisoning include restlessness, abdominal pain and bloody diarrhea. Also see hydrangea under Outdoor Wild Plants. (1,2,3,4,5,7).



IRIS (*Iris germanica*)

The garden iris and its wild relatives are grown for their attractive and colorful flowers. Ingestion of the leaves and underground stems (rhizomes) has caused abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting. Ingesting this plant may also affect the liver and pancreas. The wild iris (*Iris versicolor*) has caused the death of calves. Some individuals, especially florists who work with the plant frequently, contract dermatitis from handling the plants. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



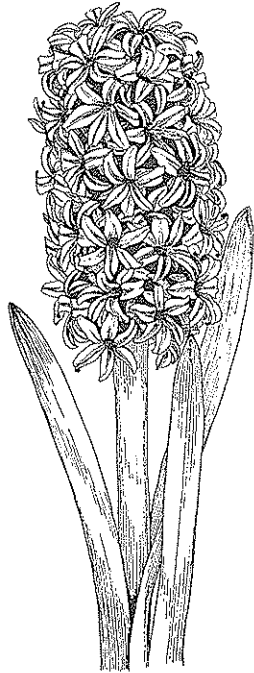
JAPANESE ANDROMEDA (*Pieris japonica*)

Japanese andromeda is an attractive evergreen shrub with large cascades of white flowers. It is used frequently in landscaping in Maryland. The flowers appear very early in spring. The plants contain andromedotoxin, and losses can be severe if animals, such as sheep, are fed the clippings. There have been reports also of human poisonings from honey produced from this and other members of the Heath family. Toxicity and symptoms of poisoning are described under azalea. Also see mountain-laurel, rhododendron. (1,2,3).

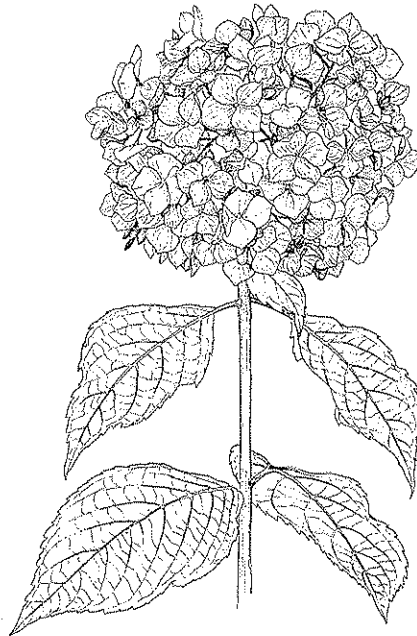
100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



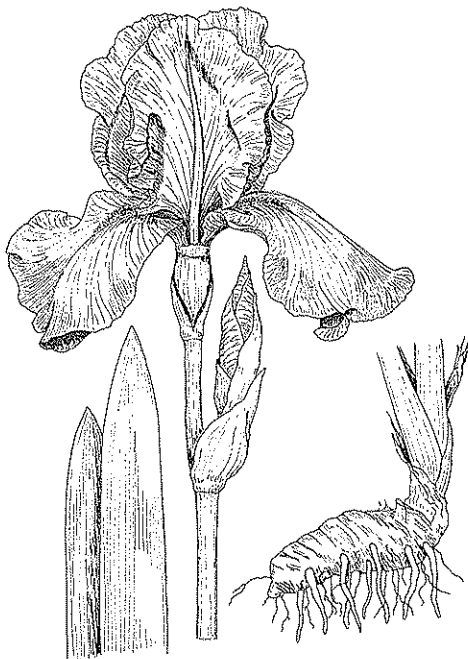
HYACINTH



HYDRANGEA



IRIS



**JAPANESE
ANDROMEDA**





JAPANESE LANTERN (*Physalis alkekengi*)

The Japanese lantern plant produces a brilliant red-orange, papery husk around a berry in autumn. Often it is used for decoration. The plant is a member of the Nightshade family, a group of plants especially well-known for its poisonous alkaloids. While the ripe fruit may be edible, all other parts of the plant seem to have the toxic alkaloids. Animals have been poisoned after eating large quantities of the tops and unripe berries, but usually animals avoid these bitter plants, and thus, cases of poisoning are rare. (1,2,5,7).



KENTUCKY COFFEETREE (*Gymnocladus dioica*)

The Kentucky coffeetree is an interesting landscape plant with large flattened woody beans. Occasionally, it is planted in Maryland. Sheep poisoning has been reported in the state as a result of the sheep eating the sprouts, leaves and fruit, which contain the poisonous alkaloid cytisin. Also, there have been reports of poisoning of people who have eaten the fruit pulp. The seeds are toxic to cattle. The symptoms of poisoning include intense gastrointestinal irritation and nervous disorders. (1,2,3,6,7).



LANTANA (*Lantana*)

Lantana is an occasionally cultivated, but cold-sensitive garden plant in Maryland. It is especially attractive in border plantings. Generally, the flowers change color as they age, resulting in attractive multicolored flower clusters. All parts of the plant, especially the leaves and green berries, are severely toxic. Recoveries are few, and livestock such as cattle and sheep develop gastroenteritis, bloody diarrhea, sores in the mouth, paralysis and blindness. Children have died from eating the green berries. Symptoms of poisoning appear in 2½ to 5 hours. The leaves also can cause contact dermatitis. (1,2,4,5,7).



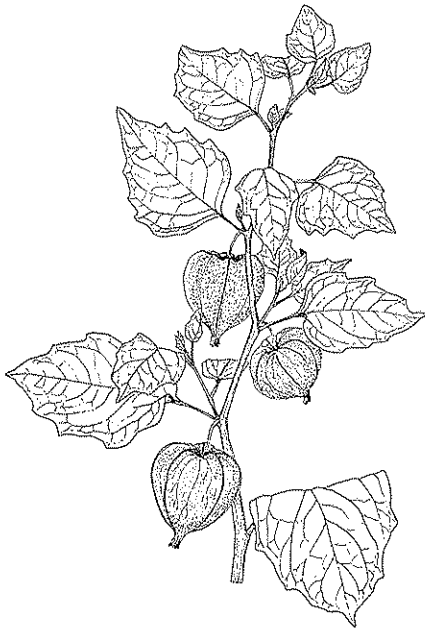
LARKSPUR; DELPHINIUM (*Delphinium*)

The larkspur, a member of the Buttercup family, is occasionally grown in Maryland as an ornamental garden flower. The young leaves, the seeds and other parts of the plant contain toxic alkaloids. Symptoms of human poisoning include burning of the mouth, tingling skin, nausea, abdominal pain, weak pulse and nervous disorders. In animals — especially cattle — symptoms are nervousness, weakness, constipation, stiffness, collapse, nausea, abdominal pains, vomiting and, if large amounts are eaten, death from respiratory paralysis. Leaves and seeds may cause contact dermatitis. Similar effects are seen in the wild species (see delphinium). Monkshood or aconite (*Aconitum*), a relative of the larkspur, sometimes cultivated in gardens, also has similar strong toxic effects and can cause death. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



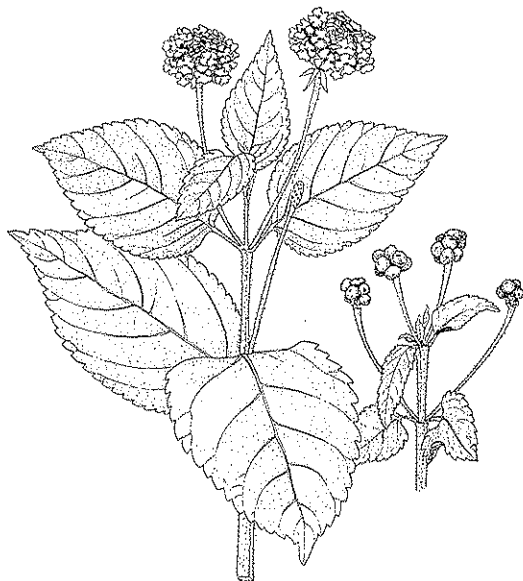
JAPANESE LANTERN



**KENTUCKY
COFFEETREE**



LANTANA



**LARKSPUR;
DELPHINIUM**





LILY-OF-THE-VALLEY (*Convallaria majalis*)

The lily-of-the-valley is planted in gardens frequently for its fragrant, nodding, white, bell-shaped flowers. The fruits ripen into conspicuous red berries that resemble small tomatoes about one-half of an inch in diameter. The toxic cardiac glycosides convallarin and convallamarin are found in the plant and have effects similar to digitalis (see foxglove). The plant is seldom eaten by animals; however, cases of poisoning have resulted from eating the leaves or flowers. The plant is potentially dangerous. (1,2,3,4,6,7).



**MARIJUANA; POT; GRASS; HEMP
(*Cannabis sativa*)**

Marijuana occurs as a cultivated drug plant and as a possible escape in some areas. The possession of the plant or its products is illegal in the United States and its territories. The primary active chemical in the plant is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — an intoxicant that when smoked or eaten generally results in a feeling of euphoria. Smoking the plant is said to be as harmful to the lungs as smoking cigarettes. There may be more harmful effects that are not yet completely understood. The loss of livestock in Greece has been attributed to ingestion of large quantities of marijuana, resulting in congestion and digestive organ hemorrhage. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



**MORNINGGLORY; HEAVENLY-BLUE MORNINGGLORY
(*Ipomoea violacea*)**

The heavenly-blue morningglory, with its attractive and abundant funnel-shaped blue flowers, is a frequently grown vine on trellises and fences in Maryland. The seeds contain very powerful alkaloids similar to LSD that have been misused for the resulting hallucinations. Effects vary in intensity with the individual. From 50 to 300 seeds induce LSD-like hallucinations, accompanied by nausea, diarrhea, panic and shock. The effects usually begin ½ to 1 hour after ingestion and last 5 to 8 hours. Recurrences of altered perceptions may occur for several weeks afterwards. Suicide has been reported as a result of these experiences. While use seems to be declining after a peak in the 1970's, there are still reports of school children experimenting with these seeds (2,5,7).



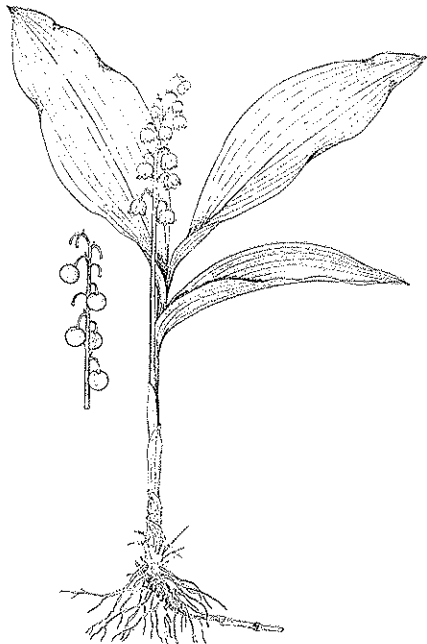
PERIWINKLE (*Vinca*)

Periwinkle, a relative of dogbane and oleander, is a frequently planted evergreen ground cover that sometimes spreads uncontrollably. All parts of the plant contain toxic and bitter alkaloids. Small amounts have been used medicinally, but the toxicity is unknown. The plant has been used to induce abortion. There have been no recent reports of poisoning in Maryland. (2,5).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



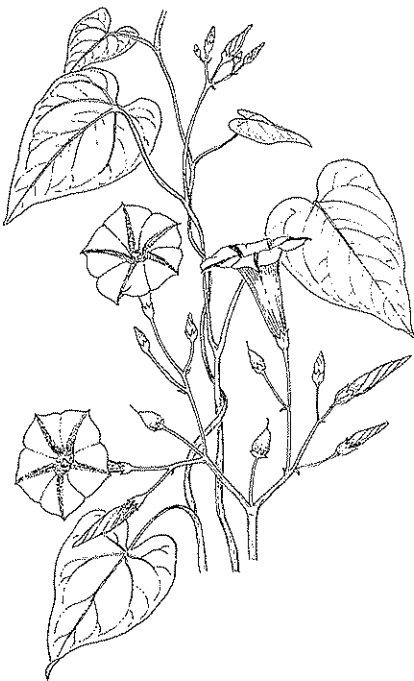
LILY-OF-THE-VALLEY



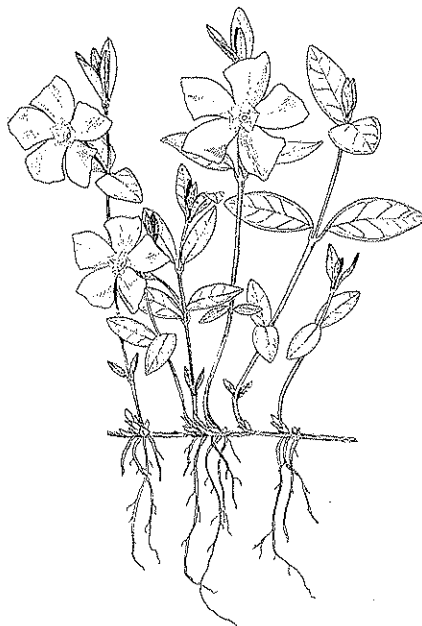
**MARIJUANA; POT;
GRASS; HEMP**



**MORNINGGLORY;
HEAVENLY-BLUE
MORNINGGLORY**



PERIWINKLE





POTATO (*Solanum tuberosum*)

The potato is one of the most important food plants in the world. It is, however, a member of the generally dangerous Nightshade family known for its toxic alkaloids, and it has some poisonous properties. Several wild potato varieties in Central and South America are entirely poisonous. Nearly all parts of the commercial potato, except the safe and nutritious tuber, are poisonous and contain toxic alkaloids such as solanine. The sprouts of the potato, as well as green ('sunburned') potatoes that have matured on the surface of the ground, develop the poisonous alkaloids and have caused death to humans and livestock. Spoiled potatoes also have caused humans and livestock to die because of bacterial and fungal action. (1,2,4,5,7).



PRIVET (*Ligustrum*)

Privet is one of the most frequently planted hedge shrubs in Maryland and often escapes into vacant lots. The leaves and fruit are gastroenteric irritants. They cause vomiting, diarrhea, pain, drowsiness, loss of coordination, weak pulse and convulsions. Fatalities have been reported for both children and animals in Europe, and sheep have died from being fed hedge trimmings in Maryland. All species are thought to be respiratory irritants when in flower. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



RHUBARB (*Rheum rhabarbarum*)

The leaf petiole or 'stalk' of rhubarb is a common home garden vegetable with a pleasant acid taste because of malic acid. The leaf blade, however, contains oxalic acid and soluble oxalates that make even relatively small amounts of it potentially lethal. Both humans and livestock have been poisoned from eating the leaf blades. Symptoms of poisoning include excessive salivation, vomiting, abdominal pains, staggering and sometimes death from convulsions after suffering 3 to 36 hours. (1,2,4,6,7).



SNOW-ON-THE-MOUNTAIN (*Euphorbia bicolor*; *E. marginata)**

Snow-on-the-mountain, a native plant of the prairies of the United States, occasionally is planted in Maryland gardens for the attractive whitened bracts at the top of the plant. There are reports that the plant is responsible for an evil-tasting and poisonous honey. The milky juice is very caustic and has even been used for branding cattle. The entire plant is toxic as are other members of the Spurge family (see croton, crown-of-thorns, poinsettia, castorbean and cypress spurge). (1,2,3,4,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



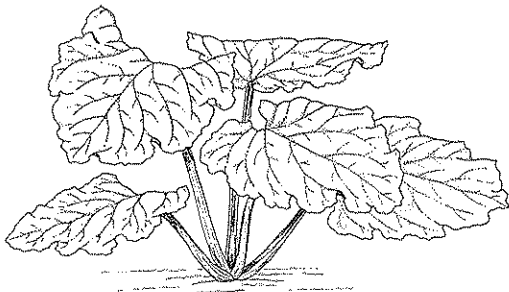
POTATO



PRIVET



RHUBARB



SNOW-ON-THE-MOUNTAIN



Outdoor Cultivated Plants



SPINDLETREE; EUONYMUS (*Euonymus*; for example, *E. europaeus**)

The spindletree is planted frequently in Maryland as a landscape shrub. Ingestion of any part of the plant can cause vomiting, diarrhea, weakness, chills, convulsions and coma. The leaves, bark and fruit act as violent purgatives and are dangerous to children and various livestock. However, apparently no cases of poisoning have been reported in North America. (1,2,4,5,7).



STAR-OF-BETHLEHEM (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*)

The common star-of-Bethlehem is a popular garden flower and frequently escapes in Maryland. The bulbs contain toxic alkaloids that have killed sheep and cattle. There have been heavy losses in Maryland, where more than 1,000 sheep were lost in a single year after eating bulbs that were brought to the surface by frost heaves. Apparently the foliage is not toxic. (1,2,3,4,6,7).



SWEETPEA; EVERLASTING PEA (*Lathyrus*; for example, *L. latifolius**)

The sweetpea and its relatives (not to be confused with green peas or snap peas) have toxic seeds. Lameness, paralysis and skeletal deformities have resulted when livestock have grazed the fruit of this plant. When people, particularly men, eat the seeds as a large part of their diet over extended periods, a disease called lathyrism results, which is characterized by paralysis of the legs. Moderate amounts of the peas in the diet apparently do not produce poisoning in either humans or animals. (1,2,4,5,7).



TANSY (*Tanacetum vulgare*)

The garden tansy has been grown as an herb since the Middle Ages and has been used to kill intestinal worms. Death rarely results from plant overdose, although small doses of this plant can cause severe stomach upset and convulsions. Abortion has resulted in cattle that have eaten tansy, but its bitter taste prevents most animals from eating it. (1,2,4,7).

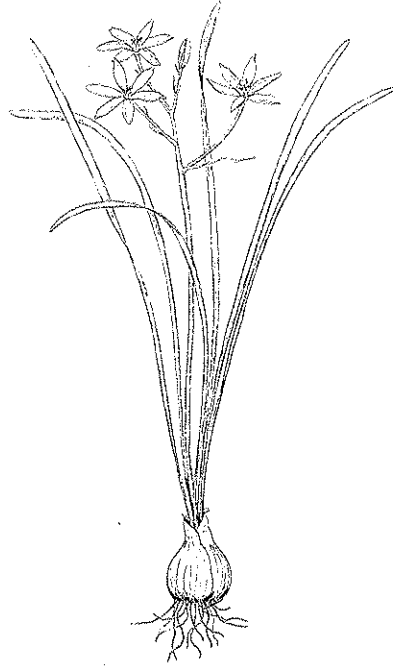
100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



**SPINDLETREE;
EUONYMUS**



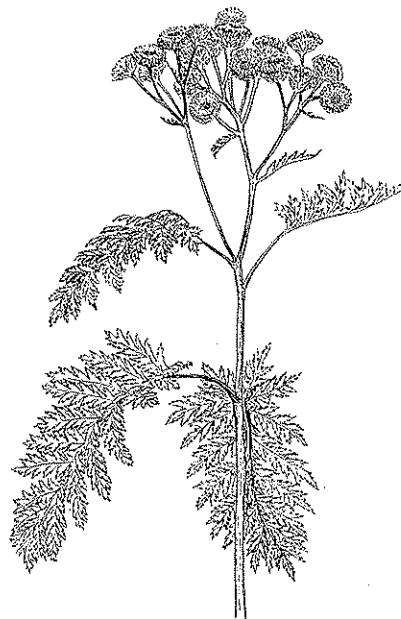
STAR-OF-BETHLEHEM



**SWEETPEA;
EVERLASTING PEA**



TANSY



Outdoor Cultivated Plants



TOBACCO (*Nicotiana tabacum*)

Tobacco, a plant continually under medical investigation, is still a multimillion dollar crop plant. The entire plant contains the alkaloid nicotine as well as other alkaloids and tars. Nicotine is absorbed easily through the skin, and the juice of the plant is a skin irritant. Overdoses of nicotine result in muscular twitching, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, rapid but weak pulse, breathing difficulty, paralysis and death as a result of respiratory paralysis. Nausea and dizziness are frequent in first-time smokers. Cancer may result from long-term use. Numerous livestock poisonings have been reported after eating the plant, some of these in Maryland. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



TOMATO (*Lycopersicon esculentum*)

The tomato is one of the most popular vegetables grown in Maryland, and the ripe fruit is vitamin rich and nontoxic. However, the leaves and other nonfruit parts contain solanine alkaloids that have caused the poisoning and death of livestock and poisoning of children. Also, the plant can be a source of contact dermatitis when it is handled frequently. Cattle have been poisoned by tomato plants that were thrown into a pasture. (1,2,5,7).



WISTERIA (*Wisteria*)

The wisteria vine, with its magnificent showy and fragrant flowers, has poisonous seeds. People in the United States have been poisoned from eating the seeds. The symptoms of poisoning include mild to severe nausea, repeated vomiting, abdominal pains and diarrhea. In serious cases, dehydration and collapse may occur. As few as two seeds have caused severe poisoning. Recovery usually occurs in 24 hours in minor cases. (1,2,5,7).



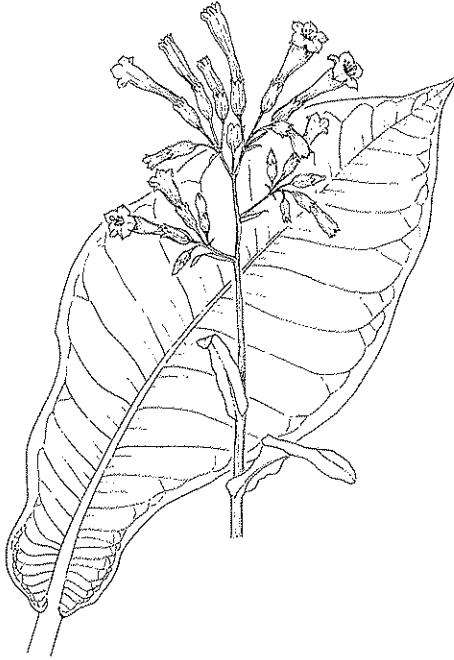
YEW (*Taxus*)

The yew is one of Maryland's most frequently planted landscape evergreens. All parts, except the fleshy red fruit around the seed, are toxic and contain taxine alkaloids. The seeds and leaves are especially toxic. Death as a result of circulatory or respiratory collapse may occur with few or no symptoms after eating a large quantity of the plant. In livestock, symptoms may appear in 1 hour or may not appear for 2 days. These symptoms are diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, circulatory or respiratory collapse, coma, convulsions and death. Humans have died from chewing the seeds or drinking a tea brewed from the leaves. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



TOBACCO



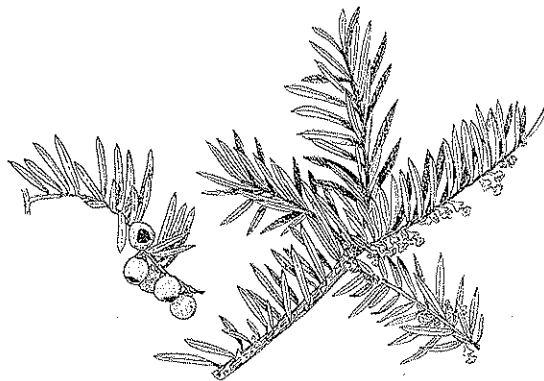
TOMATO



WISTERIA



YEW





BANEERRY (*Actaea alba*)

The baneberry is a perennial herb found infrequently in rich woodlands, primarily in northwestern Maryland. The berries are very conspicuous, white, and may look inviting to small children. It is a poisonous plant and the toxins work on the heart. Children have been poisoned from eating the berries of a related European species. The berries and the entire plant of the related red baneberry also are poisonous. Eating six berries of the red baneberry is sufficient to induce increased pulse, dizziness and stomach pains. No loss of life after ingestion of this plant has been recorded in the United States. (1,2,4,5,7).



**BITTERSWEET NIGHTSHADE;
EUROPEAN BITTERSWEET (*Solanum dulcamara*)**

This plant is a common viny herb with deep purple flowers that have pale orange anthers and bright red fruits. The entire plant contains the toxic alkaloid solanine, also found in potato sprouts and the tomato plant. Cattle, horses and sheep have been poisoned by eating the leaves and shoots of the plant. The attractive berries, resembling small tomatoes, may poison children if eaten. Several cases of child poisoning have been reported in the northwestern states. (1,2,3,4,6,7).



BLACK LOCUST (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)

The black locust is a very common, small, weedy tree found along roads in Maryland. It has attractive clusters of white flowers. Horses, mules, cattle and sheep have died from eating the bark or young shoots. Chickens have been poisoned after eating the leaves. Children have become ill after chewing the inner bark. Symptoms of poisoning include nausea, dilation of the pupils, diarrhea, weak and irregular pulse, and even death in 2 to 3 days. While fatalities are rare, recovery may take several days or weeks. There have also been reports of poisoning from the seeds of the tree. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



**BLACK NIGHTSHADE
(*Solanum nigrum**; *S. americanum*)**

Black nightshade is a common annual weed in fields and waste areas in Maryland. It has white flowers and black berries. The entire plant, except perhaps the ripe fruits, contains the alkaloid solanine and is poisonous. The toxicity of the fruits decreases at maturity, and the ripe berries are sometimes used in pies. An apparently safe garden variety is called "wonderberry" or "garden huckleberry" and is gaining popularity in vegetable gardens. Eating the other parts of the plant can produce paralysis, salivation, vomiting, bloating and diarrhea. Numerous cases of poisoning have been reported in Maryland and the United States in general. Cattle, sheep, pigs, horses, chickens and ducks have died from eating black nightshade. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



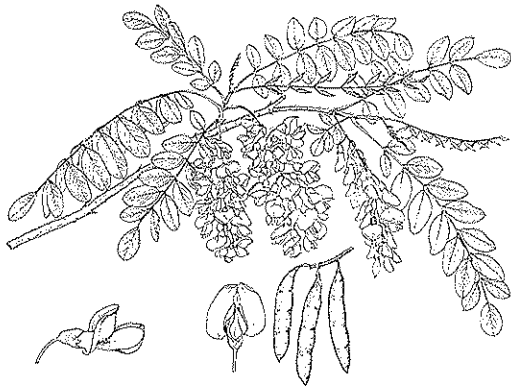
BANEBERRY



**BITTERSWEET
NIGHTSHADE;
EUROPEAN BITTERSWEET**



BLACK LOCUST



BLACK NIGHTSHADE



Outdoor Wild Plants



BLOODROOT (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

Bloodroot is an attractive, early spring, white-flowered perennial usually found in rich woodlands on sunny slopes. It has a 'root' or underground stem (rhizome) that has a bitter blood-red sap that once was used medicinally, but contains the toxic alkaloid sanguinarine that may be poisonous in moderate quantities. Overdoses of the prepared extract can cause fatal cardiac paralysis. Also, the juice of the plant is an eye and skin irritant. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



BLUE COHOSH (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)

The blue cohosh is a perennial of mature woodlands, generally most conspicuous in the autumn when it bears blue fruits that resemble grapes. The entire plant is extremely bitter and usually not eaten by people or livestock. The rootstock contains a toxic alkaloid (methylcytisine) and glycosides. Handling the plant also has caused dermatitis in some individuals. Extracts of the root were used by American Indians to promote menstruation. Children have been poisoned by eating the blue fruits. The plant is in the Barberry family, as is the mayapple. (2,3,4,7).



BRACKENFERN (*Pteridium aquilinum*)

The brackenfern is a widespread, large (to 6 feet tall), leathery fern often found in large colonies in or at the edges of woodlands. Many kinds of livestock have died from eating the fronds in the wild or mixed with hay; several of these deaths were reported in Maryland. Death may occur from thiaminase poisoning resulting in anorexia, hemorrhages and cardiac irregularities. Some persons eat the fiddleheads, or young leaves, like asparagus, but there is evidence that these may be carcinogenic in quantity (because of shikimic acid). (1,2,3,4,5,6).



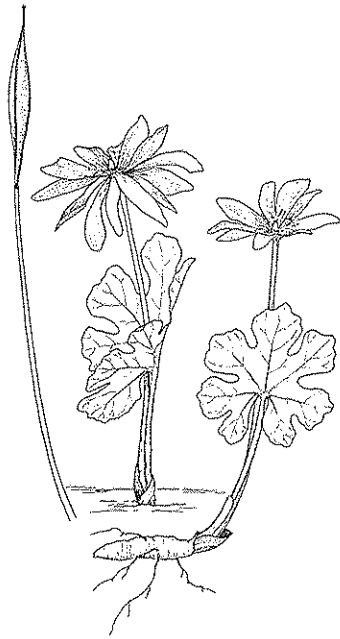
BUTTERCUPS (*Ranunculus*; for example, *R. bulbosus**)

Buttercups are frequent pasture, roadside, lawn, marsh and woodland plants that usually contain acrid poisonous chemicals (such as ranunculin and anemonin). These chemicals sometimes are strong enough to produce blisters on the skin. Cattle have been poisoned by the plant, though they rarely eat it because of its bitter taste. The plant has caused respiratory and eye irritation in people, and eating the plant can cause burning in the mouth and throat, vomiting, internal lesions and, very rarely, convulsions and death. Children have been poisoned by eating the bulbous portion of the plants. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



BLOODROOT



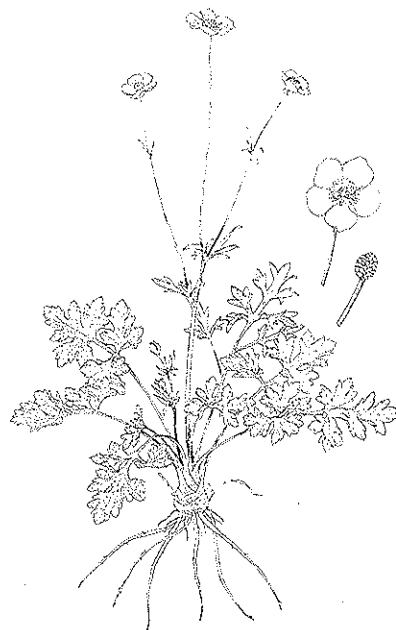
BLUE COHOSH



BRACKENFERN



BUTTERCUPS



Outdoor Wild Plants



CELANDINE; ROCK POPPY (*Chelidonium majus*)

Celandine, originally introduced from Europe, is now commonly found along roadsides and pathways. Its conspicuous orange-yellow sap is very acrid and can cause dermatitis and severe irritation and gastroenteritis if eaten. Fatalities are rare, but have been recorded. Bitter alkaloids such as chelidoneine are responsible for the plant's toxicity. (1,2,4,6,7).



COCKLEBUR (*Xanthium strumarium*)

The cocklebur is well known by its rather large spiny fruits that attach to hair, clothing and fur. Some suggest that the fruits can cause intestinal blockage if eaten by livestock. The primary danger is, however, in eating the seedlings, which are very toxic and can cause muscular spasms and death. The older plants are very bitter and seldom eaten. The seeds also are poisonous. Toxic properties may be the result of hydroquinones and cyanogenic compounds. Several cases of poisoning have been reported in Maryland. (1,2,3,4,5,6).



CORNSPOCKLE (*Agrostemma githago*)

The cornspockle is a very infrequent, introduced weed in Maryland, usually found in wheat fields. Its seeds contain saponins such as githagenin (githagin), which in large amounts can be fatal to animals, especially poultry. Ingestion of the seeds by humans can cause vomiting, diarrhea and breathing difficulties, possibly resulting in death. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



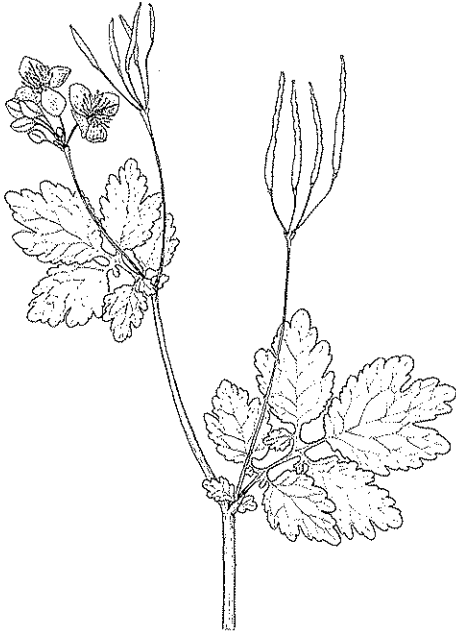
DELPHINIUM; LARKSPUR; STAGGERWEED (*Delphinium*; for example, *D. tricornis)**

The larkspur is a very attractive, unusual but scarce wildflower, found mostly along the northern Potomac River in Maryland. There are several cultivated species as well (see larkspur under garden plants). Where larkspurs are common, cattle losses are not unusual. The poisoning is caused by delphinine and other alkaloids. Generally, poisoned animals stagger, fall and become severely bloated before dying. The entire plant is poisonous, but the young leaves and seeds are the most poisonous parts. The plant may cause dermatitis in some people and severe burning in the mouth if eaten. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



**CELANDINE;
ROCK POPPY**



COCKLEBUR



CORNCOCKLE



**DELPHINIUM;
LARKSPUR;
STAGGERWEED**





DOGBANE; INDIAN HEMP (*Apocynum cannabinum*)

Dogbane is a common shrubby herb found along roads and margins of woodlands throughout Maryland. The entire plant contains the toxic glycoside cymarin, apocan- noside and other toxic chemicals. A relatively small amount of the plant (15 to 30 grams) can kill a horse or cow. The plant is distasteful and is rarely eaten. No cases of poisoning from the plant have been reported in Maryland. Symptoms of poisoning include increased pulse and temperature, dilated pupils, anorexia and diarrhea. On rare occasions death results. (1,2,3,4,6,7).



DUTCHMANS-BREECHES and SQUIRREL-CORN (*Dicentra cucullaria**; *D. canadensis*)

Dutchmans-breeches and squirrel-corn are two attractive and closely related spring wildflowers occasionally found in rich woodlands in Maryland. They contain the toxic alkaloid cucullarine, which also is found in their relative, the bleedingheart. Cases of poisoning by spring grazing of cattle have been reported in mountainous regions of Virginia, but these rarely are fatal. The tubers, the most poisonous part of the plant, are distasteful and are eaten rarely if other plants are available. Symptoms of poisoning include difficulty in breathing and convulsions. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus canadensis*)

The elderberry is a well-known swamp shrub with edible berries often used in pies or beverages. It is an attractive, relatively common plant throughout Maryland. However, the rest of the plant, especially the young leaves, roots and stems, contains a bitter alkaloid and glycoside that can produce small amounts of hydrocyanic acid (causing cyanide poisoning). Cattle, hogs and sheep have died from eating the elderberry, and children have been poisoned by chewing or sucking the bark. Nevertheless, the plant is bitter and cases of poisoning are rare. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



FALSE-HELLEBORE (*Veratrum viride*)

The false-hellebore is one of our best known and most toxic poisonous plants. It is usually found along swampy streams in colonies, mostly in the northern counties of Maryland. The entire plant contains several toxic alkaloids, such as veratrine and veratrosine, that give it a sharp burning taste. For this reason, few animals will eat the plant. Eating the plant results in extreme abdominal pain, incoordination, paralysis and convulsions. Death occurs from asphyxia. In Maryland, a few cases of cattle poisoning have been reported in Garrett county. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

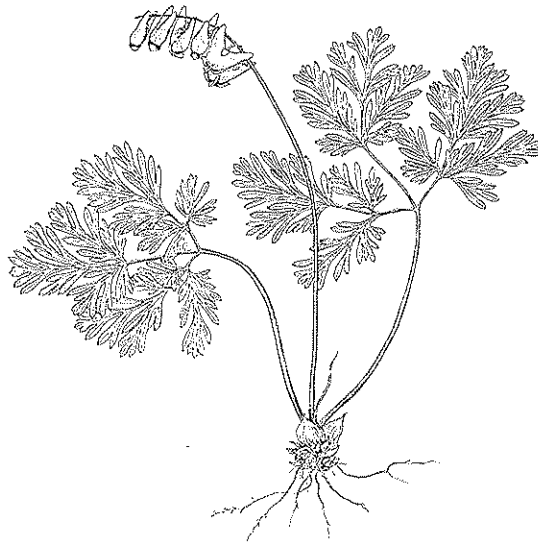
100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



**DOGBANE;
INDIAN HEMP**



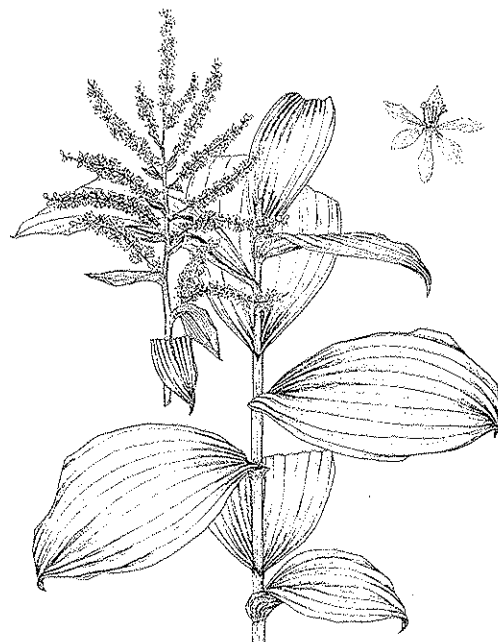
**DUTCHMANS-
BREECHES**



ELDERBERRY



FALSE-HELLEBORE



FLOWERING SPURGE (*Euphorbia corollata*)

The flowering spurge is found occasionally in fields and along roadsides, mostly in the central and southern parts of Maryland in sandy soil. Like the other spurges discussed previously (see crown-of-thorns, poinsettia, cypress spurge and snow-on-the-mountain), this plant is toxic also. People who come in contact with the milky sap may contract dermatitis with both inflammation and blisters. Some individuals are more susceptible than others. When eaten, spurges are irritating and can cause vomiting and diarrhea. Intense burning can occur around the eyes or mouth. Cattle feeding on hay with spurges (that have lost their acrid taste) become weak, collapse and may die. (1,2,3,4,6,7).



GROUNDCHERRY (*Physalis*; for example, *P. virginianum)**

The groundcherry is found occasionally in old fields and pastures in Maryland, and is often noticed because of the decorative, inflated fruit husk (calyx) that encloses an orange or yellow berry. It is a close relative of the Japanese lantern plant and has similar toxicity. Animals have been poisoned by the alkaloids in the plant, but generally avoid it because of its bitter taste. The unripe fruit is poisonous, but the ripe fruit of some species is edible. (1,2,4,5,7).



HERCULES-CLUB; DEVILS WALKINGSTICK (*Aralia spinosa*)

Hercules-club is an attractive, though sometimes weedy, small, sparsely branched tree found in moist woodlands and woodland margins. The stems have large spines or prickles that can cause physical injury. Some people are allergic to the bark and roots of the plant and develop dermatitis, with inflammation and blisters, on contact with these parts. Eating large amounts of berries may be poisonous, and the seeds have been lethal to guinea pigs. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



HYDRANGEA; WILD HYDRANGEA (*Hydrangea arborescens*)

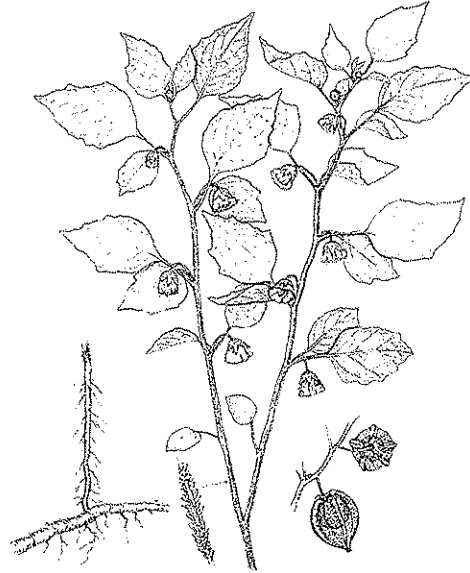
The wild hydrangea is a small shrub commonly found in shaded slopes, especially in calcareous soils along the Potomac River basin. As in the cultivated hydrangeas, a few cases of poisoning have been reported in livestock that have eaten the plant. Painful gastroenteritis and bloody diarrhea have resulted in these cases and in experimental feedings to animals. The poisoning seems to be caused by a cyanogenic glycoside called hydrangin concentrated in leaves and flower buds. (1,2,3,4,5,7).



FLOWERING SPURGE



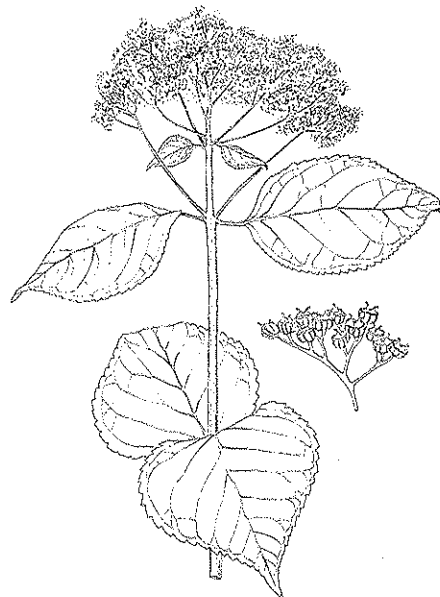
GROUNDCHERRY



**HERCULES-CLUB;
DEVILS WALKINGSTICK**



**HYDRANGEA;
WILD HYDRANGEA**





INDIANTOBACCO; LOBELIA (*Lobelia inflata*)

Indiantobacco is a small annual herb with blue flowers and a somewhat inflated fruit found mostly at the margins of moist woodlands in Maryland. For many years, the plant was used medicinally to treat laryngitis and asthma, and small amounts were even smoked or added to tobacco for this purpose. Overdoses of the plant act as narcotic poisons because of the presence of the alkaloids lobeline and lobelidine among others. Many people have been poisoned by these overdoses. Animals have been poisoned by feeding on the plant. Symptoms of poisoning include nausea, vomiting, exhaustion, dilation of the pupils, coma, and finally convulsions and death in both humans and animals. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT (*Arisaema triphyllum*)

The interesting jack-in-the-pulpit is a frequent and popular wildflower found in wet woodlands mostly in the mountains and piedmont of Maryland. This perennial herb has a starchy root corm that was roasted by American Indians for food. When fresh, however, the entire plant has the needlelike crystals of calcium oxalate typical of the Arum family. These can cause an intense burning irritation of the mouth and throat. No deaths have been reported from eating this plant, as one taste generally is enough to discourage further tasting. There are a few reports of dermatitis caused by handling this plant. See cutleaf philodendron, dumb cane, elephants ear, philodendron, pothos and skunkcabbage for others in this family. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



JIMSONWEED; JAMESTOWNWEED (*Datura stramonium*)

Jimsonweed is a rather common, large attractive annual herb found in disturbed soils throughout the state, but it is most common on the coastal plain. It has an acrid aroma, white to purplish trumpet-shaped flowers, and spiny fruits the size of a small tomato. It is one of our most famous local poisonous plants. Early settlers of Jamestown were taught by the American Indians how to use the plant as a narcotic in 1676. The plant contains potent and dangerous toxic alkaloids such as atropine, hyoscyamine and scopolamine in high concentrations, and many people have died from overdoses and experimentation. As little as 4 to 5 grams of the leaves or seeds can kill a child. Hallucinations and delirium are common, and poisoned individuals become violent at times. Convulsions can lead to a coma and death. Some of nearly every kind of livestock in Maryland have been killed by eating the leaves or seeds of this plant when other food was unavailable. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



JOHNSONGRASS (*Sorghum halepense*)

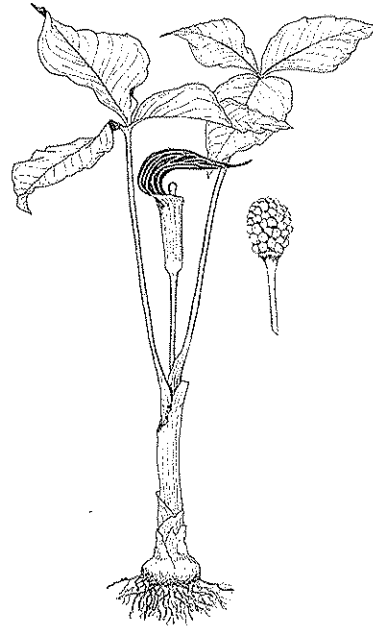
Johnsongrass is an occasional roadside weed in Maryland, but it becomes more abundant farther south. It was introduced to this country in 1830 but appears native today and can be a troublesome weed. It was thought to be an excellent pasture grass, but it was later discovered that when damaged by frost it contains significant levels of cyanide. Darker green plants have more cyanide than yellowish plants. Livestock in Maryland have been poisoned by this plant. Johnsongrass also concentrates nitrates in the soil to dangerously high levels. (1,2,3,4,5,6).



**INDIANTOBACCO;
LOBELIA**



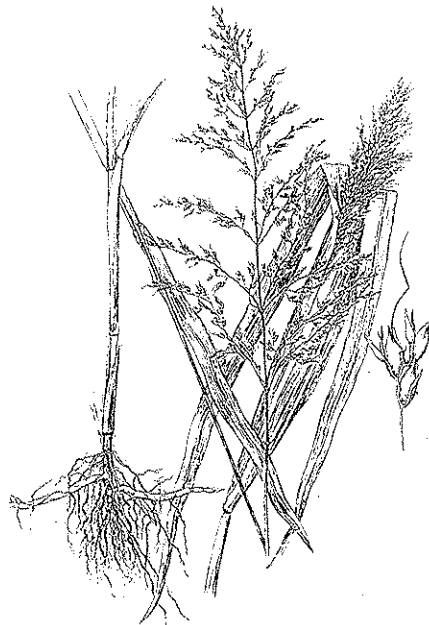
JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT



**JIMSONWEED;
JAMESTOWNWEED**



JOHNSONGRASS



Outdoor Wild Plants



MAYAPPLE (*Podophyllum peltatum*)

In spring, Mayapples are found commonly in rich, shaded, moist woodlands mostly in the piedmont portion of the state. The plant is an attractive shining green, and the two umbrella-shaped leaves hide an attractive, large, white flower. Later in the season, a small elliptical fruit like a small lemon develops, and this is edible when soft and ripe. The rest of the plant contains podophyllin, a resinous chemical that kills cells or prevents them from growing. It has been used medicinally to treat some skin cancers. However, the plant is very toxic, and severe skin lesions may occur when the root is handled. Animals and humans have been poisoned occasionally from eating the plant and through overdoses of the drug. Since the plant is bitter and rarely eaten, poisonings are rare. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



MILKWEED (*Asclepias*; for example, *A. syriaca)**

Milkweeds are common, usually summer-flowering, perennials, found in meadows, swamps and along roadsides throughout Maryland. Their name comes from the abundance of milky sap found throughout the plant. The fruits or 'pods' often are used for decoration. The toxin galitoxin is found in the sap and has poisoned livestock. Symptoms of poisoning include weakness and staggering, breathing difficulty, high temperatures, dilation of the pupils, coma and death in a few days in very serious cases. The common milkweed (*A. syriaca*) is one of the least toxic of the local species, and young shoots and pods sometimes are eaten as a vegetable. However, sheep have been poisoned by eating this plant in Maryland, and experimentation is, therefore, discouraged. (1,2,4,5,6,7).



MISTLETOE (*Phorodendron serotinum*)

The mistletoe is an olive-green evergreen parasitic plant found usually on high tree limbs. In Maryland, it is scarce except in the southern and coastal plain counties. The attractive white berries on evergreen branches are a popular Christmas decoration. However, in the western states, cattle that have eaten the plant have died. Human fatalities have been reported from eating or steeping the berries or leaves. Symptoms of poisoning include severe gastroenteritis and heart failure, resulting in death in about 10 hours. The poisonous chemicals seem to be toxic amines. (1,2,4,5,7).



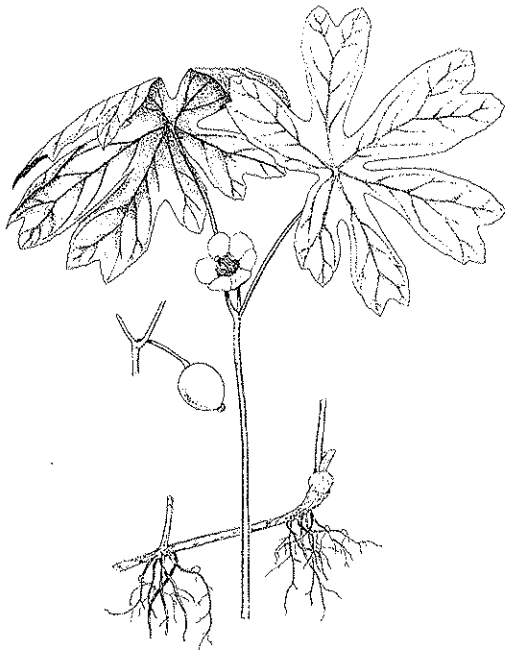
MOONSEED (*Menispermum canadense*)

The moonseed is an attractive native vine found most frequently in river forests in Maryland. It is probably most frequent in the southern Potomac basin. The fruits often are confused with grapes, but the leaves are gently lobed, not toothed, and the fruit has a single large crescent-shaped seed, unlike the grape's. Reports of fatalities of children have come from Ohio and Pennsylvania where the fruits were eaten after being mistaken for grapes. The fruits contain a bitter alkaloid, and the seeds, which have a very rough surface, also may cause mechanical injury to the intestines. (1,2,3,4,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



MAYAPPLE



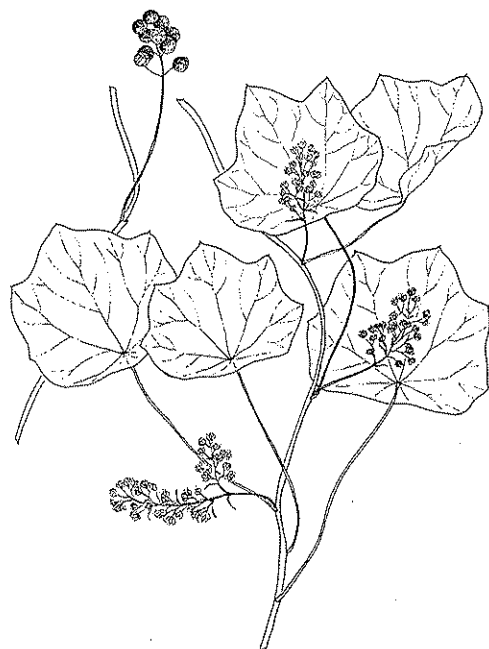
MILKWEED



MISTLETOE



MOONSEED



Outdoor Wild Plants



MOUNTAIN-LAUREL; LAUREL (*Kalmia latifolia*)

The attractive mountain-laurel is a frequent, large evergreen shrub usually found in acid woodlands in Maryland. It is sometimes cultivated for the attractive white to pink flowers. It is another member of the Heath family, and like its relatives (see azalea, Japanese andromeda and rhododendron) contains the toxic chemical andromedotoxin, which can kill humans and animals. The Delaware Indians used laurel for suicide, but more than 2 ounces of leaves were required. Human poisoning is reported from the honey from this plant. Deaths of livestock such as sheep, goats and cattle have been reported several times in Maryland from mountain-laurel. Symptoms of poisoning include anorexia, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, coma and death. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



MUSHROOMS (Many species; for example, *Amanita muscaria)**

While there are both edible and poisonous mushrooms in Maryland, and the edible species are more frequent than generally believed, only experts should gather and eat them. Species determination often is difficult, and the effects on people differ with each individual. The fly-agaric mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*), which has been used as an intoxicant and hallucinogen, causes severe gastrointestinal problems, delirium and coma when eaten. Death is rare, but possible. (1,2,6,7).



POISON-HEMLOCK (*Conium maculatum*)

Poison-hemlock, a large herb with purple-spotted stems up to 6 feet tall, historically may be the best known poisonous plant. The Greeks used poison-hemlock to kill state criminals such as Socrates. All parts of the plant are poisonous when eaten, and many people and animals have died from eating it. The seeds are sometimes mistaken for anise, the leaves for parsley and the roots for parsnips. Even blowing whistles made from the hollow stems can cause severe poisoning or death. The plant is occasionally found in colonies along roads in Maryland. The poisonous alkaloid in the plant is called conine. Symptoms of poisoning include trembling, pupil dilation, slowed heartbeat, coma and death from respiratory failure. (1,2,3,4,6,7).



POISON-IVY (*Toxicodendron [Rhus] radicans*)

Poison-ivy is a well-known large climbing or shrubby vine recognized by its white berries and its leaves, which have three shiny leaflets. The common adage: "Leaflets three, let it be" refers to the fact that all parts of the plant, especially the leaves, can cause severe blistering of the skin if touched. The entire plant is poisonous, and even the smoke or soot of the burned plant can cause severe dermatitis. The plant occurs frequently in Maryland, especially in disturbed areas. The poison is a yellowish oil called urusiol. Washing with soaps containing oils can spread this oil and the resulting rash. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



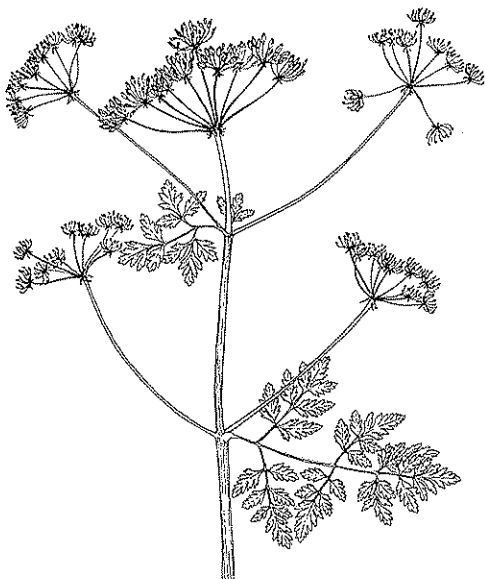
**MOUNTAIN-LAUREL;
LAUREL**



MUSHROOMS



POISON-HEMLOCK



POISON-IVY



Outdoor Wild Plants



POISON-OAK (*Toxicodendron pubescens*)

Poison-oak generally is a small shrub that closely resembles its relative, poison-ivy, except for its more deeply lobed leaves. The dermatitis caused by poison-oak is the same as that caused by poison-ivy. The plant is not common in Maryland except at the coastal plain-piedmont transition (the fall line) from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, and again on the lower Eastern Shore. See poison-ivy and poison-sumac for details on the toxic properties. (1,4,5,7).



POISON-SUMAC (*Rhus vernix*)

Poison-sumac is a few-branched, slender shrub whose leaves have 7 to 15 leaflets. It often is mistaken for a young ash tree or one of the harmless sumacs. The fruits are white or pale yellow like those of poison-ivy and poison-oak, and not red as in the harmless sumacs. The entire plant can cause severe dermatitis. In Maryland, the plant is scarce partly because of drainage of swamps, but it is still fairly common in river swamps on the Eastern Shore. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



POKEWEED; POKE (*Phytolacca americana*)

Many people who eat poke shoots each spring as a vegetable are surprised to learn that the plant is toxic. The plant is a common fleshy herb (often tinted reddish purple) with a large fleshy taproot; it is found throughout Maryland in disturbed areas. The fruits are in large bunches, and their purple-red color is similar to cherries. The plant has poisoned both humans and livestock; the roots are the most toxic part. Children reportedly have been poisoned by eating large quantities of the berries. Symptoms of poisoning include burning of the mouth, severe intestinal cramps, vomiting and diarrhea. Usually, there is visual impairment and weakened respiration and pulse. Recovery may be in 24 hours, but death can result. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



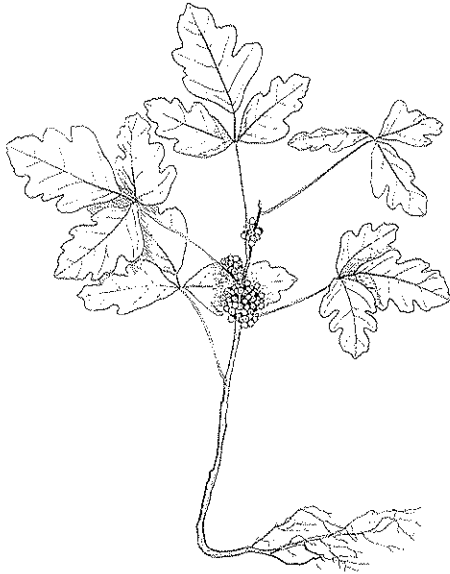
RAGWEED (*Ambrosia*; for example, *A. trifida)**

The common roadside ragweeds, while not poisonous in the same sense as the others discussed here, produce large quantities of irritant windborne pollen that causes most cases of late summer and autumn hay fever. Ragweed pollen is the most allergenic pollen in North America. The irritant component of the pollen is called antigen E. Hay fever may include intense watering of the eyes and nose and sneezing, frequently accompanied by redness, irritation and headache. Some people are allergic to the plant itself, and handling it may cause dermatitis. (1,2,4,5,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



POISON-OAK



POISON-SUMAC



POKEWEED; POKE



RAGWEED



Outdoor Wild Plants



RHODODENDRON (*Rhododendron maximum*)

The wild rhododendron, also cultivated in Maryland, is most common on cool, wet slopes in the western part of the state. The entire plant has andromedotoxin, the poisonous chemical also found in the mountain-laurel, which has caused poisoning to both humans and livestock. Reported poisonings are rare because few animals eat the bitter, tough leaves. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



SKUNKCABBAGE (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)

Skunkcabbage is found occasionally in Maryland in red maple swamps, primarily on the piedmont. The large cabbagelike leaves are preceded by an unusual flower cluster like that of the jack-in-the-pulpit, a relative. The entire plant contains calcium oxalate crystals, which can cause severe and painful irritation of the mouth and throat if eaten. The conditions and symptoms are similar to other members of the Arum family (see cutleaf philodendron, dumb cane, elephants-ear, philodendron, pothos and jack-in-the-pulpit). (1,2,4).



SPURGE; EYEBANE (*Euphorbia maculata*; *E. nutans)**

The spurges are frequent weeds along roads, in gardens and in pastures in Maryland. Several others have already been discussed (see crown-of-thorns, poinsettia, cypress spurge, snow-on-the-mountain and flowering spurge). The milky sap of these herbs is caustic and irritating to many people, and *E. maculata* may be highly toxic. Lambs have died in a few hours after eating this species. Ingestion of the plant by livestock can result in photosensitivity, or increased sensitivity to sunlight resulting in severe skin problems. Contact with the milky sap can cause dermatitis with blisters and inflammation in humans; the eyes are especially sensitive. Temporary blindness can result from contact. (1,2,3,4,7).



STINGING-NETTLE (*Urtica dioica*)

The stinging-nettle is an occasional weedy herb found mostly in disturbed ground along rivers and streams in Maryland. None of the species of nettle is poisonous, and the young boiled plant is eaten sometimes as a potherb. However, this species when fresh has stiff brittle hairs that inject irritating liquids into the skin upon contact like a wasp sting, and this causes brief but intense itching or pain. In some, swelling and burning may occur. The injected liquid may contain formic acid or histamines. (1,2,3,4,5,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



RHODODENDRON



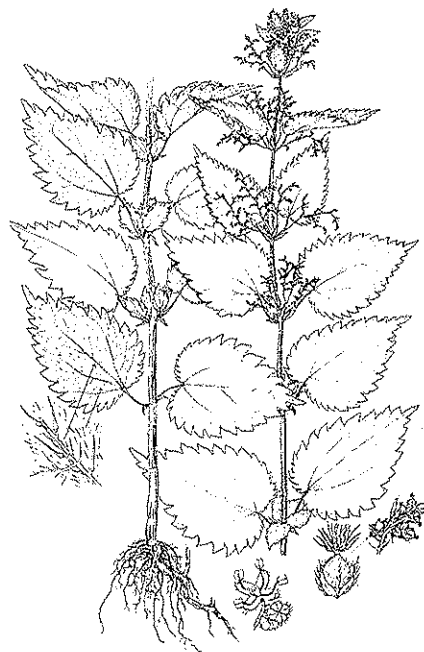
SKUNKCABBAGE



SPURGE; EYEBANE



STINGING-NETTLE



Outdoor Wild Plants



TRUMPET-CREEPER (*Campsis radicans*)

The trumpet-creeper is a very attractive native woody vine found in hedgerows, and it often is cultivated for its large, tubular, orange-red flowers that are popular with hummingbirds. The leaves and flowers can cause skin inflammation and blistering in a few people sensitive to it. The plant is reputed, with little evidence, to be poisonous. The attractiveness of the plant generally outweighs any potentially poisonous properties. (2,3,4,5,7).



VIRGINIA-CREEPER (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

This very attractive and frequent vine, found throughout Maryland, often is mistaken for a grape since it has small blue berries. Unlike the grape, the leaves have several leaflets (usually five). There are a few cases on record in which lethal poisoning in children was traced to the eating of these berries. Experimental feeding to guinea pigs has shown that a dozen berries can be lethal in 36 hours. The eating of the leaves of the plant has been suspected of causing vomiting, diarrhea, weak pulse, dilation of pupils and collapse. (1,2,5,7).



VIRGINS-BOWER; CLEMATIS (*Clematis*; for example, *C. virginiana**)

The virgins-bower or clematis is a rather attractive vine that is found occasionally along roadsides and in pastures throughout Maryland. None of the species in Maryland has been proven to be toxic, but the plant has a history of toxicity in Europe. Alkaloids, glycosides and saponins have been extracted from the plant, and all are potentially dangerous. The plant is very bitter and seems to be eaten only rarely. There have been a few reports of dermatitis from handling the leaves of *C. virginiana*. The entire plant has a very acrid juice, like its relative, the buttercup. (1,2,3,4,5,7).



WAHOO; HEARTS-A-BUSTIN'; STRAWBERRY BUSH (*Euonymus*; for example, *E. americanus**)

The wahoo is a small tree or shrub with green stems found occasionally in rich woodlands in Maryland. As with its cultivated relatives, (see spindletree) the native *Euonymus* species are suspected of causing vomiting, weakness, chills and even coma after ingestion. The bark and root have been used medicinally as a purgative in folk medicine. (1,2,4,5,7).

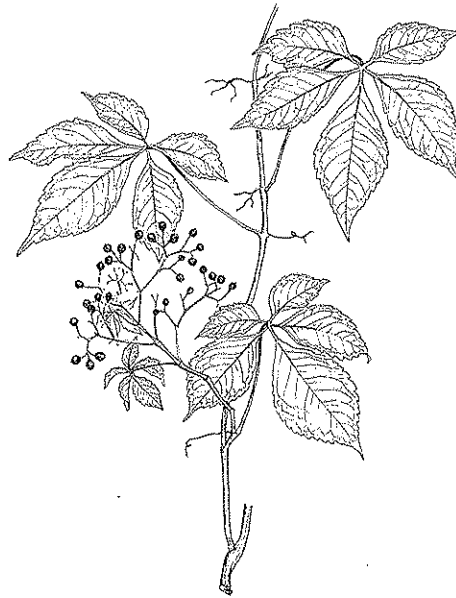
100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



TRUMPET-CREEPER



VIRGINIA-CREEPER



**VIRGINS-BOWER;
CLEMATIS**



**WAHOO;
HEARTS-A-BUSTIN';
STRAWBERRY BUSH**



Outdoor Wild Plants



WATERHEMLOCK (*Cicuta maculata*)

The waterhemlock is a close relative of the poison-hemlock and is found frequently in swamps and marshes in Maryland. This herb is extremely toxic, and many people have been fatally poisoned after eating swollen roots that were mistaken for parsnips. The poisonous substance in the plant is cicutoxin, a clear brown resin. Livestock in Maryland also have been poisoned after eating this plant. A piece of root the size of a walnut may be enough to kill a cow. Symptoms of poisoning include severe stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhea, pupil dilation, breathing difficulty, frothing at the mouth, violent convulsions and death in a few hours. With treatment, recovery can be complete in 24 hours. This is one of Maryland's most dangerous, poisonous plants. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



WHITE SNAKEROOT (*Eupatorium rugosum*)

The common woodland herb known as white snakeroot has been responsible indirectly for hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of deaths in eastern North America. The disease, called "milksickness" in humans and "trembles" in livestock occurs when dairy animals eat this plant. The poison is carried in the milk. Entire villages have been abandoned in some areas where the weed was common, and Abraham Lincoln's mother is thought to have died of the disease. The plant contains the fat-soluble chemical tremetol that accumulates in the body. Livestock still occasionally are poisoned, but human poisoning is rare today because of more careful dairy procedures. Symptoms of poisoning include sluggishness, stiffness, trembling, hemorrhage and coma, and possibly death. Maryland has had several reported poisonings. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



WILD BLACK CHERRY (*Prunus serotina; *P. virginiana*)**

The wild black cherry is one of Maryland's most frequent native weedy trees. Dangerous levels of a cyanogenic glycoside that can cause cyanide poisoning are produced in the leaves and seeds. Numerous human and livestock poisonings have been caused by this plant. Less than one-fourth of a pound of fresh leaves can kill a 100-pound animal. Branches of wild black cherry sometimes are tossed into pastures. The cyanide is concentrated in wilted leaves but disappears after the leaves have dried. Death can occur within minutes after an animal has eaten the leaves if the animal drinks large quantities of water soon afterwards. Children have died after eating the seed kernels. This is one of the most dangerous plants to livestock in Maryland, along with mountain-laurel. The fruits (exclusive of the seeds) can be eaten without harm. (1,2,3,4,5,6,7).



WOOD NETTLE (*Laportea canadensis*)

The wood nettle is found in wet woodlands especially near streams, mostly on the coastal plain and piedmont in Maryland. The plant has precisely the same properties as the stinging-nettle and the rigid hairs can deliver very painful stings. (2,3,4,5,6,7).

100 Poisonous Plants of Maryland



WATERHEMLOCK



WHITE SNAKEROOT



WILD BLACK CHERRY



WOOD NETTLE



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