

Poisonous plants used in flower arranging

I have discovered that a large proportion of our plant life is poisonous to us in various degrees, it is their defence against marauding animals, so I am limiting this article to those commonly used in flower arranging, which have proved to be dangerous.

Aconitum napellus Monk's hood, Wolf bane.

All parts of this plant are extremely poisonous.

It contains a neurotoxin which can stop the heart and depress breathing. Death can occur between two and six hours after ingestion. It was used to kill wolves —and occasionally people! The toxin can easily be absorbed through the skin, causing tingling, numbness and circulatory changes resembling bruising. Prolonged handling of the plants could be dangerous.



Monk's hood



Arum berries

Arum maculatum & italicum

All parts of the plant are poisonous. The bright red berries which come in the autumn are attractive to children. When put in the mouth they cause a severe allergic reaction causing swelling of the tongue and throat which can be very frightening. It is seldom fatal. It is the most common cause of accidental plant poisonings according to A&E records.

Convallaria majalis Lily of the valley

All parts of this plant are extremely poisonous, including the red berries which are attractive to children. Ingesting a very small part can cause nausea, vomiting and reduced heart rate.



Spindle berries

Euonymus europaeus Spindle berry tree

More common in North America. Grown for its unusual fruits and brightly coloured autumnal foliage. The berries are very poisonous, attractive to children. If eaten, they can cause fatal liver and kidney damage.

Euphorbia sps

We use several Euphorbias in the garden and in flower arranging. *Euphorbia fulgens* *Euphorbia amygdaloides* *Euphorbia pulcherima*. They all exude a caustic milky latex from cut stems and when leaves are damaged. This latex can irritate the skin, and if transferred to the eyes it can burn and cause blindness.



Euphorbia pulcherima

Digitalis purpurea Foxglove

Leaves, flowers and seeds are poisonous to humans and some animals. Ingestion is likely to cause heart failure.



Narcissus/Daffodil. The bulbs are very poisonous. They have been known to be confused with onion bulbs.

Lilium orientalis-oriental lily is also very poisonous. Tales are told of the bright yellow pollen getting onto the coat of a cat which ingested it, killing it.



Euphorbia fulgens