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21 Common Poisonous Plants

Michigan State University Extension Service

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Description for Fig. 3, *Arisaema Triphyllum* (inside) is incorrect. Should read: Native herb of woodlands with a distinctive large bract arching over the fleshy spike, leaves with three leaflets.



21 COMMON
POISONOUS PLANTS

1. *ACTAEA PACHYPODA*



common names: baneberry, cohosh, coralberry, necklace-weed, snakeberry.

Native herb of woodlands, with small white flowers in a short, thick, terminal cluster, fruit is either red (*Actaea rubra*) on slender stalks, or white (*Actaea pachypoda*) on thickened stalks, leaves have many sharply toothed leaflets.

harmful portions: roots and fruits most harmful, otherwise all parts.



2. *ACTAEA RUBRA*

common names: Indian turnip, Jack-in-the-pulpit.

harmful portions: roots

Native herb of woodlands, with small white flowers in a short, thick, terminal cluster, fruit is either white (*Actaea pachypoda*) on thickened stalks, or red (*Actaea rubra*) on slender stalks, leaves have many sharply-toothed leaflets.

3. *ARISAEMA TRIPHYLLUM*



common names: blue cohosh, papoose root.

harmful portions: leaves and the blue seeds.

Native herb of woodlands, with small greenish-yellow flowers and bright blue seeds which resemble berries, leaves with the leaflets 2-3 lobed.



4. *CALLIOPHYLLUM THALICTROIDES*

common names: celandine, rock poppy.

harmful portions: leaves and seeds.

Naturalized herb of woods and waste places in rich damp soil, with small yellow-orange flowers, leaves are pinnately divided, juice or sap is bright yellow, fruit dry, opening from the bottom upward, seeds with a crest.

5. *CHELIDONIUM MAJUS*



common names: spotted cowbane, spotted water hemlock, water hemlock.

harmful portions: ROOTS ARE DEADLY, as well as aboveground parts.

Native herb of wet places, with very small white flowers in a flat-topped cluster, leaves with many sharply-toothed leaflets, a cluster of fleshy finger-like roots, smelling like parsnips.

6. *CICUTA MACULATA*



7. *CONIUM MACULATUM*



common names: poison fool's parsley, poison hemlock.

harmful portions: SEEDS, ROOTS, and LEAVES ARE DEADLY.

Naturalized herb of waste places, with spotted stems, small white flowers and large leaves with numerous leaflets; this species lacks the cluster of fleshy roots that *Cicuta maculata* has, but otherwise is very similar.

8. *CONIUM MACULATUM*



common names: Kentucky coffee tree.

harmful portions: legume with the pulp between the seeds.

Native tree of rich woods, flood plains, with rough bark and leaves twice divided into leaflets, fruit a heavy flat legume, with flat seeds surrounded by pulp.

10. *GYMNOCLADUS DIOICA*



11. *MENISPERMUM CANADENSE*



common names: moonseed, yellow parilla.

harmful portions: fruits

Native climbing vine of woodlands and openings, flowers inconspicuous, leaves simple with 3-7 rounded lobes, fruits blue and fleshy with a single curved seed (see figure 11). Menispermum vine is often confused with harmless grape (*Vitis*). For comparison, see figure 12 illustrating the fruit and seed of *Vitis* (on left) and *Menispermum* (on right) displayed on a *Vitis* leaf.

12. *VITIS/MENISPERMUM*



9. *DATURA STRAMONIUM*



common names: Jimson weed, stramonium, thorn apple.

harmful portions: all parts, but particularly the seeds and the leaves, DEADLY in relatively small quantities.

Naturalized large, weedy herb of cultivated fields and waste places, flower large, funnel-shaped and white, blooming throughout the growing season, fruit a prickly, rounded capsule with large flat seeds.

common names: mandrake, may-apple.

harmful portions: rhizomes, roots, stem, flower, leaves, and unripened fruit.

Native herb of woodlands with umbrella-like leaves and creamy white flowers beneath, fruit is a large fleshy berry, eventually turning yellow by fall, with thick fibrous roots and creeping rhizomes.



14. *PODOPHYLLUM PELTATUM*

15. *SAMBUCUS CANADENSIS*



common names: elderberry, red-berried elder.

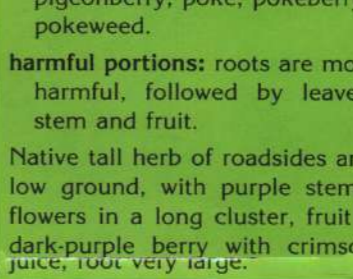
harmful portions: roots, stems, leaves, much less the flowers and unripe fruits.

Native shrubs of the woods or open places, twigs with large soft pith, flowers small and white in rounded (*s. pubens*) or flat-topped (*s. canadensis*) clusters, fruit a berry which is bright orange-red (*s. pubens*) or dark purplish-black (*s. canadensis*).

16. *SAMBUCUS PUBENS*



13. *PHYTOLACCA AMERICANA*



common names: inkberry, pigeonberry, poke, pokeberry, pokeweed.

harmful portions: roots are most harmful, followed by leaves, stem and fruit.

Native tall herb of roadsides and low ground, with purple stems, flowers in a long cluster, fruit a dark-purple berry with crimson juice, root very large.

13. *PHYTOLACCA AMERICANA*



common names: ball nettle, horse nettle.

harmful portions: unripened fruit most harmful, otherwise all parts.

Native prickly weedy herb of sandy areas and waste places, flower purple or white, fruit a yellow berry, leaves coarsely toothed.

18. *SOLANUM DULCAMARA*



common names: bittersweet, red nightshade.

harmful portions: unripened fruit most harmful, otherwise all parts.

Naturalized climbing or leaning vine of thickets or near settlements, woody at the base with simple leaves which sometimes have a pair of lobes at the base, flowers purple or occasionally white, fruit a red berry resembling a small tomato.

19. *SOLANUM DULCAMARA*



common names: nightshade, black-nightshade.

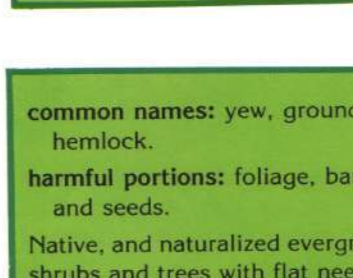
harmful portions: unripened fruit most harmful, otherwise all parts.

Naturalized coastal herb of waste places and roadsides, flowers similar to *Solanum dulcamara*, fruit a dull black berry.

20. *SOLANUM NIGRUM*



17. *SOLANUM CAROLINENSE*



common names: yew, ground hemlock.

harmful portions: foliage, bark, and seeds.

Native, and naturalized evergreen shrubs and trees with flat needle-like leaves, and red, fleshy arils surrounding the seeds.

21. *TAXUS spp.*



NOTE: This chart is designed merely as an aid in identifying some common native and naturalized plants which have been reported as internally harmful or poisonous to humans when ingested. It is NOT intended that it be all inclusive of any wild plant that may be poisonous in the northeastern U.S., neither does it imply that there are not other harmful or poisonous plants which one may encounter outdoors or indoors. Treatment should be referred to a physician.

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