






## Poisonous Plants

When introducing this subject to groups of children they almost always ask (with more than a little relish) “Will you die? Will you die if you touch it? Will you die if you lick it?” To which the answer is most often, ‘No’ much to their disappointment. We are very lucky in the UK that there are few extremely poisonous plants, ones that would cause a serious threat to life by touching alone. Most plants require ingestion in a significant quantity to cause real problems but there are one or two which are easily confused with other perfectly edible plants, thus making them dangerous and one or two which would only take ingestion of a couple of berries to cause serious harm. So, this is not something that should be taken lightly. To instil a measure of safety with our ghoulish children, we introduce the following chant:






***No pick..., no lick....!***







Meaning don’t pick anything that is green and growing. And don’t lick your hands or anything else. Always wash your hands after foraging or having come into contact with any wild plants.

Here is a list of some of the **most common** poisonous plants. (Please note this is not a comprehensive list of every poisonous plant in the UK)





Plant name(s)	Toxicity rating	Confusion rating	Poisonous parts and effects
Ivy 	x	Low	All parts are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested: vomiting, paralysis, difficulty breathing, convulsions and coma
Holly 	xx	Low	The berries are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested: vomiting and diarrhoea (Ingestion of over 20 berries may be fatal to children)
Lords and Ladies, also known as Cuckoo Pint   	x	Low	All parts are poisonous, especially the berries. Symptoms if ingested: vomiting, swelling of throat and tongue.

Sources: Hedgerow by John Wright, Wild Flowers by Bob Gibbons, Food for Free by Richard Mabey, The Wildlife Trusts

<p>Lily of the Valley</p> 	<p>xxx</p>	<p>High – the leaves look <u>very similar</u> to the edible and highly desirable wild garlic plant. The flowers differ.</p>	<p>All parts are highly poisonous. Symptoms if ingested: abdominal pain, vomiting, reduced heart rate, blurred vision, drowsiness and skin rashes.</p>
<p>Dog's mercury</p> 	<p>Xx</p>	<p>Medium- could be confused with Annual Mercury (both are best avoided)</p>	<p>All parts are poisonous Symptoms if ingested include: diarrhoea, inflammation of the kidneys, flushing cheeks and haemolysis (destruction of red blood cells).</p>
<p>Annual Mercury</p> 	<p>x</p>	<p>Medium- likely to be confused with Dog's Mercury</p>	<p>All parts are poisonous (less so than Dog's mercury) Symptoms if ingested include: diarrhoea, it used to have a medical reputation as a 'useful laxative'</p>
<p>Fool's parsley</p> 	<p>xx</p>	<p>High- easily confused with parsley (hence the name) and other members of the carrot family.</p>	<p>All parts are poisonous Symptoms if ingested include: nausea, vomiting, headache, abdominal pain and numbness in the limbs</p>
<p>Foxglove</p> 	<p>xxxx</p>	<p>Medium- leaves look similar to comfrey but in full bloom, this plant isn't easily confused.</p>	<p>All parts are poisonous Symptoms if ingested include: vomiting, diarrhoea, can slow the heart causing heart attack.</p>

<p>Yew</p> 	xxx	Medium- could be confused with other pinnate trees	All parts are poisonous except the aril (but the pip inside the aril is extremely poisonous, so don't try it) Symptoms if ingested include: accelerated heart rate, muscle tremors, convulsions, difficulty breathing, circulation impairment
<p>Black Bryony</p> 	xx	Low	All parts are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested include: irritation of the skin
<p>Hemlock</p> 	Xxxx	Medium- it looks similar to cow parsley but has a distinctive red-spotted stem	All parts are poisonous, particularly the seeds. Symptoms if ingested include: paralysis and respiratory failure.
<p>Hemlock Water-dropwort</p> 	Xxxxx One of the most poisonous wild plants found in the UK	High- the leaves can be easily confused with flat leaved parsley, parsnip, carrot and ground elder.	All parts are poisonous but the fleshy roots have the highest concentration of poison. Symptoms if ingested include: vomiting, accelerated heart rate, abdominal cramps, seizures and in severe cases it can kill by paralysing the lungs.
<p>Woody nightshade Also known as 'Bittersweet'</p> 	Xx	Medium- commonly mistaken for deadly nightshade	The red berries are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested include: thirst, abdominal pain and flushing skin.
<p>Black nightshade</p> 	x	Medium- can be mistaken for a potato plant and is often found growing in vegetable patches	The young berries are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested include: headache and diarrhoea. Very rarely death due to cardiac and respiratory failure.

Here is a list of more rare poisonous plants:

Plant name(s)	Toxicity rating	Confusion rating	Poisonous parts and effects
Deadly nightshade (Atropa belladonna) 	xxx	Low	All parts are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested include: convulsions, hallucinations and death.
Monkshood 	Xxx	Low	All parts are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested include: nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, difficulty breathing, impaired movement and arrhythmia. In large doses death is almost instantaneous.
Henbane 	xxx	Medium- similar to Thorn Apple and some goosefoots.	All parts are poisonous. Symptoms if ingested include: thirst, dilated pupils, accelerated heart rate, fever, vomiting, hypertension, convulsions, hallucinations and coma.
White bryony 	Xxxx	Low	All parts are poisonous, particularly the roots. Symptoms if ingested include: severe diarrhoea and vomiting