

Choosing safe flowers, plants for pet parents

BY JESSICA DAMIANO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

If you're sending your Sweetheart cut flowers or a potted plant for Valentine's Day, choose ones that are safe for their pets.

One lick of a pollen-covered lily stamen can be life-threatening to cats, as my daughter Julia learned when her cat, Nyah, found her way to a beautiful and well-intentioned gift bouquet displayed in a vase on the table. It was a momentary encounter, but the damage was done. Three days of dialysis and \$2,500 later, Nyah returned home.

"Each year, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) sees a rise in calls around Feb. 14th," according to Dr. Tina Wismer, veterinarian, and senior director of the APCC. She said many of those involve chocolate, xylitol, and indoor plants, adding that plant poisonings are a concern for pets year-round.

In 2021 alone, she said, "the APCC received more than 31,500 calls about pets ingesting potentially toxic indoor and outdoor plants and flowers."



This Photo depicts a cat examining a spider plant. According to the ASPCA spider plants are nontoxic; still, ingesting nontoxic plants can cause some gastrointestinal distress.

(Jessica Damiano via AP)

ONES TO WATCH FOR

Lilies, Wismer agreed, are among the worst offenders. "Even a small exposure to *Lilium* (lily) and *Heimerocallis* (daylily) causes kidney issues in cats, as they are extremely toxic." But they aren't considered toxic to dogs, she said. Tulips, on the other hand, are problematic to both cats and dogs. "While ingestion of the leaves typically just causes stomach upset, the bulb contains toxins that can cause intense stomach upset, low blood pressure, convulsions, and cardiac abnormalities," Wismer said.

Carnations, calla lilies, chrysanthemums, daisies and gladiolas, all popular bouquet additions, also are toxic and should be kept away from dogs and cats.

Non-flowering plants aren't necessarily safer, Wismer says. Sago palm "is toxic to all pets and can cause symptoms including vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, liver failure, and potentially death."

Other trendy houseplants, like dumb cane (*Dieffenbachia*), Swiss cheese plant (*Monstera*), peace lily (*Spathiphyllum*), golden pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*) and snake plant (*Sansevieria*) are toxic to both species.

"The most common outward signs of any toxicity in pets will be nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and drooling," Wismer said. "In more severe cases, lethargy, depression and seizures can suggest your pet may have ingested something poisonous."

If your pet has eaten any part of a toxic plant or flower, or shows any of these signs or symptoms, Wismer recommends contacting your veterinarian or the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at 888-426-4435 as soon as possible.