

Safety in Pre-school Centres

Plants which existing literature suggests should not be grown or tolerated in pre-school centres



Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

INTERNAL POISONS - (Harmful if swallowed)

- Angel's trumpet (*Brugmansia candida*) – North Island and warmest parts of South Island
- Arums and arum lily (*Arum* species and *Zantedeschia aethiopica*)
- Bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*) – mainly South Island and lower North Island
- Castor oil (*Ricinus communis*)
- Death cap and fly agaric fungi (*Agaricus phalloides* and *A. muscaria*)
- Fox glove (*Digitalis purpurea*)
- Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)
- Jerusalem cherry (*Solanum diflorum* and *S. pseudocapsicum*)
- Laburnum (*Laburnum anagyroides*) – mainly South Island and southern half of North Island
- Lantana (*Lantana camara*) – warmer parts of North Island and northern areas of South Island
- Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) – mainly South Island
- Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*) – mainly South Island and colder parts of North Island
- Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)
- Persian lilac or white cedar (*Melia azederach*) – mainly North Island
- Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) – all green parts
- Privet species (*Ligustrum* species)
- Queen of the night (*Cestrum nocturnum*) – mainly northern North Island
- Spindle tree and Japanese spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus* and *E. japonicus*) – latter mainly fruiting in North Island
- Stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*)
- Tutu (*Coriaria* species) – nearly always *C. arborea*
- Yew (*Taxus baccata*) – although nearly all parts of both sexes are poisonous, only the berry of the female tree, with its poisonous seed, is likely to be eaten

EXTERNAL POISONS - (Harmful if touched)

- Stinging nettles (*Urtica* species)
- Wax tree or Japanese wax tree (*Rhus succedanea*) – mainly North Is. and northern South Is.

Notes

Certain very poisonous plants are excluded from the above list because of their rarity in New Zealand, e.g. deadly nightshade* (*Atropa bella-donna*), bushman's poison (*Acoканthera oppositifolia*), henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), and poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*). Also excluded are poisonous plants which, although common, have no parts likely to attract young children; e.g. hellebores (*Helleborus* species), box (*Buxus sempervirens*), and thornapple or datura (*Datura stramonium*), the last having very poisonous seeds enclosed in spiny capsules.

Many plants have spiny or prickly vegetative parts but these are not considered to be reason enough to exclude such plants from pre-school education centres. Most of these plants are either not poisonous or not very poisonous; e.g. roses (*Rosa* species and hybrids), firethorns, (*Pyracantha* species), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), gooseberry (*Ribes uva-crispa*), and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).

* True deadly nightshade is extremely rare in New Zealand. Unfortunately, this name is mistakenly applied to black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), the latter having somewhat poisonous green parts and harmless berries. The two are easily distinguished: deadly nightshade is a large plant over a metre high when mature, and has large, bell-shaped, brownish-purple flowers followed by large, egg-shaped black berries. Black nightshade is a much smaller plant (about half the height of deadly nightshade when mature), and has small white star-shaped flowers followed by little black berries, similar to black currants.

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