Guidance: Poisonous Plants in Family Child Care

Minnesota Rules, part 9502.0435, Toxic Substances, states: “All medicines, chemicals, detergents, poisonous plants, alcoholic beverages, and other toxic substances must be inaccessible to children.” This requirement is critical, as the Minnesota Poison Control System states that over half of the calls received by poison control centers nationwide are related to incidents involving children under the age of six. Ensuring that family child care providers know what potentially poisonous plants they have in their yards, and how best to protect the children in their care from the negative effects of those plants, is essential for keeping Minnesota’s children safe.

What is a poisonous plant?

The toxicity levels of plants vary. A child’s reaction to different plants can vary greatly as well, with symptoms ranging from skin irritation to vomiting and diarrhea. In more serious cases, exposure can affect a child’s heart, kidneys or liver. To explain the toxicity levels of plants, the Minnesota Poison Control System has a list published online that divides plants into three categories: Non-toxic, Mildly Toxic, and Toxic. The online document can be found HERE (also attached). The list describes the toxicity of the three categories of plants and provides some direction about safely keeping the plants around children.

- Nontoxic (safe, not poisonous). The plants in this category are considered to be non-toxic. However, any plant may cause unexpected reactions in certain individuals, including choking. Common plants in this category include ferns and lilacs.

- Mildly Toxic (caution). The plants in this category may be mildly toxic or may easily be confused with toxic plants. Plants in this category are common in many households and yards and include tomato (leaves), crab apple, dogwood, and potato (leaves) plants.

- Toxic (dangerous, poisonous). The plants in this category are toxic. Many of the plants in this category are common in landscaping and along walkways such as hydrangea and peonies.

What can I do to comply with this requirement?

What do I do if I have non-toxic plants in my home or yard?

- Location of plants: Although there are no restrictions about the location or accessibility of these plants to children, children could ingest these plants. Make sure you know what to do if a child ingests the plants or has an unexpected allergic reaction.

- If a child ingests a portion of a non-toxic plant, the Minnesota Poison Control System recommends that Poison Control be contacted at 1-800-222-1222.

What do I do if I have mildly toxic plants in my home or yard?

- Location of plants: Because these plants are mildly poisonous, they can be kept around children, “with some precautions.” These plants should not be directly in the area where the children’s activities most often occur. However, these plants may be located in other areas of a yard not used...
for regular play and where a child’s presence would be known when the required supervision is being provided. They may also be located in areas where children may pass while supervised when in route to the yard’s play area or when entering the home. If the provider would have difficulty intervening to prevent the ingestion of toxic plants, the provider needs to provide some type of barrier to make these plants inaccessible to children. The provider may also choose to remove the plants rather than installing a barrier.

- If a child ingests a portion of a mildly toxic plant, Poison Control should be called at 1-800-222-1222.

**What do I do if I have toxic plants in my home or yard?**

- Location of plants: Like mildly toxic plants, plants in this category should not be directly in the area where the children’s activities most often occur. These plants may be located in other areas of a yard not used for regular play and where a child’s presence would be known when the required supervision is being provided. They may also be located in areas where children may pass while supervised when in route to the yard’s play area or when entering the home. If the provider would have difficulty intervening to prevent the ingestion of toxic plants, the provider needs to provide some type of barrier to make these plants inaccessible to children. The provider may also choose to remove the plants rather than installing a barrier.

- If a child ingests any portion of a toxic plant, Poison Control needs to be contacted immediately at 1-800-222-1222.

**What steps can I take to comply with this requirement and ensure that poisonous plants are inaccessible to children?**

1. Know your yard. Do you know which plants are in your yard? Are any mildly toxic or toxic?
2. Assess the location of the plants, especially those included on the Minnesota Poison Control System list as mildly toxic or toxic. Which plants are in locations that children use to play?
3. Assess your ability to supervise children in those spaces. For mildly toxic and toxic plants, providing required supervision is critical in making the plants in the yard inaccessible to children in care. If mildly toxic or toxic plants are in a provider’s yard, the provider must assess how close the plants are to the area used by children and the provider’s ability to provide the required supervision to prevent children from accessing the mildly toxic and toxic plants. If the provider would have difficulty intervening to prevent the ingestion of mildly toxic or toxic plants, the provider needs to provide some type of barrier to make these plants inaccessible to children. The provider may also choose to remove the plants rather than installing a barrier.
4. Questions or concerns. If you have questions or concerns, reach out your county licensor or use DHS’ “Family Child Care Provider Questions” portal to receive clarification on licensing requirements (www.dhs.state.mn.us/fccfaq).

**What if I have plants in my home or yard that are not on the Minnesota Poison Control System list?**

- The same steps listed above apply to this situation. (1) Do you know which plants are in your yard? (2) Assess whether these plants are in locations that children use to play. (3) If a child was near these plants, is he/she being supervised, such as by you or a parent (i.e., along a walkway to the home)? Would you be able to intervene and prevent a child from ingesting the plants? (4) If you are still uncertain of the appropriate steps to take, reach out for further guidance.
**Nontoxic (Safe, not poisonous)**

The following plants are considered to be non-toxic. However, any plant may cause unexpected reactions in certain individuals, including choking. Always check with the Minnesota Poison Control System if a plant has been ingested.

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<td>Calathea argyriaea</td>
<td>Calico Hearts</td>
<td>Calyx Lily</td>
<td>Begonia</td>
<td>Camellia</td>
<td>Carriger Flowers</td>
<td>Catania</td>
<td>Cattleya</td>
<td>China Doll</td>
<td>Chinese Evergreen</td>
<td>Christmas Cactus</td>
<td>Coleus</td>
<td>Columbine</td>
<td>Coral Bells</td>
<td>Cordyline</td>
<td>Corn Plant</td>
<td>Creeping Charlie</td>
<td>Crotus (Houseplant)</td>
<td>Dahlin</td>
<td>Dandelon</td>
<td>Dracaena</td>
<td>Dragon Tree</td>
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<td>Elm Tree</td>
<td>Eugenia</td>
<td>False Solomon’s Seal</td>
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<td>Feltbrush</td>
<td>Ferns</td>
<td>Ficus Benjamin</td>
<td>Fig Tree</td>
<td>Fotheria</td>
<td>Friendship Plant</td>
<td>Fuchsia</td>
<td>Gardenia</td>
<td>Gloxinia</td>
<td>Gold dust plan</td>
<td>Goldfish plant</td>
<td>Grape Ivy</td>
<td>Hawaiian Ti Plant</td>
<td>Hibiscus</td>
<td>Honey Locust</td>
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<td>Plush Plant</td>
<td>Polka Dot Plant</td>
<td>Potentilla</td>
<td>Powder puff</td>
<td>Prayer plant</td>
<td>Pregnant plant</td>
<td>Propeller plant</td>
<td>Purple Passions</td>
<td>Queen’s Tears</td>
<td>Rabbit’s Foot</td>
<td>Rainbow plant</td>
<td>Ribbon plant</td>
<td>Rosary vine</td>
<td>Rubber plant</td>
<td>Salvia</td>
<td>Sansevieria</td>
<td>Schefflera</td>
<td>Screw pine</td>
<td>Sensitive plant</td>
<td>Silk tree</td>
<td>Silver dollar plant</td>
<td>Silver evergreen</td>
<td>Silver poplar</td>
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**Caution (Mildly toxic)**

The following plants may be mildly toxic or may easily be confused with toxic plants. However, since they are only mildly poisonous, they can be kept around children, with some precautions. We recommend calling the Minnesota Poison Control System if a child consumes a portion of any of the following:

| Aloe Vera | Begonia | Birch Tree | Black Walnut | Bleeding Heart | Boston Ivy | Bougainvillea | Burro Tail | Cactus | Caladium | Calla Lily | Carnation | Araucaria | American Ivy | Carrot (Greens) | Century plant | Chelinite Plant | Cherries | Chrysanthenum | Clovia | Cotoneaster | Crab Apple | Daisy | Devils Ivy | Dieffenbachia | Dogwood | Angel’s wings | Donkey Tail | Dutchman’s Pipe | Elephant Ear | Engleman Ivy | English Ivy | Eucalyptus | Five-leaved Ivy | Geranium | Gladiola | Hens and chicks | Honeysuckle | Iris | Arrowhead | Ivy | Jonquil | Juniper | Lamb’s Tail | Mexican snowball | Mother-in-law plant | Narcissus | Nephthys | Oak Trees | Oxalis | Asparagus fern | Painted lady | Pansy | Peace Lily | Philodendron | Poinsetta | Potato (Leaves) | Potto | Rhabarb (Leaves) | Rose | Sand begonia | Seindapsus | Sedum | Shamrock plant | Spathe Flower | Spathiphyllum | Sprenger fern | Sweet pea | Tomato (Leaves) | Tulip | Violets | Virginia creeper | Woodbine |

**Toxic (Dangerous, poisonous)**

The following plants are considered toxic. If any portion of the following plans is ingested, call the Minnesota Poison Control System, Immediately.