

POISONology

SAFETY & FIRST AID TIPS FROM THE ARIZONA POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

Oleanders- beauty is only skin deep



Oleander plants are a common fixture in southwest landscaping. They grow quickly, can become quite large and make for a good vegetative wall or barrier. They are, at the same time, toxic. This means oleanders can be a dangerous poison.

All parts of the plant are considered toxic. Exposure to these plants can be from eating the leaves, flowers, chewing on the branches or even inhaling the smoke from burning them. The Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center has received many calls over the years of humans and animals being exposed to oleanders. One man was hospitalized after using oleander leaves to make an “herbal tea” that someone recommended to him!

The type of toxin that is found in the plant is a cardiac glycoside. This makes it harmful to the heart. The toxin in the plant causes the natural rhythm of the heart to be disturbed.

One of the major complications with predicting how harmful exposures to oleanders are is trying to determine the amount of toxin that the person was exposed to. The toxin is found in all parts of the plant but not in consistent amounts. The level of poison depends on the health of the plant, the time of year, growing condition. This means that any possible ingestion could be at a poisonous level.

If you have any questions about a possible oleander poisoning, please call the Poison Center 800-222-1222

If you have other poisoning concerns or questions call the tollfree national hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to reach your local poison center. If you live in Arizona outside of Maricopa County, this number will get you to our experts at the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center in Tucson.