

BEWARE OF BACKYARD DANGERS!

As the weather warms up, more and more animal companions will be heading for the great outdoors. Even if that means no more than a daily romp in your backyard, always be there to supervise -- and please make sure your pets stay safe with the following tips from the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center:

- Always store lawn and garden products in areas that are inaccessible to animals. Ingestion of large amounts of fertilizer, for example, can cause severe gastric upset and gastrointestinal obstruction.
- Do not allow pets to go on lawns or in gardens that have been treated with fertilizers, herbicides or insecticides until the time listed on the label by the manufacturer.
- Know which plants and trees can be poisonous to your pets.
 - Cardiotoxic plants -- those that can affect the heart -- include lily of the valley, oleander, rhododendron, azalea, yew and foxglove.
 - Rhubarb leaves and certain species of lily can cause kidney failure. The leaf or stems of tomato plants are toxic (not the actual tomato), and a raw (not cooked) onion can be lethal.
 - Cycads and some species of mushrooms can result in liver failure. Remember, toxic and nontoxic mushrooms can grow in the same area; to be on the safe side, always assume that any ingested mushroom is highly toxic until it has been identified.
- If you suspect that your animal companion has eaten a poisonous plant, call your veterinarian or the APCC's emergency hotline -- (888) 464-4957-- for round-the-clock telephone assistance. If you are unsure of the species of plant ingested, you may need to bring the plant to a nursery for identification.