



Treescape® guide to

Hazardous Plants and Shrubs



Green Asset
Management

Euphorbia sp.



Characteristics:

- > Looks like cactus
- > White, milky, latex-like sap that is poisonous

Allergens:

- > Breathing in dust can cause severe anaphylactic reaction
- > Severe skin irritant – can cause rash or blisters
- > Can cause eye damage or blindness

Mitigation:

- > Gloves and wrist to ankle cover
- > Facemask / respirator
- > Safety glasses
- > Do not chip

First Aid:

- > If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- > Wash affected area with cold running water immediately
- > Take a photo of the plant if you suspect poisoning and take it to the doctor

Caryota Sp. (Fishtail Plams)



Characteristics:

- > Leaves have a fishtail shape

Allergens:

- > The whole plant contains needle-like calcium oxalate crystals which if chewed or eaten can produce a burning sensation in the mouth.
- > Skin contact can result in burning, itching and dermatitis.
- > If dust is inhaled it could cause respiratory discomfort

Mitigation:

- > Gloves and wrist to ankle cover
- > Facemask / respirator
- > Safety glasses
- > Do not chip

First Aid:

- > If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- > Use soft brush on the skin to remove oxalate crystals

Brazilian pepper tree (Schinus spp)



Characteristics:

- Evergreen tree, grows to 15m
- Bright pink to red fruits
- Leaves smell peppery when crushed

Allergens:

- Skin contact with sap can result in burning, itching and dermatitis
- If dust is inhaled it could cause respiratory discomfort

Mitigation:

- Gloves and wrist to ankle cover
- Facemask / respirator
- Safety glasses
- Avoid contact with sap on bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Fig trees (Ficus spp)



Characteristics:

- Evergreen tree
- Large leaves, green on top and hairy bronze on the bottom
- Milky latex like sap

Allergens:

- Skin contact with sap can result in burning, itching and dermatitis
- If dust from leaves is inhaled it could cause respiratory discomfort

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Avoid contact with sap on bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Box (*Buxus sempervirens*)



Characteristics:

- Evergreen shrub, usually used for hedges

Allergens:

- Farm stock, especially cattle are said to have grazed box bushes if they get into gardens
- Death may occur through respiratory failure in animals
- Contact can cause skin rashes and the clippings should be handled with care

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Castor Oil Plant (*Ricinus communis*)



Characteristics:

- Shrub
- Glossy palmate leaves
- Dark green to purple leaves

Allergens:

- The broken mottled seeds are highly toxic if ingested.
- A severe allergic reaction in certain individuals following skin contact with broken seeds
- The toxic principle is ricin, a phytotoalbumin, plus ricinine, an alkaloid
- Symptoms can be immediate or delayed. They are nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, bloody diarrhoea, depression, trembling, weating, convulsions and coma; may be fatal.

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**

Cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)



Characteristics:

- Shrub or tree to 10m
- Evergreen
- Flowers on long spikes rather than clusters

Allergens:

- *P. laurocerasus* poisonous parts are the wilted leaves, twigs (stems) and seeds if ingested due to cyanogenic glycoside, amygdalin
- Symptoms are gasping, weakness, excitement, pupil dilation, spasms, convulsions, coma and respiratory failure; may be fatal.

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest

First Aid:

- Seek medical advice immediately if ingested
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**

Chinaberry (Melia azedarach)



Characteristics:

- Shrub or tree to 10m
- Evergreen
- Flowers on long spikes rather than clusters

Allergens:

- The yellow fruit is poisonous if eaten by humans and animals although many birds seem partial to them and are not affected.
- Tranortriterpenes have been isolated and identified as the main toxic constituents of the fruit
- The poisonous fruit is toxic to humans and some other mammals. Pigs are the most susceptible
- In humans, the first symptoms of poisoning appear a few hours after ingestion



- They may include loss of appetite, vomiting, constipation or diarrhoea, bloody faeces, stomach pain, pulmonary congestion, cardiac arrest, rigidity, lack of coordination and general weakness
- Death may take place after about 24 hours. 6 to 8 fruits have been reported to cause death in young children
- The leaves are also toxic and deadly to grazing animals

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest

First Aid:

- Seek medical attention immediately if ingested
- Call the poison Centre **0800 764 766**

Five Finger or Whauwhaupaku (*Pseudopanax arboreus*)



Characteristics:

- Shrub or small tree to 8m
- Evergreen
- 5-7 leaflets
- Purplish black berries in autumn

Allergens:

- Some people may have a skin reaction as it is part of the ivy family
- Parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Be careful when handling

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Ivy (Hedera helix)



Characteristics:

- Evergreen climbing plant, growing to 20–30 m
- Or growing as ground cover

Allergens:

- All parts are poisonous including the berries
- The toxic principles are triterpenoid saponins and polyacetylene compounds which when ingested will give the following symptoms, burning sensation of throat, delirium, stupor, convulsions, hallucinations, fever, and rash
- Severe skin irritation with redness, itching, and blisters following contact with cell sap

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Wrist to ankle cover
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Jasmine, Star jasmine (Trachelospermum jasminoides)



Characteristics:

- Evergreen climbing plant
- Or growing as ground cover

Allergens:

- Star Jasmine is a member of the milkweed family
- The entire plant is considered mildly poisonous and should not be consumed
- Handling plant may cause skin irritation or allergic reaction due to its milk-like sap
- Beware this milk will stain clothes black

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Wrist to ankle cover
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Moth Vine or Cruel Vine (*Araujia sericifera*)



Characteristics:

- *Araujia sericifera* is a creeping vine that can climb up to 5–7 metres or growing as ground cover
- The pear-shaped fruits are large pods, about 8–10 centimetres

Allergens:

- This serious weed pest has as a white latex in all parts of the plant that is poisonous
- Contact with its milky sap causes skin and eyes irritations, and occasionally even severe allergic reactions in susceptible people

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Wrist to ankle cover
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Oleander (Nerium oleander)



Characteristics:

- A shrub or small tree
- Oleander grows to 2–6 m (6.6–19.7 ft) tall, with erect stems that splay outward

Allergens:

- Oleander is one of the most dangerous poisonous plants. If this plant is being burnt the smoke is toxic
- The whole plant is highly toxic due to the cardiac glycosides oleandrin, neriine, known for their powerful effect on the heart
- Oleander causes intense abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, drowsiness, dizziness, visual disturbances, rapid pulse, an irregular heartbeat and heart malfunction, often causing death
- The sap if in contact with the skin can cause dermatitis, blistering, irritation and soreness

- Poisoning has occurred when using **oleander** sticks for sausage and marshmallow roasts and drinking water in which the flowers have been placed

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Wrist to ankle cover
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Privet (Ligustrum several species)



Characteristics:

- A shrub or small tree
- Purplish black seeds, glossy leaves
- Smooth green bark

Allergens:

- The highly toxic parts of this plant are the leaves and the berries and should be handled with care
- There are even reports of fatalities in children who have consumed the berries
- The toxic principles are the glycosides: syringin (ligustrin), shikimic acid
- Symptoms after ingestion are abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, headache, weakness,

- low blood pressure, cold and clammy skin possibly lasting 48 to 72 hours
- The pollen might be irritable for those with allergies and the heavy, cloying scent of the flowers can cause distress for those who can't tolerate heavy fragrances

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- Seek immediate medical attention if ingested
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**
- Antihistamine can relieve symptoms of allergic reaction

Rangiora (Brachyglottis repanda)



Characteristics:

- A small, bushy tree or tall shrub endemic to New Zealand.
- It grows to a height of 5 to 7 metres tall

Allergens:

- All parts of this tree are highly poisonous
- The hepatotoxic substance a pyrrolizidine alkaloid is especially concentrated in the growing tips, flowers and the sap
- Poisoning causes Pyrrolizidine alkaloidosis and can result in damage to the liver, kidneys, heart, brain, smooth muscles, lungs, DNA, lesions all over the

body, and could be a potential cause of cancer. Pyrrolizidine alkaloidosis is known as "Winton Disease" in New Zealand.

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest

First Aid:

- Seek immediate medical attention if ingested
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**

Silky Oak (*Grevillia robusta*)



Characteristics:

- A medium to large tree.
- It grows to a height of 5 to 40 metres tall

Allergens:

- Contains a chemical called resorcinol which can cause severe skin irritation on exposure

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Smoke Bush (Cotinus coggygia)



Characteristics:

- A medium shrub
- It grows to a height of 5 to 7 metres tall

Allergens:

- Contact with sap from stems shoots and leaves can cause inflammation and irritation to some people

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area

Tree Nettle (*Urtica ferox*)



Characteristics:

- A medium shrub
- It grows to a height of 1 to 3 metres tall
- The leaves and stalks have numerous white stinging hairs (trichomes), up to 6mm long

Allergens:

- The tree nettle is one of New Zealand's most poisonous native plants. Brushing the plant produces a stinging on the skin of varying intensity
- These break after piercing the skin, injecting toxins into the tissues, giving rise to pain and rash
- Formic acid is present and responsible for the initial pain but the longer term effects are

caused by histamine, acetylcholine and 5-hydroxytryptamine

- The Poisonous Plants in New Zealand, mentions a group of trampers who developed loss of coordination for three days after being stung.

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- Seek immediate medical attention if ingested
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**
- Antihistamine can relieve symptoms of allergic reaction

Tree of Heaven (Ailanthus altissima)



Characteristics:

- Quick growing tree, growing to a height of 15m
- Deciduous tree

Allergens:

- It is reported all parts of this tree is poisonous as it contains a quinone irritant, 2,6-dimethoxybenzoquinone, as well as active quassinoids
- Ingestion causes nausea, vomiting and muscular relaxation
- The odour of the foliage can cause a headache and nausea...rhinitis and conjunctivitis in some individuals
- Contact dermatitis can occur and the pollen can cause hay fever

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Antihistamine may relieve symptoms of hay fever and allergic reaction

Wax tree or Rhus (Toxicodendron succedaneum)



Characteristics:

- Large shrub or tree, up to 8 m tall
- It is now officially classified as a noxious weed in Australia and New Zealand

Allergens:

- Highly toxic, allergy-causing tree
- The plant contains the carcinogenic shikimic acid (shikimate) which causes severe dermatitis beginning with a rash, redness, itching and blisters wherever skin comes into contact with the plant or its sap
- The rash is often accompanied by localised swelling of the face, arms and legs

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest
- Avoid contact with bare skin

First Aid:

- If any symptoms present seek medical advice
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area
- Seek immediate medical attention if ingested
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**
- Antihistamine can relieve symptoms of allergic reaction

Woolly Nightshade (*Solanum mauritianum*)



Characteristics:

- Small tree or shrub up to 10m
- It is now officially classified as a noxious weed in Australia and New Zealand

Allergens:

- All parts of the *Solanum mauritianum* plant are poisonous to humans, especially the berries
- Human fatalities have resulted from the consumption of the berries
- The main toxic compound is the alkaloid solasodine, with the highest content in the unripe green berries (2-3.5% dry weight)

- Handling the plants can cause irritation and nausea
- The dust from the plant can cause respiratory problems if exposure is prolonged

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest

First Aid:

- Seek immediate medical attention if ingested
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**
- Antihistamine can relieve symptoms of allergic reaction

Giant Hogweed (Heracleum mantegazzianum)



Characteristics:

- Small tree or shrub up to 6m
- It is now officially classified as a noxious weed in Australia and New Zealand

Allergens:

- It is poisonous to humans - touching it, or exposure to dust from weed-eating, can irritate skin and cause blisters and swelling
- Sap from leaves and stems is highly toxic and can cause 'photodermatitis' or 'photosensitivity' (the skin becomes very sensitive to sunlight and may suffer blistering, pigmentation and long-lasting scars)
- **Contact with the eyes can lead to temporary or permanent blindness**

Mitigation:

- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Do not ingest

First Aid:

- Seek medical attention
- Wash affected area with cold running water and soap
- Avoid direct sunlight on affected area
- Call the Poison Centre **0800 764 766**