

Dear Dr. Wise,

Question: My neighbor told me that Easter lilies, tiger lilies, and all lilies are highly poisonous to cats and dogs. I just thought it was only Easter lilies and only affected cats. Is my neighbor correct?

Answer: You are both partially right and partially incorrect. There are many ornamental plants that are called “lily” plants even though they don’t belong to the *Lilium* genus of plants.

The lily plants known to be poisonous include the Easter lily, tiger lilies, rubrum or Japanese showy lilies (all members of the *Lilium* family of plants) and day lilies (*Heimerocallis* species of lily plants). The cat, but not the dog, will develop kidney failure with exposure to any part of these lily plants. Even one bite of a poisonous lily plant can cause signs of poisoning in the cat.

Peace lilies, calla lilies, and lily of the valley do not cause kidney damage, but they can produce other signs if ingested. If you believe your cat has ingested a lily plant and you do not know what type of plant it is, bring the cat and the plant to the veterinarian immediately so steps can be taken to identify the plant, determine if there is a significant poison involved, and begin emergency treatment.

If you have a question, write Dr. Wise, Indiana Veterinary Medical Association, 201 S. Capitol Avenue, Suite 405, Indianapolis, IN, 46225, or www.invma.org.