



Melissa Kaplan's Herp Care Collection

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Edible Plants List

Compiled by Melissa Kaplan, 1996, 2001

The following list of plants has been compiled from a wide variety of sources as being safely edible, at least in small amounts, by reptiles. The best source for identifying weeds and finding out if they are safe or not is to get one of the many field guides to edible plants such as Thomas S. Elias and Peter A. Dykeman's *Edible Wild Plants: A North American Field Guide* (Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., New York, NY. 266 p. ISBN 0-8069-7488-5). Many junior colleges and university extension programs, and some parks departments and nature centers, offer short courses or day-hike series by naturalists or botanists that explore the edible wild plants growing in your area. Taking such a course can be invaluable if you have trouble translating the photos and text descriptions from books into what you see growing around you.

Keep in mind that even if you do not use pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers in your yard, if your neighbors do, or *their* neighbors do, some is bound to end up in your yard. Many plants purchased from nurseries and stores have been treated with topical pesticides, herbicides and the soils with fertilizers. They should be washed and repotted before using. [Plants, Pesticides, and Herps](#) discusses this a bit. You also might want to think twice about feeding cut flowers you buy from florists in case they have been sprayed or stored in something that may not agree with reptilian constitutions.

Also keep in mind that, as with lists of toxic plants, no listing of edible plants will ever be complete. It is for that reason that you will find links to other plant sites for you to use if you do not find the plant you are looking for on the toxic, harmful or edible lists at my site.

Another important point to keep in mind: Just because a little bit is okay, a lot may not be, so always feed edible ornamentals in moderation and watch your pet carefully for any signs that the plant has disagreed with it. Possible signs include decreased or increased activity, increased salivation, mouth or face rubbing, diarrhea or other change in feces and urates, changes in respiration rate, labored breathing, rapid weight loss, increase water consumption. If any of these changes are observed, get your reptile to a reptile vet and be sure to let her or him know what your reptile has or may have been eating and if there is a possibility of chemical contamination of the plant.

Anytime you are talking about an ornamental or other plant that is not commonly eaten by humans or farm animals, all bets are off when it comes to short- and long-term safety.

While we may know - grossly - that a plant is not outright toxic (kills the consumer within a short period of time after ingestion), that doesn't mean that it is completely benign. The reason why plants that don't kill outright eventually appear on toxic lists is because some vet or researcher somewhere got intrigued by what he or she saw in their practice and figured out that certain plants cause certain reactions in some or potentially all species. Because there are so many variables on the individual level (animal size, how much it already ate of its usual diet, core body temperature, how much it has had to drink, the age of the plant eaten, the season of year the plant was eaten, the plant part eaten, how healthy the animal is, whether there is already some liver or other organ dysfunction, etc.), as well as at the species level and between individuals within a population of a species, there are no absolutes or certainties. So, save "safe" plants for occasional treats in small amounts, rather than feeding them daily or in large amounts.

Another source for information on edible plants is the [Plants for a Future](#) website, where you can access the [UK](#) database or the [US](#) mirror site.

ASTILBE (*Astilbe* spp.)²

BABY'S TEARS (*Soleirolia soleirolia*)²

CHINESE LANTERN (*Abutilon hybridum*): flowers

CARNATIONS (*Dianthus*) (PINKS): petals¹

DAHLIA: flowerhead

DANDELION (*Taraxacum officinale*): leaves, flowerhead

DAY LILIES (*Hemerocallis* sp.): flowers

DRACAENA spp. cornplant

FICUS (*Ficus benjamina*): leaves

GERANIUM (*Pelargonium* sp.): flowers, leaves. Other names include: Carolina cranesbill; Geranium carolinianum.

GRAPE (not ornamental grape ivys *Cissus* sp.): leaves, fruit

HENS AND CHICKS (*Echeveria* spp.)²

HENS AND CHICKENS (*Sempervivum tectorum*)²

IMPATIENS (*Impatiens* sp.)²

JOHNNY-JUMP-UP (*V. tricolor* sp.): flowers

HIBISCUS, tropical (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*; Chinese hibiscus; shoebackplant): flowers, leaves. Blue Hibiscus (*Alyogyne huegelii*): flowers

Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*): leaves, flowers³

KUDZU (*Pueraria phaseoloides*, *P. thunbergiana*, Fanko Puero): edible by humans, goats and cows; uncertain at this time of potentially harmful phytochemicals which may prohibit or limit intake. If fed, do so sparingly and observe effects

MAPLE (*Acer* sp.): leaves have been eaten with no apparent consequence^a

MESQUITE (*Prosopis glandulosa torreyana* (*P. chilensis*): leaves

MULBERRY (*Morus alba*): leaves

NASTURTIUM (*Tropaeolum majus*): flowers, leaves

PANSIES (*V. tricolor hortensis* (*V. wittrockiana*)): flowers; (*Chlorophytum comosum*): leaves²

PEA, GREEN BEAN (not sweetpea): leaves, pods

PETUNIA (*Petunia hybrida*)²

PHLOX (*Phlox paniculata*)²

PINKS (*Dianthus*): petals¹

POTHOS (*Epipremnum pothos aureus* (*Epipremnum aureum*): leaves*

ROSE (*Rosa* sp.): petals

SPIDER PLANT (*Tradescantia cussonia specata*): leaves (sap may be an skin irritant)

SPLIT-LEAF PHILODENDRON (*Monstera*): leaves - known safe for prehensile-tailed skinks*

SQUASH / ZUCCHINI (*Cucurbita* sp.): flowers

VIOLETS (*Viola* spp, not African violets *Saintpaulia ionantha*) (PARMA VIOLET *V. alba*; VIOLA, TUFTED PANSY *V. cornuta*; AUSTRALIAN VIOLET *V. hederacea*; SWEET VIOLET *V. odorata*; CONFEDERATE VIOLET *V. preceana* (*V. sororia*); JOHNNY JUMP UP *V. tricolor*; PANSY *V. tricolor hortensis* (*V. wittrockiana*): flowers, leaves - known safe for tortoises

WANDERING JEW (*Zebrina* spp; *Tradescantia zebrina*): leaves (sap may be an skin irritant)

YUCCA (SPANISH BAYONET *Y. Aloigolia*; DATIL YUCCA *Y. baccata*; JOSHUA TREE *Y. brevifolia*; SOAPTREE YUCCA *Y. elata*; SPANISH DAGGER, SMALL SOAPWEED *Y. glauca*; SOFT TIP YUCCA *Y. gloriosa*; TORREY TUCCA *Y. torreyi*; OUR LORD'S CANDLE *Y. whipplei*; *Y. elephantipes* (*Y. gigantea*); *Y. tilamentosa*; *Y. flaccida*; *Y. harrimania*; *Y. recurvifolia* (*Y. pendula*); *Y. schidigera* (*Y. mohavensis*); *Y. schottii* (*Y. macrocarpa*): flowers

* ... high in oxalic acid - pothos may be offered to iguanas only in moderation

Sources:

a ... Anecdotal as reported by reptile keepers.

1... [Campin, Jack. Plant Relationships \(for food allergy and intolerance identification\)](#)

2... [University of California \(Davis\) Safe and Toxic Plants](#) - An excellent site to look up plants you don't find on any of my Edible or Harmful/Toxic lists!

3... [Plants for a Future](#)

Related Articles and Resources

[Harmful Plants](#)

[Susan Barnard's Harmful & Toxic Plants](#)

[Homecooking.about.com's Edible Flowers](#)

[ExoticPetsGardening Email discussion list](#)

[Plant Identification Sites](#)

www.anapsid.org/resources/edible.html

Amphibians	Conservation	Health	Lizards	Resources
Behavior	Crocodilians	Herpetology	Parent/Teacher	Snakes
Captivity	Education	Humor	Pet Trade	Societies/Rescues
Chelonians	Food/Feeding	Invertebrates	Plants	Using Internet
Clean/Disinfect	Green Iguanas & Cyclura	Kids	Prey	Veterinarians
Home	About Melissa Kaplan	CND	Lyme Disease	Zoonoses
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