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Toxic holiday plants: The tree, mistletoe, and poinsettias

Fir trees, the common Christmas Trees, do not contain highly toxic compounds. They can cause a lot of problems including foreign body obstruction, oral lesions, bowel impaction, and gastro-intestinal upset including vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, and abdominal pain. The tinsel and ornaments can cause other problems as well if ingested. The water, if you use it, contains many toxins such as the sap, bark, needles, and pigments. These can be highly toxic and can cause organ damage as well as gastro-intestinal signs. Dogs and cats seem to love the water. Please keep your pets (and children) away from the tree if unattended.

Mistletoe is a highly toxic plant. The whole plant is toxic, especially the berries. Signs of toxicity include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, hypothermia, increased urination, heart rate abnormalities, and CNS signs including dizziness, delirium, ataxia, seizures, coma, and death. There is no antidote so prompt emesis (vomiting) and lavaging the stomach is required to prevent intoxication. Do not leave Mistletoe where your pet can reach it, and if ingestion occurs, bring them here or to an emergency clinic immediately.

Poinsettias are beautiful plants, but their sap, leaves, and stems are toxic. They cause severe irritation of the oral cavity and esophagus. Pawing at the mouth, coughing, choking, retching, vomiting, diarrhea, intestinal cramping or temporary blindness can all be signs of exposure or ingestion of a poinsettia. While ingestion is rarely fatal, supportive care is usually required and the wounds are quite painful. Please keep your pet away from poinsettia plants.