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California Poison Control Discusses Holiday Plant Safety

San Francisco – December 23, 2014 – [California Poison Control System](#) (CPCS) provides information on common holiday plants, such as the poinsettia and mistletoe, which are often considered very poisonous, and even life-threatening. Although caution should be exercised, ingestion of these plants is not fatal. If you have questions about the plants listed above or any other plants in your home, call poison control at 800-222-1222 (number works in all states). Always keep plants out of reach of small children. Here are guidelines.

Amaryllis (*Hippeastrum spp.*): This exotic plant from tropical America and Africa has brilliant-colored flowers and green strap-shaped leaves. A stomach-ache can occur if the bulb is eaten.

Christmas Cactus: This is an old favorite during the holiday season. The arching, drooping branches are made up of flattened, scallop-edged, smooth, bright green, spineless joints. Rosy purplish, red flowers appear at Christmas time. This plant is considered non-toxic.

Christmas Trees (Cedar): Eating the bark can cause a stomach-ache. The sap may cause an itchy skin rash.

Christmas Trees (Pine, Spruce & Fir): The needles can cause choking, but are non-toxic.

Holly berries (*Ilex spp.*): The bright red berries of this plant are especially attractive to small children. Nibbling on one or two berries will not cause any symptoms. Swallowing more, however, can result in nausea, vomiting, stomach pain and diarrhea.

Jerusalem Cherry (*Solanum pseudocapsicum*): Swallowing this ornamental plant can result in vomiting, redness of the skin, drowsiness or restlessness, and hallucinations. This plant has bright orange and dark red berries. In rare cases, seizures may occur.

Mistletoe (*Phoradendron spp.*): All parts of the plant contain toxic substances and if eaten can cause vomiting, diarrhea and stomach pain. One to two berries or leaves eaten by a child will NOT result in serious harm. As a precaution when hanging mistletoe in your home, place it in a piece of netting or a plastic sandwich bag.

Poinsettia (*Euphorbia spp.*): Eating many leaves may cause mild stomach upset. The sap from the plant may cause skin rash and should be washed off with soap and water. Contrary to earlier beliefs, poinsettias are safe in the home during the holidays.

Pyracantha (*Pyracantha spp.*): This plant is often used in holiday center-piece decorations because of its showy ornamental appearance. It has oblong, shiny leaves, white flowers and a lot of berries during the winter season. If large amounts of berries are eaten, a stomach-ache may result. However, most experts say it is safe for decorating use during the holidays.

Rosary Pea or the Jequirity Bean (*Abrus precatorius*): The jequirity bean, commonly used in Mexico, is often used in jewelry making because of its dark red color and black tipped end. There is no harm if the beans are swallowed whole, but can be life-threatening if they are chewed prior to swallowing. Vomiting and stomach-ache occurs within a few hours after swallowing. This is followed by bloody diarrhea.

About CPCS

You can learn more about a variety of poison issues by following CPCS on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/Xyj6xs> and on Twitter @poisoninfo. Sign up for weekly safety text messages to your cell phone by texting TIPS to 69866; and download a free iPhone app, Choose Your Poison, at <http://bit.ly/gg9vfG>. CPCS is dedicated to providing California residents with the most up-to-date information and 24-hour help in case of poisoning. In case of an accidental poisoning, consumers should immediately call **1-800-222-1222** for advice.