Gardening Section: Franklin Times

October 5, 2015

“Poisonous Plants In the Home Garden”

by: Martha L. Mobley

Extension Agent, Franklin County

There are many animal lovers in Franklin County and if you are one of them, you need to be aware of certain horticultural plants when planting your landscapes and gardens that could injury or cause death to their animals. Particularly in the Fall of the year, I have seen many animals with poisoning concerns from ingesting plants, either around the yard or pastures.

One particular weed, “Perilla Mint” or “beefsteak plant” can cause havoc and will cause an economic loss of livestock when ingested, primarily this time of year. Some gardeners plant it as an ornamental in the landscape with its various shades of purple and green leaves and pungent “minty” smell. It spreads by seeds and rhizomes and become difficult to control once established. The flowers of this plant are particularly toxic, with the plant blooming this time of year.

More than 700 plants have been identified as producing physiologically active or toxic substances in sufficient amounts to cause harmful effects in animals. Poisonous plants produce a variety of toxic substances and cause reactions ranging from mild nausea to death. Certain animal species may have a peculiar vulnerability to a potentially poisonous plant. For example, cats are poisoned by any part of a lilly.

There are several good websites that list poisonous plants to pets and livestock. One site is <http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/poisonous_plants.pdf>. You may wish to print off the list and keep it in an accessible place. Please reconsider establishing these plants in your garden and landscape this Fall.

For more information about gardening and poisonous plants, contact your local Franklin County Cooperative Extension Office at 919-496-3344. You can also visit the website at franklin.ces.ncsu.edu.

