

WEIRD PLANTS

MOST DANGEROUS



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Castor Beans

Widely grown as an ornamental plant, the Castor Bean is an attractive plant native to Africa while the processed seeds are the source of castor oil, they naturally contain poison ricin and are deadly in small amounts.

It only takes a seed or two to kill a child and about eight to kill an adult. Ricin works by inhibiting the synthesis of proteins within cells and causes severe vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, and death.

Castor beans are also dangerous for animals – for e.g. if a bird swallows it they will be affected as their muscular body will grind the seed to release harmful toxins. Castor beans leaves are also very deadly, though fatalities are rare in animals eating the leaves.

The poison was used in 1987 against Georg Markov, a journalist who spoke out against the Bulgarian government, and has also been mailed to many U.S politicians in failed terrorism attempts. Most fatalities are, however, the result of accidental ingestion by children and pets.

Castor beans are not edible even if cooked. Castor beans would still have enough toxic to kill you as it contains high lectin. Castor oil is edible though. That is because it is produced by pressing ripe seeds that have had their hull (outer covering) removed. The hull is the where all the Ricin poison exists. That is why castor oil is not poisonous. It has been used as a medicine for centuries though it has a couple of side effects if you drink too much like vomiting and diarrhea.

Castor beans are illegal in some cities. Some cities like Hayward, California, prohibits the possession of Castor Bean plant, seeds or beans.

The Latin name for Castor Beans is *Ricinus Communis*. It is a species belonging to perennial flowering plant in the Spurge family, Euphorbiaceous.

FOUR FACTS YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW

- Castor oil was used for wick lamps in the past.
- Castor bean is an annual plant.
- There is no known cure if poisoned.
- There is a glossary below.



WORD GLOSSARY

- **INHIBITING:** To prevent
- **SEIZURES:** A seizure is a disturbance in the brain and causes changes in behavior
- **SYTHESIS:** A combination of part that form a connected whole.