

### LAURIE PATTON — SE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

#### *A Note From Your Director .....*

The month of December is one of the busiest months of the year and brings the joys of the holiday season. If you are traveling to visit family and friends, please stay safe. Remember to keep your cats safe from the holiday decorations.



I want to wish you all a Happy Holiday Season and and prosperous and Happy New Year.



**“It’s ALL About the Cats”**

*Laurie*

### **Dangerous Winter Holiday Plants for Pets**



Animals will often chew plants to get some roughage. For dogs this is because they are omnivores and actually enjoy plant foods. Plant roughage can be a good source of vitamins and can be helpful for passing food through the intestines. Cats are strictly carnivorous, but eating plants can benefit them by helping to bind hair in the stomach and carry it back out when they hack the hair out through their esophagus and mouth. However, animals also eat leaves for reasons we do not always understand. This is especially true for pets that are kept indoors most or all of the time, since they have not learned which plants taste bad and should be avoided, or they do not have enough access to plants and will chew on whatever is accessible.

There are some types of decorative plants that are toxic to dogs and cats. In some cases, only mild indigestion and discomfort will result, in other cases, the toxicity can lead to more severe health problems, and even fatalities. If you are planning to bring holiday foliage into your home this year this season, you will need to know which plants are safe, which should be kept out of your pet’s reach, and which should be avoided entirely.

#### **Poinsettia Plant Basics**

A lot of people have been led to believe that the poinsettia plant is deadly for pets and children, but this is actually an unlikely occurrence. The poinsettia plant’s brightly colored leaves contain a sap that is irritating to the tissues of the mouth and esophagus. If the leaves are ingested, they will often cause nausea and vomiting, but it would take a large amount of the plant’s material to cause poisoning, and most animals and children will not eat such a large enough amount because of the irritating taste and feel from the sap.

However, if the plant has been treated with a pesticide, your pet could be at risk of becoming ill from ingesting the pesticide. The size of your pet and the amount of ingested plant material will be the determining factors for the severity of the poisoning. Young animals -- puppies and kittens -- are at the highest risk. Severe reactions to the plant or to the pesticide it has been treated with include seizures, coma, and in some cases, death.

## Holly and Mistletoe

Holly and mistletoe are also popular holiday plants. These plants, along with their berries, have a greater toxicity level than the poinsettia. Symptoms of illness from ingesting these plants include intestinal upset, such as vomiting and diarrhea, excessive drooling, and abdominal pain.

Mistletoe contains multiple substances that are toxic to both dogs and cats, including toxalbumin and pharatoxin viscumin (Lectins, Phoratoxins). Mistletoe is well known for causing severe intestinal upset, as well as a sudden and severe drop in blood pressure, breathing problems, and even hallucinations (unusual behavior). If a large enough amount of these plants are ingested, seizures and death may follow. The leaves and berries of holly and mistletoe plants, even the dried plants, should be kept well out of your pet's reach, or kept out of the home altogether.

## Lilies and Daffodils

Both popular gift items at this time of year, plants in the lily and daffodil can be toxic to pets. In cats, *Lilium* and *Heimerocallis* genera lilies are the most dangerous. Eating even a small amount of the plant will have a severe impact on a cat's system, causing severe symptoms such as gastrointestinal issues, arrhythmia, and convulsions. Daffodils are also toxic to both dogs and cats, especially the bulbs.

## Amaryllis

The beauty of the flowering Amaryllis is matched by its toxicity. The Amaryllis contains Lycorine and other noxious substances, which cause salivation, gastrointestinal abnormalities (vomiting, diarrhea, decreased appetite, and abdominal pain), lethargy, and tremors in both cats and dogs. The bulb of the plant is reputed to be even more dangerous than the flowers and stalk.

The Amaryllis also goes by other names, including Belladonna, Saint Joseph Lily, Cape Belladonna, and Naked Lady.

## Christmas Cactus

Fortunately, the Christmas Cactus (or its relative, the Easter Cactus) plant is not toxic to dogs in either its parts or flowers. The same lack of toxicity applies for cats. However, fibrous plant material can cause irritation to the stomach and intestine, leading to vomiting or diarrhea.

## The Christmas Tree

There are other dangers to consider with the good ol' Yule tree other than lights and ornaments. The oils produced by fir trees can be irritating to a pet's mouth and stomach, causing excessive vomiting or drooling. The tree needles, meanwhile, may cause gastrointestinal irritation, obstruction and puncture.

Additionally, the water used to nourish Christmas trees can be noxious. Bacteria, molds, and fertilizers can cause your pet to become extremely sick with only a few laps.

## Playing it Safe

If you do choose to bring any of these plants into the home, or place them near the entry way where your pet can reach them, be very careful about where you are placing them. Cats, especially, need to be considered, since they can jump to high shelves. If your cat is a known plant chewer, you will probably be better off choosing imitation plants over the real things. But, if your dog or cat does manage to ingest any part of these holiday plants, call your veterinarian or poison control immediately to find out what you should do to minimize the damage.

**KEEPING YOUR FURRY FAMILY MEMBERS SAFE DURING THE HOLIDAYS CAN BE A DIFFICULT TASK. THERE ARE THE ORNAMENTS, PLANTS, PRESENTS, LIGHTS -- OH, AND WHO COULD FORGET THE CHRISTMAS TREE (IF DO YOU DECIDE TO PUT ONE UP THIS YEAR)? LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME SIMPLE STEPS THAT WILL ALLOW YOUR PETS TO JOIN IN THE HOLIDAY FUN THIS YEAR, WHILE AVOIDING ANY TRIPS TO THE ANIMAL EMERGENCY ROOM.**

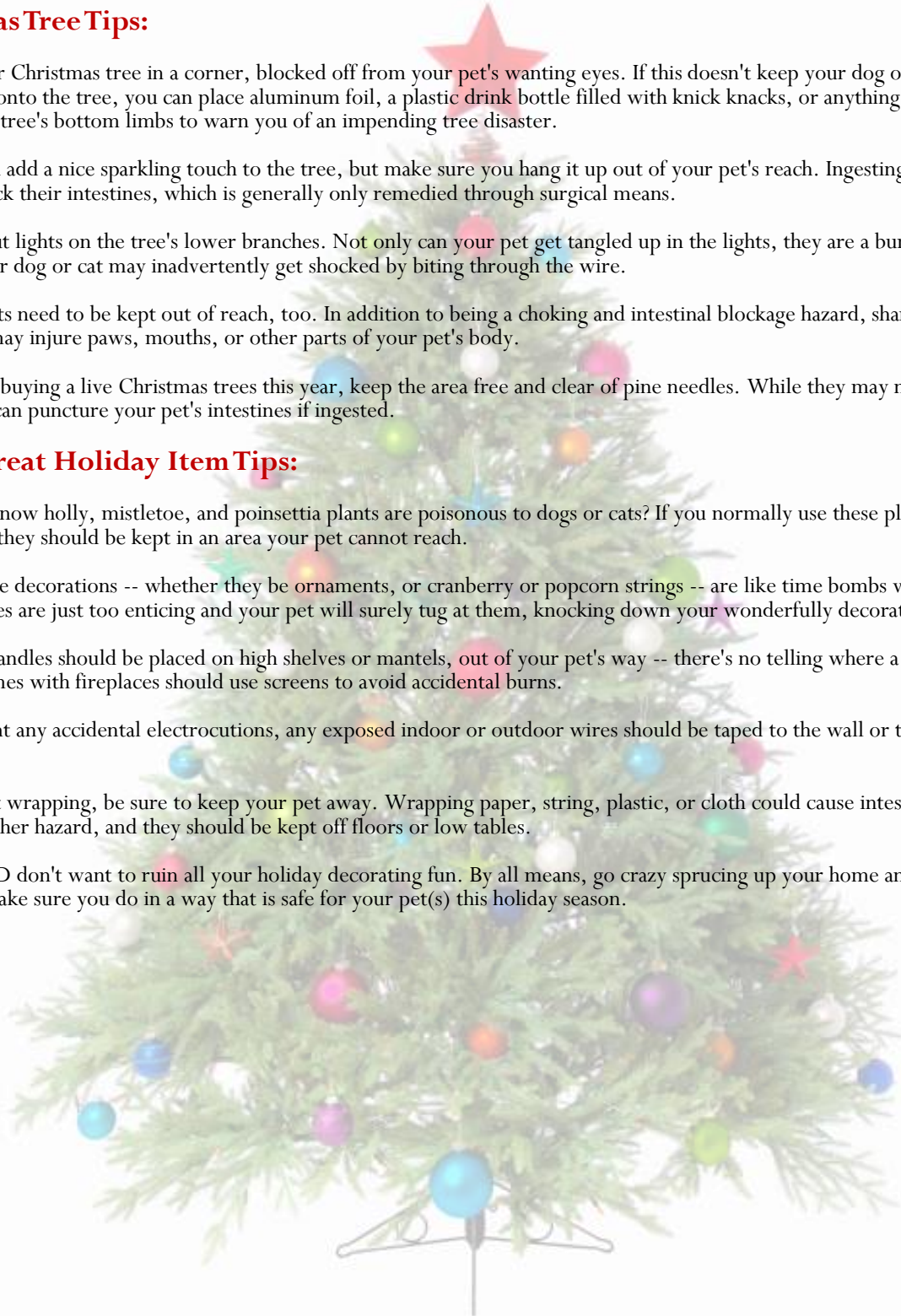
**Christmas Tree Tips:**

1. Place your Christmas tree in a corner, blocked off from your pet's wanting eyes. If this doesn't keep your dog or cat from attempting to jump onto the tree, you can place aluminum foil, a plastic drink bottle filled with knick knacks, or anything else that creates noise on the tree's bottom limbs to warn you of an impending tree disaster.
2. Tinsel can add a nice sparkling touch to the tree, but make sure you hang it up out of your pet's reach. Ingesting the tinsel can potentially block their intestines, which is generally only remedied through surgical means.
3. Do not put lights on the tree's lower branches. Not only can your pet get tangled up in the lights, they are a burning hazard. Additionally, your dog or cat may inadvertently get shocked by biting through the wire.
4. Ornaments need to be kept out of reach, too. In addition to being a choking and intestinal blockage hazard, shards from broken ornaments may injure paws, mouths, or other parts of your pet's body.
5. For those buying a live Christmas trees this year, keep the area free and clear of pine needles. While they may not seem dangerous, the needles can puncture your pet's intestines if ingested.

**Other Great Holiday Item Tips:**

1. Did you know holly, mistletoe, and poinsettia plants are poisonous to dogs or cats? If you normally use these plants to decorate your home, they should be kept in an area your pet cannot reach.
2. Edible tree decorations -- whether they be ornaments, or cranberry or popcorn strings -- are like time bombs waiting to happen. These goodies are just too enticing and your pet will surely tug at them, knocking down your wonderfully decorated spruce.
3. Burning candles should be placed on high shelves or mantels, out of your pet's way -- there's no telling where a wagging tail may end up. Homes with fireplaces should use screens to avoid accidental burns.
4. To prevent any accidental electrocutions, any exposed indoor or outdoor wires should be taped to the wall or the sides of the house.
5. When gift wrapping, be sure to keep your pet away. Wrapping paper, string, plastic, or cloth could cause intestinal blockages. Scissors are another hazard, and they should be kept off floors or low tables.

We at petMD don't want to ruin all your holiday decorating fun. By all means, go crazy sprucing up your home and wrapping presents. But make sure you do in a way that is safe for your pet(s) this holiday season.





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# RECIPES and CRAFTS



## PIZZELLE COOKIES

### Ingredients:

- 1 3/4 Cups of Flour
- 2 tsp of Baking Powder
- Pinch of Salt
- 3/4 of a Cup of Sugar
- 1 tsp of Vanilla Extract
- 3/4 tsp of Anise extract or Almond extract
- 3 Eggs
- 1/3 cup of Unsalted Butter, melted
- 1 tsp of Lemon Zest, optional
- 1/4 cup of Milk, you might not need it.

### Directions

- 1) Sift the first 3 ingredients into a bowl and set aside.
- 2) In a large bowl, mix together the remaining ingredients really well. Add the dry ingredients and mix to make sure everything is well incorporated. If needed, add milk to thin the batter slightly, only a couple tablespoons.
- 3) To cook the pizzelles, preheat your pizzelle maker and cook them according to manufacturer's instructions. Every pizzelle maker is different so I will not be able to say exactly how long you need to cook them for. Just make sure you read the instructions.



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