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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**“Beauty Isn’t Always Benign: Pretty Plant Poisons to Watch Out For This Summer”**

**OKLAHOMA CITY (July 2025)** Lush greenery and vibrant blooms are the crown jewels of summer landscaping—but some of the season’s prettiest plants can also be the most poisonous.

“People are often surprised to learn that some of the most beautiful garden plants—like foxglove or daffodils—can cause significant health problems if touched or eaten,” says Dr. Kristie Edelen, board-certified clinical toxicologist and managing director of the Oklahoma Poison Center. “We want families to enjoy the outdoors safely by recognizing which plants can pose a danger, especially to curious children and pets.”

**Here are a few Oklahoma garden favorites with a toxic twist:**

* Foxglove – These tall, elegant flowers can cause nausea, vomiting, slowed heart rate, and even fatal irregular heartbeats if ingested.
* Oleander – All parts of this flowering shrub are highly toxic and can lead to confusion, vision problems, and cardiac arrest.
* Pokeweed – Its dark purple berries are tempting to children, but ingestion can cause vomiting, frothy diarrhea, and—in serious cases—seizures or coma.
* Jimson Weed – Also known as moonflower, this plant can cause hallucinations, confusion, and dangerously high heart rates.
* Mushrooms – Some wild mushrooms found in Oklahoma backyards can lead to severe gastrointestinal symptoms or liver failure. Never eat wild mushrooms unless properly identified by an expert.

**What About Poison Hemlock?**  
Poison hemlock grows rapidly across Oklahoma and is indeed toxic if consumed—but recent reports have overstated the risk to the general public. While ingestion can affect the way your nerves and muscles work together and may lead to breathing problems, simply being near the plant does not pose a danger. Touching poison hemlock may cause mild skin irritation in some individuals, but toxicity is not expected through casual contact. Homeowners with concerns about removing the plant from their property can contact their local OSU Extension office for safe removal guidance. Unlike humans, livestock are highly susceptible—ingestion can be fatal for animals, so farmers and ranchers should remain especially vigilant.

**Leaves of Three, Let It Be**

Even the common poison ivy hides in plain sight with its “leaves of three.” Contact with the plant’s oil, urushiol, can cause severe itching, blistering rashes, and may linger for years on clothes, tools, and even pets. “Never burn poison ivy,” warns Dr. Edelen. “Inhaling the smoke can cause serious respiratory reactions.”

**Tips to Stay Safe This Summer:**

* Learn to identify toxic plants in your yard or neighborhood.
* Teach children not to touch or taste plants or berries outdoors.
* Wear gloves, long sleeves, and pants when gardening or hiking in overgrown areas.
* Never burn plants like poison ivy, oak, or sumac.
* Wash skin and tools immediately after outdoor activities with a grease-cutting soap.

If you suspect someone has touched or eaten a poisonous plant, don’t wait for symptoms. Call the Oklahoma Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222, available 24/7 with confidential advice from pharmacists and registered nurses.

“A beautiful yard shouldn’t come at the cost of your family’s health,” adds Kristie Edelen. “Know what’s growing around you—and when in doubt, give us a call.”

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**About Oklahoma Poison Center**

Oklahoma Poison Center is dedicated to providing expert advice and support in cases of poisoning and exposure to harmful substances. Our mission is to prevent poisonings and reduce their impact through education, prevention, and providing emergency treatment recommendations. The Oklahoma Poison Center is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy.

**The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences**

The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences is one of the nation’s few academic health centers with all health professions colleges — Allied Health, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, Graduate Studies and School of Community Medicine. OU Health Sciences serves approximately 4,000 students in more than 70 undergraduate and graduate degree programs on campuses in Oklahoma City and Tulsa and is the academic and research partner of OU Health, the state’s only comprehensive academic healthcare system. OU Health Sciences is ranked 129 out of over 2,849 institutions in funding received from the National Institutes of Health, according to the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research. For more information, visit ouhsc.edu.