



## A Few “Green” Ways to Prevent Poisoning

These days it’s hip to be green, but even though being green is good for the environment, the products we use to embrace an environmentally-friendly lifestyle aren’t always fit for ingestion, skin contact or inhalation. Just as special care must be taken when handling harsh chemical cleaners and household products, so must care be taken when dealing with their earth-friendlier alternatives. This becomes particularly important in spring, when the garden – and its eventual fruits – become part of a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center offers the following tips for those who want to save the world and keep themselves safe in the process:

- Pay attention to what you’re growing. The tomato plants that you are getting ready to put into the ground will be a tasty addition to the summer, but other plants in your garden may be hazardous. Make sure you know what’s in your garden, and what could be toxic. Consult your poison center to help identify potentially harmful plants, and be sure to consider weeds, because nightshade and nettles often co-exist with planted flowers and shrubs. Signs of plant poisoning include symptoms ranging from skin irritation to nausea to hallucinations.
- Even if the green cleaning agents you buy are advertised as non-toxic, make sure you store and use them safely. Mixing household cleaners can create hazardous fumes, and some ingredients like boric acid and alcohol found in “green” cleaners can be toxic, and should be used with caution. Some green cleaners may already exist in your pantry – vinegar, baking soda, salt, mineral oil and cornstarch could be used for everything from floors to windows to freshening the air.
- Remember that while green, natural and organic are terms that are used interchangeably, that doesn’t necessarily mean the products are harmless. Regardless of the product, make sure you carefully read label information before using any green product. If you believe you’ve been exposed to a poison or have questions about whether a substance is poisonous, call the Nebraska Regional Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.