
Lantana *Lantana camara*



Erect or spreading shrub, 0.5 to 1.2 m tall, with recurved prickles on the angles of the square stem. Leaves opposite or whorled, deciduous, ovate to lanceolate, 2 to 7 cm long, margins toothed, aromatic when crushed. Flowers initially cream, yellow or pink changing to orange or scarlet, thus resulting in a multi-colored, short, head-like spike. Fruit greenish blue or black, one seeded. Found in sandy Coastal Plain soils, Florida to Texas; common along roadsides and in waste places, yards, and gardens; persisting after cultivation and escaping.

Toxicity

This ornamental shrub contains lantanin, a triterpenoid, and other compounds irritating to the mucosa of the gastrointestinal tract. All parts of the plant are quite toxic, and poisoning may occur year-round but is most common in summer and fall. Many poisoning cases occur when clippings are thrown into the pasture.

Sheep, cattle, horses, and humans are sensitive to the effects of the plant. Cattle are most often affected. Children have been poisoned by eating the berries.

Symptoms

There are two forms of toxicity: acute and chronic. The acute form usually occurs within 24 hours after the plants are eaten. Animals exhibit gastroenteritis with bloody, watery feces. Severe weakness and paralysis of the limbs are followed by death in 3 to 4 days. The chronic form is characterized by jaundiced mucous membranes, photosensitization, and ulcerations of the mucous membranes of the nose and oral cavity. The skin may peel, leaving raw areas that are vulnerable to blowfly strikes and bacterial infection. Severe keratitis may result in temporary or permanent blindness.

Treatment

Remove animals from direct sunlight. Use antibiotic injections and topical applications of protective antibiotic creams. Treat with 20 percent sodium thiosulfate (1 ounce per 100 pounds); repeat treatment every other day. Use topical application of cortisone to relieve itching.