
Oleander *Nerium oleander*



Ornamental shrub or small, densely branched tree, 1 to 10 m tall. Leaves opposite or whorled, evergreen, leathery, narrowly elliptic to linear elliptic, 6 to 15 cm long, 1 to 3 cm wide, margins entire. Flowers showy, white, pink, red, or yellow, 3.5 to 4 cm wide, in large terminal clusters. Found in Coastal Plain from Florida to Louisiana; particularly abundant on sandy soils near the coast; widely cultivated and escaping along roadsides and edges of woods and in lawns and gardens.

Toxicity

The toxic principles are two glycosides, oleandroside and nerioside, which can be isolated from all parts of the plant. Toxins may also be inhaled in smoke when plants are burned. Human poisoning occasionally occurs from eating hot dogs roasted on sticks from nearby oleander plants. This extremely toxic plant can poison livestock and humans at any time of the year.

Symptoms

Severe gastroenteritis, diarrhea, abdominal pain, sweating, and weakness are the usual symptoms. These signs appear within a few hours after eating the leaves. Cardiac irregularities are common, often characterized by increased heart rate. However, a slower heart rate is often detected in the later stages.

Treatment

Nonspecific. Treat symptoms although symptomatic treatment is usually unsuccessful.