

For Immediate Release  
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## ***Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants* Illuminates the Dark Side of Plants**

**New guidebook published December 15, 2006**

Hot off the press, *Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants* is a useful, portable, and comprehensive reference to the toxic plants encountered everywhere, both inside and outside the home. This clearly structured and colorfully illustrated guidebook, co-published by The New York Botanical Garden Press and Springer, is a comprehensive and indispensable resource for hikers, gardeners, parents of small children, pet owners, physicians, nurses, and veterinarians. Its handsome and information-packed presentation will also appeal to everyone who loves plants or collects books about plants.

Lewis R. Goldfrank, Chairman, Department of Emergency Medicine, New York University School of Medicine, comments, "This second edition of the *Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants* is a remarkable improvement to a great book. It is a much more logical and clinically relevant use of botany and medicine. New graphics and formal structure increase its value for the lay person and the clinician."

The authors of this completely revised edition (first published by the American Medical Association in 1985) include two physicians in active practice in medical toxicology and emergency medicine: Lewis S. Nelson, M.D., New York University School of Medicine, and Richard D. Shih, M.D., Morristown Memorial Hospital, Morristown, New Jersey. They teamed with Michael J. Balick, Ph.D., a noted ethnobotanist and authority on toxic plants and Director of the Institute of Economic Botany at The New York Botanical Garden.

The handbook helps answer common questions about the harmful potential of plants and products derived from them. An authoritative yet accessible book drawing from both plant science and medicine, it provides clear visuals to help identify individual poisonous and injurious plants, as well as information on each plant's toxins and the corresponding clinical symptoms and therapeutic treatments.

*Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants* presents clear information on hundreds of plants for the use of the layman as well as health experts at emergency departments and poison control centers. The book is lavishly illustrated with 434 images, which elegantly highlight each plant's distinguishing characteristics. The images include 398 full-color photographs as well as color plates from the LuEsther T. Mertz Library of The New York Botanical Garden. The book contains vital information on a broad variety of poisonous and injurious temperate and tropical plants such as holly, poinsettia, and philodendron. It also includes common names, descriptions, species distribution, and information on the toxic part of each plant, and provides the latest medical information along with scientific references. An easy-to-use glossary of botanical terms helps guide the non-specialist through this fascinating and multidisciplinary field.

In the 20 years since the publication of the first edition, there has been an expansion in both the number and variety of poisonings caused by toxic plants. In the same time, the diversity of plants in gardens and homes has proliferated, expanding the range of potential exposure to toxic plants.

Plant poisoning is a significant problem around the world; in the United States, exposures to plant toxins account for approximately 10 percent of the annual calls to the nation's Poison Control Centers.

The 340-page, softcover book can be purchased at [www.nybgshop.org](http://www.nybgshop.org)

### **About the Authors**

Dr. Lewis S. Nelson is an Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at New York University School of Medicine, and is an attending physician at both NYU Medical Center and Bellevue Hospital. He is the Director of the Fellowship in Medical Toxicology at New York University School of Medicine and the Associate Medical Director of the New York City Poison Control Center. He is board certified in both emergency medicine and medical toxicology, and maintains both clinical and leadership roles in these disciplines. Dr. Nelson has written and lectured extensively about plant and herbal poisoning, drugs of abuse, and medication safety. He is an editor of the 8th Edition of *Goldfrank's Toxicologic Emergencies*, published by McGraw-Hill, considered by many the flagship reference text in medical toxicology.

Dr. Richard D. Shih is an Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and the Emergency Medicine Residency Director at the Morristown Memorial Hospital. He is an attending physician at both the Morristown Memorial Hospital and the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System. He is board certified in both emergency medicine and medical toxicology. Dr. Shih's areas of research interest include residency education, drugs of abuse, plant toxicology, and herbal poisoning.

Michael J. Balick, Ph.D., Vice President, Philecology Curator of Economic Botany, and Director of the Institute of Economic Botany, The New York Botanical Garden, is a noted ethnobotanist, author, professor, and authority on toxic plants. He has conducted 56 international expeditions in countries from Belize to Micronesia, including several extended ethnopharmacological investigations—the search for plants with medicinal properties. Dr. Balick conducts research in New York City as well, studying traditional healing practices in urban ethnic communities. In 1981, he co-founded the Institute of Economic Botany at The New York Botanical Garden. He is also a co-founder of a course that teaches herbal medicine to practicing physicians and other health care professionals, run in collaboration with Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons and the University of Arizona Program in Integrative Medicine.

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**The New York Botanical Garden is an advocate for the plant kingdom. The Garden pursues its mission through its role as a museum of living plant collections arranged in gardens and landscapes across its National Historic Landmark site; through its comprehensive education programs in horticulture and plant science; and through the wide-ranging research programs of the International Plant Science Center.**

**The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.**

**A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.**

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