Plants poisonous to guinea pigs

The bulk of a guinea pig's diet should be made up of fiber grass and hay, with vegetables and other plants making up a smaller proportion of the overall intake. However, some plants can be harmful if fed, so it is important to know which plants are safe to feed to your guinea pigs and which ones aren't!

How do I know if something is safe to feed?

Always do your research, and if in any doubt as to what something is, don’t feed it!

If you are picking wild plants, ensure that you pick them away from verges on the road and look around for signs of wildlife or cats/dogs using the area as a toilet. Always wash fresh food thoroughly before feeding.

Don’t rely on your guinea pig to avoid eating something that is poisonous, as they may not instinctively know.

In the wild guinea pigs eat mainly grass and the bulk of your guinea pig's diet should also comprise mainly grass or hay. Don’t forget to provide fresh water - although if your guinea pig eats mainly grass then less water is likely to be drunk than if it eats mainly pelleted food.

What if my guinea pig eats a potentially poisonous plant?

Guinea pigs are unable to vomit so if they eat anything that is poisonous, they may not show an initial reaction but may suffer from subsequent problems. Poisonous plants can affect guinea pigs in different ways and with varying severity, ranging from increased salivation, skin allergies, heart and breathing problems, stomach
problems and even death. If you suspect your guinea pig may have eaten something poisonous, keep it warm, quiet and ensure it has access to plenty of fresh water and hay. You should also telephone your veterinarian if you believe your guinea pig has eaten something potentially poisonous. If your veterinarian suggests you bring your guinea pig to the surgery try to take a sample of the suspect plant along to help your veterinarian come to a diagnosis. Your veterinarian may admit the guinea pig and administer gut protectants and fluids to help flush the toxins out.

The lists of plants below are not comprehensive they include the most common plants, vegetables and fruits so if a plant is not listed, don’t assume that it is safe for your guinea pig, and if you are unsure if something is safe to feed or not, then it is best avoided to be on the safe side.

Introduce any new plants gradually as guinea pigs can develop gastrointestinal problems in response to abrupt changes in their diet. Conditions such as diarrhea or bloat may occur. Also, after a couple of hours remove any uneaten plants from the cage as they may become moldy and begin to ferment which can cause bloating.

All plants should be rinsed with water to remove any residues. Also remember that the fruits and vegetables given to guinea pigs should be free from pesticides and avoid plants collected from parks, roadsides or fields they may be contaminated by exhaust fumes leaving lead deposits, pesticides, herbicides and feces and urine from dogs, cats or wild animals.

Grass clippings must not be fed they start to ferment very quickly and can cause digestive disturbances. Many houseplants are also poisonous so if your guinea pig roams free in your house, keep all plants out of their reach.

**Which plants are safe and which ones aren’t?**

The following list of plants is not exhaustive, so if something is not known to be 100% safe, then it must NOT be fed.

**Plants safe to feed to your guinea pig**

- Alfalfa.
- Apple.
• Apricot.
• Asparagus.
• Banana.
• Basil.
• Beet tops.
• Broccoli.
• Brussel sprouts.
• Cabbage.
• Carrot (tops and root).
• Cauliflower.
• Celery.
• Chives.
• Coriander.
• Cucumber.
• Dandelion.
• Fresh grass.
• Green, red and yellow peppers.
• Kale.
• Kiwi.
• Marjoram.
• Melon.
• Mint.
• Nectarine.
• Parsley.
• Peach.
• Pear.
• Peas.
• Pineapple.
• Raspberry.
• Spinach.
• Strawberry.
• Swede.
• Tomato.

Plants that are safe in the garden

• Asters.
• Carnations.
• Daisy.
• Marigolds.
- Nasturtiums.
- Roses.
- Sunflowers.
- Clover (but not red clover).
- Dandelions (small amounts as is diuretic/laxative!).
- Nettles.
- Thistles.

**Plants to avoid**

- All plants grown from bulbs, including Daffodil, Snowdrop, Tulip, Anemone, Arum, Bluebell.
- Antirrhinums.
- Azalea.
- Bittersweet.
- Bryony.
- Buttercup.
- Caladium.
- Chrysanthemums.
- Clematis.
- Cyclamen.
- Columbine.
- Dahlias.
- Dog Mercury.
- Dock.
- Deadly nightshade.
- Delphinium.
- Evergreens, eg yew.
- Fig.
- Figwort.
- Foxglove.
- Fools parsley.
- Frozen or wet greens/vegetables.
- Ground ivy.
- Gysophila.
- Hellebore.
- Hemlock.
- Holly.
- Honeysuckle.
- Hyacinth.
- Iris.
- Ivy.
- Jasmine.
- Jerusalem Cherry.
- Juniper.
- Kingcup.
- Laburnum.
- Lettuce.
- Leyland Cypress.
- Lobelia.
- Lily of the Valley.
- Lords and Ladies.
- Love in a mist.
- Lupins.
- Marsh marigold.
- Mistletoe.
- Monk's hood.
- Morning Glory.
- Oak.
- Philodendron.
- Plum branches.
- Poppies.
- Potato tops.
- Privet.
- Ragwort.
- Red clover.
- Rhododendron.
- Spurges.
- St John's wort.
- Tomato leaves.
- Wisteria.
- Woody nightshade.

**Treats**

Treats should only be given to your guinea pig in small amounts. Overfeeding of treats and/or food low in fibre can lead to obesity, dental problems, heart and
gastrointestinal problems. Treats can however be a useful training aid as a reward for good or required behaviour. Avoid giving foods that are high in sugar, fat or starch.

**Treats to be given in small amounts**

- Artichoke.
- Broccoli.
- Brussel sprouts.
- Cabbage; savoy and kale.
- Corn on the cob.
- Carrot tops.
- Radish.
- Raspberry canes.
- Swede.
- Sweet potato.
- Strawberry leaves.

**Avoid**

- Raisins (very high in sugar).
- Beans.
- Seeds.
- Chocolate.
- Peas.
- Cereals.
- Oats.
- Refined sugar.
- Corn.
- Nuts.
- Wheat.

**What should I do if I suspect my guinea pig has eaten a poisonous plant?**

**CALL YOUR VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY!**

If you know what they have eaten, then take a sample of this with you.
Often supportive treatment in the way of fluids to try and flush through the toxin and support the kidneys, as well as gut protectants are what your veterinarian will recommend.

The outcome will depend upon what was eaten, how much of it and when.

What can I do to prevent my guinea pig eating something poisonous?

When in the garden ensure that they are kept in a secure area, so you know exactly what they are eating. Only offer fresh food that you are 100% able to identify, and ensure you wash it before feeding it.