

Poisonous Plants of the Schwäbische Alb Biosphere

The Schwäbische Alb in Germany hosts a variety of poisonous plants. Some pose an acute danger to humans (e.g. causing severe poisoning or skin injury), others endanger grazing animals (especially horses), and a few invasive species threaten local biodiversity. Below is a field reference table of key poisonous plants in this region, with identification notes, toxicology, and recommended first-response actions. **Always exercise caution** when handling unknown plants, and keep livestock away from these species. In case of suspected poisoning, seek medical or veterinary help immediately.

Highly Toxic & Potentially Deadly Species

These plants can cause life-threatening poisoning even in small amounts. Avoid any ingestion or unprotected contact.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Autumn crocus	<i>Colchicum autumnale</i>	All parts (esp. seeds) ¹	Delayed onset: burning in mouth, vomiting, bloody diarrhea, paralysis, respiratory collapse ² ³ ; often fatal.	Damp meadows, pastures; spreads in late-mown hay fields ⁴ .	High	Leaves Mar–Jun; Flowers Aug–Oct ⁵	ID: Purple-pink crocus-like flowers in fall, no leaves when blooming. Broad, odorless leaves in spring resemble wild garlic ⁶ (no garlicky smell). First Aid: No antidote – urgent hospital/vet care; do not eat wild plants unless 100% sure of identity.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Deadly nightshade	<i>Atropa belladonna</i>	All parts (berries, leaves, roots) ⁷	Dilated pupils, dry mouth, hallucinations, rapid pulse, confusion, convulsions; can lead to respiratory failure ⁷ .	Chalky woodlands, scrub, path edges (calcareous soils) ⁸ ; often in forest clearings or disturbed ground.	High	Flowers Jun-Sep; Berries late summer (shiny black) ⁹ ¹⁰ .	ID: Shrub up to 1.5 m; dull purple bell-shaped flowers and black cherry-sized berries. First Aid: If berries/leaves eaten, call poison control immediately – do not induce vomiting ; keep victim calm until help arrives.
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>	All parts except red berry flesh (needles, seeds, wood) ¹¹	Trembling, collapse, slow or irregular heartbeat, sudden death (often without warning) ¹² .	Forest edges, shady slopes, ornamental hedges ¹¹ ; an evergreen conifer shrub/tree.	High	Evergreen (year-round toxin); berries Aug-Oct.	ID: Dark-green needle leaves; red fleshy berries (seed inside is toxic). First Aid: Extremely deadly – even 100 g can kill a horse within minutes ¹³ . If ingested, seek emergency medical/vet help immediately . Keep yew clippings away from livestock.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Monkshood (Wolf's bane)	<i>Aconitum napellus</i> & rel.	All parts (root, stem, flower) ¹⁴	Tingling or numbness, excessive salivation, vomiting, diarrhea, irregular heartbeat, muscle paralysis ascending from limbs, respiratory failure ¹⁴ .	Damp meadows, streambanks; also grown as ornamental (flower beds, parks) ¹⁴ .	High	Perennial: sprouts in spring; Flowers Jun–Aug.	ID: 1–1.5 m tall herb; deeply divided leaves; showy blue-purple hooded flowers in a spike. First Aid: Wear gloves – toxin absorbs through skin. If suspected contact or ingestion, wash skin thoroughly and get medical help at once (aconitine is often fatal).
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	All parts (leaves, flowers, seeds) ¹⁵	Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dizziness; irregular slow heartbeat, tremors, convulsions – can be fatal due to cardiac failure ¹⁵ .	Light woods, clearings, rocky slopes; also in gardens ¹⁶ . Prefers acidic or sandy soils.	High	Biennial: rosettes year-round; Flowers May–Jul.	ID: Up to 1.5 m; rosette of downy leaves; tall spike of bell-shaped purple-pink flowers with spotted throats. First Aid: Treat as cardiac emergency – seek medical help. Do not induce vomiting unless directed; take any remaining plant sample for identification.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Poison hemlock	<i>Conium maculatum</i>	All parts (esp. seeds) 17	Salivation, dilated pupils, trembling, weakness, ascending paralysis starting from legs, respiratory failure 17.	Roadsides, field edges, waste places; prefers moist, nutrient-rich soils. Often found near ditches or farm dumps.	High	Biennial: basal leaves first year; Flowers Jun–Jul (white umbrella clusters).	ID: Tall (up to 2 m) parsley-like plant; hollow green stems with purple blotches; pungent “mousy” odor when crushed 17. First Aid: Deadly – even small amounts can kill. If ingested, call emergency services; keep victim at rest (conium can cause respiratory arrest).
Thorn-apple (Jimsonweed)	<i>Datura stramonium</i>	All parts (esp. seeds) 7	Thirst, dry flushed skin, delirium, hallucinations, fever, seizures; can progress to coma and respiratory arrest 7.	Waste ground, nutrient-rich soils (manure heaps, field edges); often near farms or disturbed urban soil. Warm, sunny spots.	High	Annual: germinates late spring; Flowers Jun–Sep; spiky seed pods by late summer.	ID: 0.5–1 m bushy annual; large irregular leaves with foul odor; white or purple trumpet-like flowers; spiny golf-ball-sized seed capsules. First Aid: Extremely toxic – call poison control immediately. Keep victim cool (can overheat); do not give stimulants.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Spurge-laurel (Mezereon)	<i>Daphne mezereum</i>	All parts (esp. berries & bark) ¹⁸ ¹⁹	Burning of mouth and throat, drooling, severe vomiting, abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhea ¹⁸ ; can lead to convulsions and collapse. A few berries can be lethal to a child.	Wooded hills, limestone forests ²⁰ ¹⁸ ; often grows in open woods or forest edges. Early spring bloomer.	High	Deciduous shrub: flowers Feb–Apr; red berries May–Jul.	ID: 0.5–1 m shrub; fragrant pink-purple flowers on bare stems in late winter; oval leaves after bloom; bright red berries in clusters. First Aid: Rinse mouth if eaten; do not induce vomiting if large amount ingested (risk of aspiration). Get medical help; activated charcoal may be administered by professionals.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Laburnum (Golden chain)	<i>Laburnum anagyroides</i>	All parts (esp. seeds) <small>21 19</small>	Intense sweating, trembling, agitation, labored breathing, rapid pulse, muscle spasms; can progress to coma or death in high dose <small>21</small> .	Planted ornamental tree/shrub; escapes on calcareous slopes or hedgerows. Seen in parks, old gardens, and village edges.	High	Deciduous: flowers May (yellow chains); seed pods develop in summer.	ID: Small tree up to 7 m; trifoliate oval leaves; hanging clusters of bright yellow pea-flowers; green pods turning black with 3–7 seeds. First Aid: If seeds or parts swallowed, call emergency services. Induce vomiting only if advised; monitor breathing. Keep horses away from fallen pods (200–300 g of seeds can be fatal <small>22</small>).

Other Poisonous Plants of Concern

These species also pose risks (to animals, humans, or ecosystems), though their toxicity is often situational or requires larger exposures. They are important for scouts, land managers, and horse owners to recognize.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i> (syn. <i>Senecio jacobaea</i>)	All parts; leaves & flowers contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids (remain toxic in hay) ²³	Chronic liver damage (weight loss, jaundice, depression) ²⁴ ; can cause irreversible liver failure (“walking disease”) after cumulative intake. Rarely causes acute illness in humans ²⁵ .	Overgrazed pastures, roadsides, wasteland – especially on nutrient-poor or calcareous soils ²⁶ . Often invades neglected horse fields.	High (livestock)	Biennial: rosette year 1; Flowers Jun–Sep (yellow daisies).	ID: 30cm tall herb with bright yellow daisy-like flowers in clusters. Dark-green lobed leaves with ragged margins. Aid: Remove animals from infested pastures. Antidote: liver damage is cumulative ²³ . P: ingest, pulling (with gloves before seedling or bagging) (toxic if into hay).

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Sycamore maple	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Seeds and seedlings (contain hypoglycin A) ²⁷	In horses: sweating, muscle tremors, weakness, colic, dark brown urine ²⁸ ; progresses to <i>atypical myopathy</i> (breakdown of respiratory & cardiac muscles) ²⁹ , often fatal. (Not toxic to humans under normal exposure.)	Woodlands and tree-lines; common native maple on Alb. Seeds spread into pastures especially near adult trees.	High (for horses)	Deciduous: seeds drop in fall; toxic seedlings sprout in spring ²⁷ .	ID: Large tree, up to 30m tall, broad leaves, winged seeds, “helicopter” seed pattern. Aid: Prune horse to see seeds and sap (seeds toxic to horse). Signs of atypical myopathy: a veterinarian immediately after early in season. Care is critical. ²⁸ .

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Giant hogweed	<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	Sap (in stems, leaves, hairs)	<p>Contact (skin + sun): redness, itching, blistering burns that can scar ³⁰. Blisters develop 24–48h after exposure; sensitivity to sunlight may last months. (Not typically eaten due to acrid sap; ingestion can cause oral burns.)</p>	Invasive along streams, ditches, forest edges ³⁰ ; moist nutrient-rich soil. Also common hogweed (<i>H. sphondylium</i>) has milder similar effects ³⁰ .	High (contact)	<p>Biennial: rosette in spring; Flowers Jun–Jul (giant white umbels); seeds by late summer. Dies after flowering.</p>	<p>ID: Ve (3–5 m plant; sharpl divide leaves stem v purple blotch White cluster 50 cm)</p> <p>First A Wash imme with so cool w contac area fr light fo least 4 burns, medic attent</p> <p>Remo Wear protec clothing goggle not us trimm (spray Report eradic stands protec and biodiv</p>

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Black locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	Bark, leaves, seeds (contain robin & toxalbumins) ³¹	Drooling, abdominal pain, diarrhea, weakness, irregular pulse; colic and kidney/liver damage in severe cases ³² . Horses may show depression, dilated pupils, lack of coordination; can be fatal if enough bark ingested.	Dry slopes, woodland edges, roadsides. Invasive tree on Alb grasslands (outcompetes natives). Often planted for wood, now naturalized.	Moderate-High	Deciduous: leaf-out Apr; Flowers May-Jun (white clusters); seed pods Sept-Oct; bare in winter.	ID: Medium-sized tree up to 15m; rounded crown with fissured bark. Compound leaves with oval leaflets. Pendulous clusters of fragrant pea-flowers. First Aid: Keep horses away from broken branches. Remove bark (often fenced). Ingested seeds suspected: call veterinarian. Human: avoid seeds and bark. For young saplings, ecological sensitivity in some areas. Suckers spread.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Toxic Parts	Typical Symptoms	Typical Habitat	Risk Level	Seasonality	Identification & First Response
Lily-of-the-valley	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>	All parts (cardiac glycosides) ¹⁹	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness ³³ ; chest tightness, slow or irregular heartbeat, possibly arrhythmia ³³ . Large ingestions can cause collapse.	Shaded forests (beech, oak woods); often co-occurs with wild garlic and can be mistaken for it ³⁴ . Also a common ornamental groundcover in gardens.	Moderate-High	Perennial: Emerges Mar; Flowers May (white bells); red berry fruits late summer.	ID: Low two gl lance- leaves base, a one-si stalk o scente bell flo Cauti Leaves like wi but lac smell First A ingest expect vomiti seek n attent to hea Monit bring of pla assist treatm

1 19 25 26 **Giftpflanzen im Extensiv-Grünland**

<https://s8e97737d569e52a2.jimcontent.com/download/version/1615451653/module/7582400851/name/Giftpflanzen%20des%20Gr%C3%BCnlandes.pdf>

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3 4 7 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 21 22 23 24 27 28 31 32 **Giftpflanzenlexikon für Pferdebesitzer - diese sind besonders giftig | Pavo | Pavo**

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<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/plants/wild-flowers/deadly-nightshade/>

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http://www.biosphaere-alb.com/Archiv/07_01/36_37_hang_lage.htm

30 **BÄRENKLAU - Bernstadt | Alb-Donau-Kreis**

<https://www.bernstadt-wuertt.de/baerenklaus/>

33 **Vorsicht beim Bärlauchsammeln | Universitätsklinikum Freiburg**

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34 **Was isch denn des? – AlbCloud**

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