Virginia Piedmont Common Poisonous Plants

What evil lurks in your pasture?

Systems affected by bad plants

- Sudden death
  - Wilted Wild Cherry
- Cardiovascular System
  - Milkweed and Yew
  - Red or Swamp Maples
- Digestive System
  - Pokeweed
  - Oak trees and acorns
- Liver and Skin
  - Senecio and Fall Panic Grass
- Nervous System
  - Sudan and Johnson Grass
- Musculoskeletal System
  - Black Walnut

Senecio

- Tansy ragwort, groundsel
- Causes liver damage
- Photosensitivity
- Neurologic signs
- Usually chronic ingestion
  - Signs develop over time

Figure 4-9A Senecio showing typical bract formation (*Senecio* spp.).

Panic Grass

Panicum spp

- Grows 1 to 3 ft tall
- Damages the liver
- Usually chronic ingestion of plant
- Difficult to eradicate
- Looks like Johnson grass

Wild Cherry

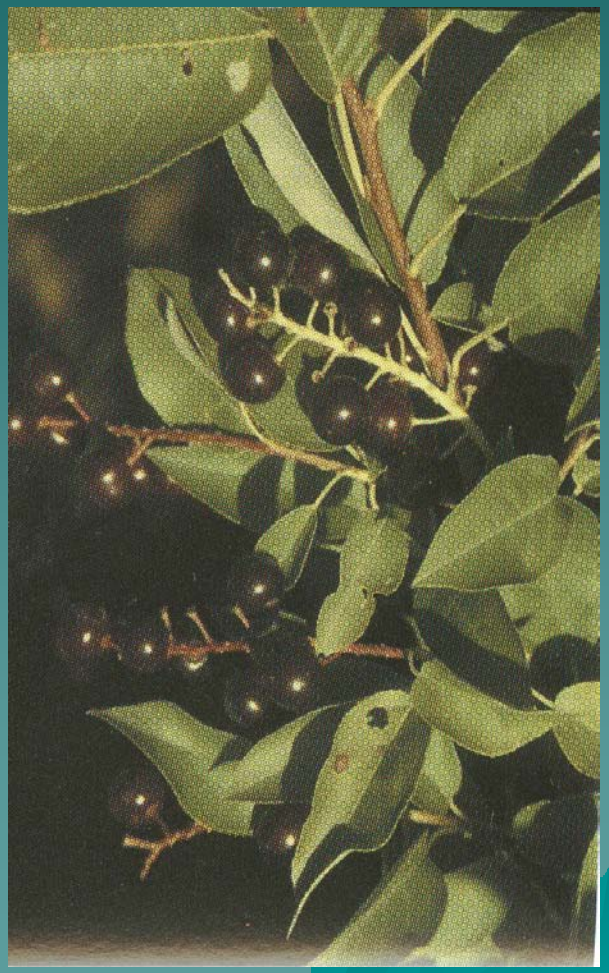
Prunus serotina

- Flowers arranged in long racemes

Wild Cherry

Prunus serotina

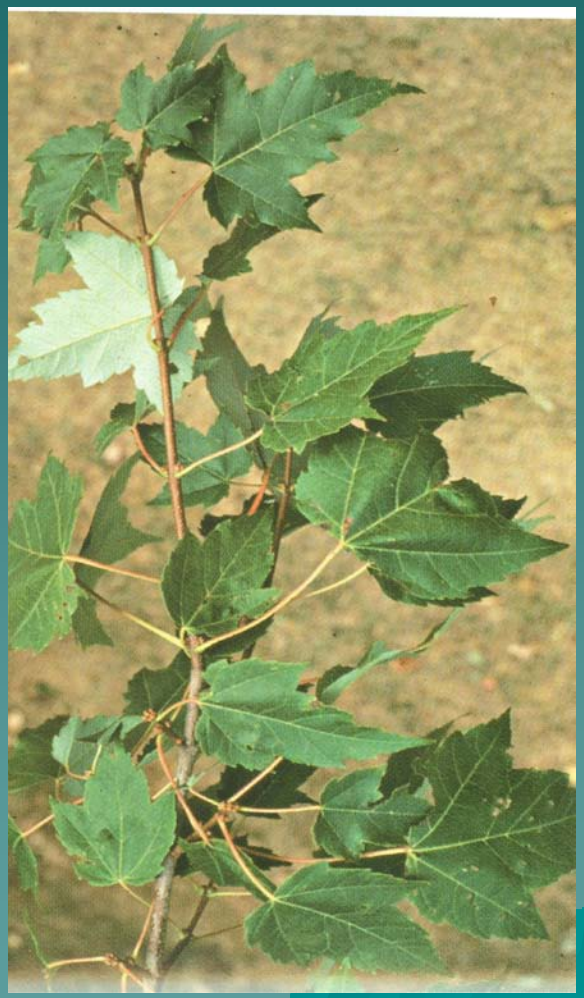
- Mature trees grow to 30 ft or more, also grows as shrub
- Wilted leaves and new twigs highest cyanide levels
- Can cause sudden death
- Cyanide prevents blood from releasing oxygen to the tissues
- Signs of respiratory distress and cherry red venous blood
- Remove trees during winter, the bark is also poisonous.



Red or Swamp Maple

Acer rubrum

- Common native tree
- Grows to 100 ft
- Dry leaves toxic
- Causes damage to red blood cells leading to anemia
- Rapid death



Johnson and Sudan Grass

Sorghum halepense

- Similar in appearance to Panic Grass
- Cyanide poisoning in young shoots, or stressed plants
- Signs of ataxia and bladder paralysis
- Improvement of syndrome possible if not too severe

Oak trees and Acorns

Quercus spp.

- Native tall trees
- Young leaves and green acorns most toxic
- Affect GI tract and kidneys
- Stop eating and drinking, dark feces, painful

Black Walnut

Juglans nigra

- Native tree growing to 60ft.
- Causes laminitis when horses come in contact with shavings
- Does not need to be ingested
- Prompt removal and treatment for laminitis can lead to complete recovery

References

- http://ohioline.osu.edu/b762/b762_24.html Ohio State U Extension Horse Nutrition Bulletin contains concise information on several toxic pasture plants, pictures, signs of poisoning in horses, etc.
- http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/php/plants.php?action=faqs&num=320 Cornell U Dept of Animal Science list of plants poisonous to Livestock. Pictures, answers some questions.
- http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=G4970 List of poisonous plants, line drawings, habitat, poisonous parts and symptoms. Very concise
- Knight, A. P., and Walter, R. G. (2001). A Guide to Plant Poisoning of Animals in North America, pp. 1-367. Teton NewMedia, Jackson WY.