

NOTES FROM OUR LANDSCAPE CORNER

Nandina's Toxic Effect on Birds and Other Animals

By Diana Scranton
Landscape Committee Chair
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Dear neighbors,



Due to the toxicity found in *nandina domestica* (AKA - Heavenly Bamboo, Sacred Bamboo), our Board has recently approved that we, the Landscape Committee, remove the berries from our nearly one hundred nandina shrubs that are thriving throughout Creekview Commons.

So, when weather permits, we'll briefly stop by, remove your nandina's berries (if you have them in the front or side of your unit). If for any reason, you do not want us to remove berries at your residence, please let us know.

Nandina berries contain cyanide and other alkaloids that produce highly toxic hydrogen cyanide (HCN), a mitochondrial toxin that impairs cellular respiration, and according to the ASPCA nandina is also extremely toxic to dogs, cats, horses and grazing animals. Sudden death may be the only sign of cyanide poisoning, and death usually comes within minutes to an hour.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and most states classify *Nandina domestica* as a noxious, non-native, invasive weed from China and Japan. It has naturalized and invaded our national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, city parks, and other habitats throughout the U.S.

According to the Audubon Society: "You can help by choosing to remove Nandina [...] If you don't want to rip out your Nandina, please prune the berry laden branches."

In 2020, I spoke with Veronica Bowers, Founder and Director of Native Songbird Care & Conservation, a non-profit organization in Sebastopol, that cares for ailing/injured/orphaned native songbirds in our area. I asked Veronica to verify the information I'd found about nandina's toxicity and requested her advice. She confirmed its toxicity to birds and other animals, and suggested we remove the its berries at the very least. While nandina berries are toxic to all berry-eating birds, such as the American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, and Cedar Waxwings, the last is said to gorge on them when other food is in short supply and subsequently die.



Note: If handling nandina plants yourself, please use caution and wear gloves. Nandina leaves are also poisonous.

References available on request.