

Arbutus unedo

Common name:

Irish Strawberry tree

Palatability to Livestock:

Moderate.

Toxicity to Goats:

Moderate.

Toxicity to Other Species:

Potentially toxic to all animal species.

Poisonous Principle:

Probably arbutin, a glycoside of hydroquinone.

Effects:

Signs and symptoms;

- . Incoordination, wandering,
- . Gastric pain.
- . In man, affects the motor nerves, produces mental confusion, and permanent insanity.

Health and Production Problems;

- . Animals may be just found dead.
- . Fruit is usually unpalatable to humans, but if eaten in quantity, can be narcotic.
- . No poisoning reported in Australia.
- . Overseas, poisoning has been reported in goats, cattle, sheep and horses.

Treatment;

- . Be aware of potential problems.

Integrated Control Strategy:

- . Be aware of potential risks.

Comments:

- . Garden plant.
- . A small to medium evergreen tree, growing to 10m high, by 10m spread.
- . Leaves are alternate, oval, shiny dark green and leathery.
- . Young stems are hairy, older stems have red flakey bark. The wood is very hard.
- . Drooping clusters of bell-shaped, whitish, perfumed flowers are produced in autumn.

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- . Fruits from the previous year ripen at about the same time as the flowers open.
- . Large, round, warty berries, ripen from green to deep orange, in autumn. Berries are not very palatable, and contain pulp and many small hard seeds.
- . Spread by seed, with birds and foxes as the main vector.
- . Large lignotubers persist after fire, and resprout quickly after rain.
- . Native of Ireland and Mediterranean area.
- . Found in SE areas of Australia.
- . Tolerates hot dry summers and full sun.



Pictures: *Arbutus unedo*



Pictures: Lois Cady, Crookwell, NSW.

Further Reading;

- . Blood. Environmental Weeds. Field Guide for SE Australia. CRC Management Systems. 2001
- . Everist. Poisonous Plants of Australia. 1981
- . Swarbrick and Skarratt.. Bushweed 2 Database. 1994