

THE DEATH TREE

The Death Tree, scientifically known as *Hippomane mancinella*, is a captivating plant found along the coasts of Central America and the Caribbean. What sets this plant apart is its lethality. Any part of the Death Tree, be it its fruit, bark, or



sap, is extremely toxic and can cause severe harm to any human or animal that comes into contact with it. Contact with the Death Tree can lead to painful skin irritation and even blindness if the sap comes into contact with the eyes. The toxicity of this species is so high that merely being under its leaves during rain can cause painful skin reactions. Even if you leave a car below the

tree, the paint and the metal will be severely damaged. Despite its notorious danger, the Death Tree is a vital part of coastal ecosystems. Its fruits, despite being poisonous, serve as a food source for some bird species, and iguanas.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is the Death Tree typically found, and why is it known as the Death Tree?

2. What are the potential dangers of coming into contact with any part of the Death Tree?

3. Despite its danger, what significant role does the Death Tree play in coastal ecosystems?

