

## NATURAL DOES NOT EQUAL SAFE

The death of a Carlsbad teen after using jimsonweed highlights the need for parents to know about drug use trends, and talk about them with their children. Jimsonweed grows wild in San Diego County and throughout the continental U.S. Jimsonweed, also known as Loco weed, is an annual which grows up to 5 feet high, with trumpet-shaped blue, purple or white flowers. All parts of the plant are toxic, with two psychoactive substances which cause intense hallucinogenic effects. A cultivated toxic perennial in the same genus, Angel's Trumpet, with yellow, white, or pink pastel flowers is found in local yards.

Jimsonweed produces dehydration, hallucinations, confusion, difficulty swallowing and speaking, and painful sensitivity to light. The length of the effects may persist for days because the alkaloids slow the digestion process. It is difficult to know the extent of Jimsonweed use in the U.S. because it is not scheduled under the Controlled Substances Act. Increasingly, deaths and poisonings have been linked to Jimsonweed use.

But Jimsonweed is not the only “natural” plant that provides a drug threat. San Diego teens can legally buy Salvia, another unregulated plant which creates hallucinations, short term memory loss, and at high doses, unconsciousness. Both Jimsonweed seeds and Salvia leaves can be bought on the internet. Your youth need to know that:

- **“Natural” or “herbal” does not mean safe.**
- **Something can be legal and yet be harmful.**

### **Does your child know...?**

- Pharmaceutical medicine should only be taken by the patient who got the prescription, in the dosage the doctor ordered. Parents should be alert to “pharming,” – slang for abuse of someone else’s medicine.
- Household substances should NEVER be inhaled. They are toxic for that unintended use, and deprive the brain of the oxygen it needs. (Parents should warn about “huffing” without naming specific products that tend to be abused by upper elementary or middle school students.)
- Alcohol mixed with any of the above is extremely dangerous. Alcohol is still the drug of choice for local teens, but teens who begin using substances often mix alcohol with marijuana and other drugs.
- Many substances—not just alcohol—impair driving ability. Also, recent surveys show students underestimate the danger of being a passenger with a driver who has smoked marijuana.

### **Behavioral expectations and limits help keep kids safe.**

- Know where your teen is going, and with whom.
- Ask if parents will be present.
- Create a codeword system your child can use to signal the need to be picked up from a situation where drugs are being used.