



Poisonous plants are extremely common in the United States. They are one of the most common triggers of rashes every year for people who spend time outside. It is important to know what poisonous plants look like and how to avoid getting a rash.

Characteristics

- **Poison ivy and oak have 3 leaves.**
“Leaves of 3, let it be.”
- Poison ivy grows as a vine or bush.
- Poison oak grows in dry, sandy areas and is less common.
- The leaves can be shiny and change color depending on the time of year.
- Urushiol (oo-roo-shee-ohl) oil triggers an allergic reaction, resulting in an itchy rash.
- **Urushiol can remain active on clothing/tools for up to 5 years.**
- Symptoms of exposure: burning, itching, swelling or blisters on the skin.

Prevention

- Stay out of areas where you know poisonous plants can be.
- Wear long pants, a long sleeve shirt, boots, and gloves when entering any

area where poisonous plants can be. The less skin exposed the better.

- **If exposed, wash the skin as soon as possible.** If you get most of the oil off quickly, it will help to limit the rash.
- **Remove contaminated clothing in a way to avoid contact with oil residues.**
- Wash any items or tools that may have been in contact with poisonous plants.
- Never burn poison plants, the burning plant can still release oils that could result in a widespread rash for anyone near the fire.

Rash Care

- Initial care: **wash your skin with rubbing alcohol, poison plant wash, or degreasing soap and lots of water.**
- Treatment: cold compress, calamine lotion, non-prescription hydrocortisone cream, or an antihistamine to ease itching.
- Call your doctor if the rash is near your eyes or covers a large portion of your body.
- Get emergency medical help or call 911 if you have a severe reaction.