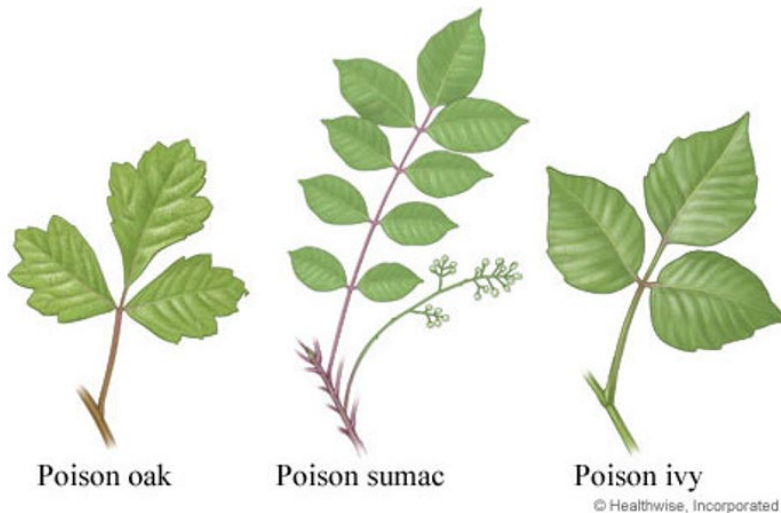


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Owner:	Todd Numan	Approval:	Michael Labosky

Fact Sheet: Plants

Both exotic and native plants can be hazardous when ingested, inhaled, or physically touched. Common poisonous plants in North America are poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. Skin contact with the sap oil (urushiol) of these plants can produce an itchy, painful rash and blisters.



Personal Protective Equipment

- Long pants and shirts with long sleeves
- Closed toe shoes
- Gloves, when handling leaf litter

Preparation and Training

- Prior to your trip, research local plants of concern. You should be able to identify them in the field.
- Apply a barrier lotion (e.g., Ivy Block) prior to expected exposure to reduce the risk of a rash.
- Contact your primary care physician if you have a known or suspected allergy to a plant.
- It is recommended you take courses in: Basic First Aid

General Safety

- Adhere by the adage “Leaves of three, let it be” for poison ivy and poison oak.
- Thoroughly wash clothing that has come in contact with urushiol with hot water and soap.

- Wash tools and other objects that may come into contact with plant material with a dilute bleach solution or rubbing alcohol.
- Never burn poison ivy or other hazardous plants, as inhalation can cause severe reactions.
- Do not eat any wild vegetation, fungi, or berries, as they may be poisonous.

First Aid Treatment

- Immediately rinse skin with degreasing soap (dishwashing soap) and lots of water. Try to wash it off within 30 minutes of contact.
- Scrub under the fingernails with a brush to prevent the plant oil from spreading to other areas.
- Over the counter topical medications may relieve symptoms of rash.
- Taking antihistamine (like Benadryl) can help relieve itching. This may make you drowsy
- Do not apply medications to open blisters or broken skin.
- If the rash is on the face or genitals, severe, or shows signs of infection, seek medical attention.
- Call emergency services if the person is having a severe allergic reaction, such as swelling or difficulty breathing, or has inhaled smoke from burning poisonous plants.
- If you have ingested a potentially dangerous plant, contact the American Association of Poison Control Centers at 1-800-222-1222, or other emergency service, for immediate assistance.

References and Additional Resources

- CDC National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety [Poisonous Plants](#)
- Back Packer – [The Beginner's Guide to Foraging](#)
- Wild Edible – [Foraging: Ultimate Guide to Wild Food](#)
- Adapted from *Plants Fact Sheet*, by University of Maryland: Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk (<https://essr.umd.edu/about/research-safety/field-research-safety/planning>) with permission.