



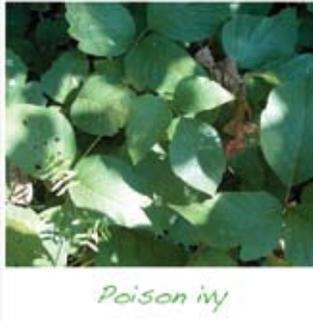
My clean beach

Itchy Plants

This card provides information about four species of plants that provoke skin irritation. It closes with suggestions on how to avoid contact or control irritation.



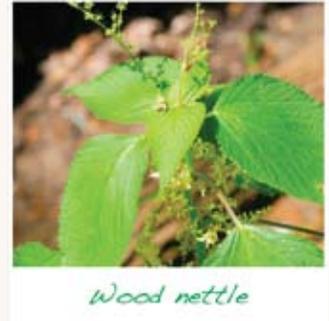
Poison sumac



Poison ivy



Stinging nettle



Wood nettle

Poison sumac

This shrub is even more toxic than poison ivy. Every parts of the plant can irritate the skin if touched.

Description :

- Shrub or small tree, 1.5 to 7 metres (5 to 23 feet) high
- Often with several trunks at the base
- Fairly smooth, greyish-brown bark
- Alternate compound leaves
- 7 to 13 irregularly toothed leaflets
- Small clusters of white-to-yellow flowers
- Whitish-green berries that remain on the tree in winter

Habitat :

- Open swamps and bordering marshes

Similar non-itchy species :

- Ash: opposite leaves, trees up to 20 m (65 feet) high
- Staghorn sumach: hairy branches, toothed leaflets and dense clusters of red berries



Poison ivy

In general, it takes more than one exposure to the plant to develop an allergic reaction. Symptoms appear 24 to 48 hours after contact and disappear within 7 to 10 days.

Description :

- Shrubs, creeping plant or climbing plant. In all cases, it is woody
- Alternate compound leaves
- Three irregularly toothed leaflets
- Central leaflet with petiole (tail) longer than those of both lateral leaflets
- White-to-greenish flowers
- Waxy green-to-yellowish-white berries



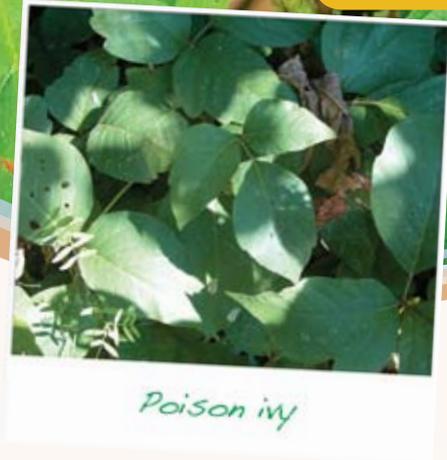
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Habitat :

- Fields, shorelines, forests, bordering trails and just about anywhere

Similar non-irritating species:

- Raspberry: Leaflets have smaller, more regular teeth. The flowers, berries and thorns also help distinguish them from poison ivy.



Stinging nettle and Wood nettle

Unlike the two plants above, stinging nettle and wood nettle don't produce an allergic reaction long after contact but instead an immediate sting and small, red swell marks. The reaction generally lasts only a few minutes but may become more intense and last for several days if contact is repeated. The pain is caused by small hairs breaking in the skin and releasing an irritant.

Description :

- Herbaceous plant 30 cm to 1 m (1 to 3 feet) high
- Small greenish flowers in clusters all around the stem
- Simple, coarsely toothed leaves that are opposed for stinging nettle and alternate for wood nettle

Habitat :

- Fields, bordering trails and forests



What can you do...

To protect yourself:

- Wear long pants and sleeves.
- Always wear gloves.
- Show all your volunteers what the plant species look like so that they can avoid them.

If you have touched poison ivy or poison sumac:

- Wash the exposed areas as soon as possible in cold water. Don't forget beneath your nails. Soap removes the irritating oil more effectively but also eliminates the natural protection of the skin that prevents the oil from penetrating.
- Wash contaminated clothes and objects several times with hot soapy water. Wear gloves when handling the items.
- Wash your pet with soap and water.
- To calm the itch, apply compresses of cool water or compresses soaked in a solution of baking soda. Oatmeal baths can be soothing. Certain medications (e.g., calamine) can relieve the itch.
- Consult a doctor if symptoms are severe, rashes cover large areas of the body or a fever develops.