

Poison Ivy



(Rhus radicans L.)



How to Identify Poison Ivy

- Found in low-growing, dense colonies; sometimes as ground cover or vine form which can climb trees, shrubs and posts for several meters above ground
- A woody perennial, often develops root-like structures which attach to things and other plants
- ‘Leaflets three – Let it be!’ The middle leaflet is attached to a longer stem than the other two which are opposite to each other.
- ***Poses significant threat to human health (see over for details)***

Description

Family

- Cashew or sumac family

Range & Habitat

- Widespread throughout Leeds Grenville and most of Ontario
- Grows in deep woods or in open, dry sandy areas, rock crevices or swamps and along fence rows

Height

- As upright plants 60 to 90 cm (2 to 3 ft) high or trailing vine, may climb from 6 to 10 m (6.5 to 11 yards) high on trees, posts, or rough surfaces.

Flowers/Fruit

- Cream to yellow-green flowers with 5 sepals and 5 petals, (during June and July) from axil of one leaf
- Cluster of dry, white, berry-like fruits, 3 to 7 mm (.12 to .28 in) in diameter from the flower cluster in September

Leaves

- Pointed with a longer stalk on the middle leaflet than the two side ones with smooth or toothed edges up to 12 cm (5 in) long; reddish in spring, turns green in summer, and shades of yellow, orange, or red in the fall
- Upright plants have 3 leaves/vines have 5 leaves

Stem

- Stems are woody

Origin

- Invasive



Photo: Rob Routledge, Sault College, Bugwood.org



Photo: Richard Gardner, Bugwood.org



Photo: weedscanada.ca



Photo: Richard Gardner, Bugwood.org

Impact

- Poses risk to people and animals sensitive to its toxic oil
- Extensive underground stems make it difficult to eradicate

When Working Around Poison Ivy

Protective clothing is critically important, including:

1. Waterproof gloves
2. Long sleeve shirts and pants
3. Eye protection
4. If available wear disposable hazmat style coveralls over normal clothing.
5. Tape coveralls at the wrist to minimize potential skin exposure to the sap.

In Case of Exposure (use rubber gloves)

- Wash with soap and water before AND after removing clothing.
- Remove protective eye wear last.
- Place non-disposable clothing in the laundry and wash yourself immediately with soap and water.
- See a doctor if the rash is close to your eyes or is widespread over your body.
- Go to Emergency if you have severe reactions in addition to the rash, like nausea, fever, shortness of breath, extreme soreness at the rash site, or swollen lymph nodes. Call 911 if you have any trouble breathing or feel faint.

Management of Poison Ivy

Controlling Poison Ivy before it becomes locally established will reduce its impacts on human health, biodiversity, the economy and society. Control of Poison Ivy should take place in early spring, as plants are typically less than 30 cm in height.

Control Methods:

Pulling or Digging	Burning Compost	Herbicide
<p><i>Most Effective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove roots and stems • Best when used in conjunction with herbicides 	<p>Do NOT burn or compost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may release the poison 	<p><i>Recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best for large growth populations • This is a safer method but may kill surrounding vegetation



Poison Ivy has a distressing toxic action on the skin of people who become sensitized to it appearing as red, swollen skin, blisters and severe itching, sometimes within hours after exposure.

All persons who frequent or work in areas that may contain Poison Ivy must practice established safety protocols.

All persons who believe they may have been in contact with Poison Ivy must immediately undertake the necessary Poison Ivy exposure protocols.

Remember to wash any tools or equipment that may have come into contact with Poison Ivy sap!

Dead Poison Ivy plants can still cause rashes and must be handled with care, since the oil can stay active on any surface for up to 5 years. Dispose by placing in a garbage bag, sealed, well identified, and disposed of in landfill.