

Leaves of three... let them be!

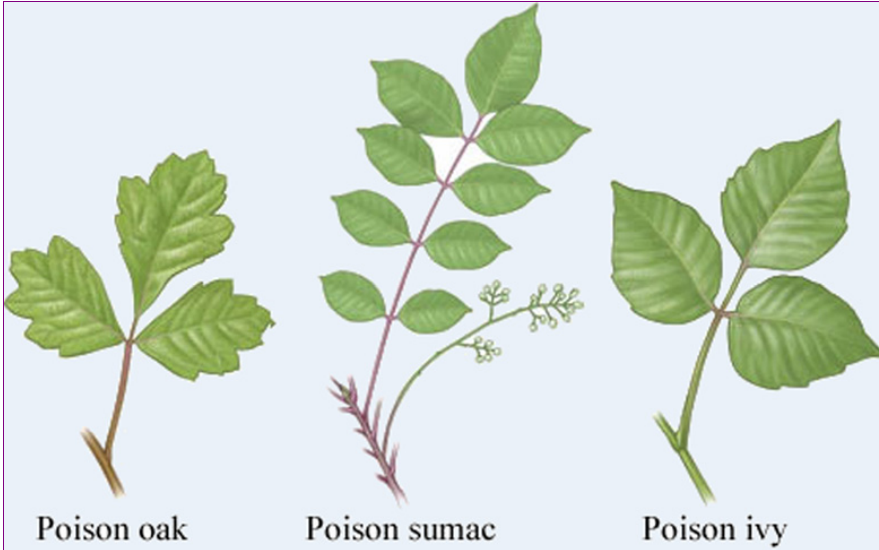
Leaves of three... let them be! That's poison ivy I'm talking about. It grows east of the Rocky Mountains as either a vine or a shrub. It's leaves are in a cluster of three and we have our share of it in Tennessee.

Then, there's poison oak. It grows west of the Rockies, usually as a shrub or a small tree, but sometimes as a vine. You may or may not have heard of poison sumac. It grows in southern swamps and northern wetlands. Only "Mother Nature"

could provide us with these annoying plants. In fact, these little poison plants are the most common allergy known to humans.

The wicked itch and bothersome rash of these "poisons" are caused by an oil, either yellow or color-

less, and one of the world's most potent toxins. And, get this, it only takes a mere one-billionth of a gram to cause a person to scratch themselves silly.



Poison oak

Poison sumac

Poison ivy

The potency of the oil does wash away 'if' you wash yourself with soap and water within 15 minutes after contact. This should help avoid a later rash, hopefully.

Let us name some ways to nix Mother Nature's little

itches once you have been exposed:

- Applying calamine lotion is probably the best known cure.
- A compress with ice cold

milk helps dry the rash.

- Make a paste of baking soda and water and apply to skin if you have blisters.
- Milk of Magnesia can relieve the itch.
- Zinc oxide may soothe itching and may help dry the rash.

-There are several over-the-counter poison ivy products sold which will help the itch.

- Last, but not least, you can get a shot for the poison from a doctor. For myself, that's much easier and quicker and works the fastest.

If you find the poison plants on your property, do not try burning it to get rid of it. The release of droplets of oil will be in the air and can be inhaled and cause damage to the lungs. Also, burning the plant can cause the smoke to get in your eyes and really give you problems.

Instead, you have to dig it up, roots and all, and dispose of it in a sealed container. Afterwards, wash your clothes and tools. Better yet, get rid of clothes

and tools in the sealed container, because the potency of the oil will last about five years. Therefore, you can still get a reaction from handling unwashed tools. For myself, it makes sense and is much safer just to dispose of the evidence!

Facts about this itching plant:

1. You can spread the rash if you bust a blister and the oil touches your body anywhere.
2. Direct contact is needed to release the oil.
3. The oil stays active for up to 5 years.
4. These poison plants are annoying to an estimated 50 million people each year.

Mother Nature is good to us most of the time. With July on the horizon, weather is usually picnic fine. Just stay away from poison plants. Remember the old saying, leaves of three... let them be. Now, ants are another story all together. They love picnics! Oh yes! Almost forgot to

Take time to be Health Conscious



by B J Armstrong

tell you about one more remedy for poison plants. Take along a spray can of deodorant! William Epstein, U.S. Forest Ranger in California came up with an inexpensive way to protect forest rangers from poison ivy. He found that aluminum chlorohydrate and other agents in spray deodorants will help keep the poison oil from irritating the skin. Isn't that interesting?

"In everything: safety closely follows the greatest pleasures." - Marcus Cicero

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