



Poison Ivy & Poison Sumac

STAY ALERT — IT IS ON THE CAMPUS!

The best way to identify **POISON IVY** is by its typical cluster of 3 leaflets. The leaflets can be two to four inches long and can have a dull or glossy green finish. Poison ivy leaves usually have pointed tips. The middle leaflet is generally larger than the two laterals. Poison ivy produces oil called **urushiol**. When this oil comes in contact with skin it acts as an irritant to most people. This irritant forms a rash marked by tiny red blisters containing small amounts of **urushiol**. When scratched or broken open, these blisters spread oil to other parts of the body. When enough **urushiol** gets onto the human body it can enter the bloodstream and spread all over the body.

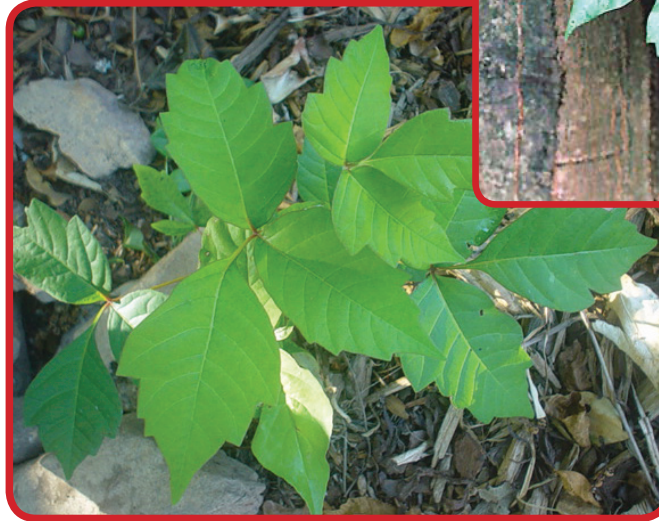
If you believe you have been exposed to poison ivy, wash your hands and other affected parts as soon as possible. Some people think it takes no more than ten minutes for **urushiol** to soak through the skin. Others think it takes up to two hours. In the latter case, if you wash yourself thoroughly after exposure, you have a good chance to avoid irritation.

MYTH: *rubbing the poison ivy rash will not spread poison ivy to other parts of your body (or to another person). You spread the rash only if urushiol has been left on your hands.*

POISON SUMAC is commonly a shrub with alternate leaves; the leaf stalk is mostly reddish or grayish in color. This deciduous plant has between 7 and 13 leaflets per stem. The smooth leaves can vary in length between 5 to 15 inches. Poison sumac leaves become orange or scarlet in the fall and produces flowers and fruit in the spring and summer. The flowers are yellowish-green and the fruit is usually white or pale yellow. Poison sumac contains **urushiol**, the oil that makes it poisonous.



Poison Ivy



Poison Sumac



Poison ivy is the most common allergy in the United States claiming half the population. Only 1 nanogram (1 billionth of a gram) of urushiol is needed to cause a rash. **Urushiol oil** stays active on any surface, including dead plants, for up to 5 years. It can take up to 7-10 days before a rash breaks out from exposure to poison ivy. Once the rash has broken out on the skin it can take about 2-3 weeks for it to heal and disappear. Upwards of 90% of people are allergic to urushiol oil. The more times a person is exposed to urushiol, the more likely it is that an individual will break out with an allergic rash.



Blister with urushiol oil