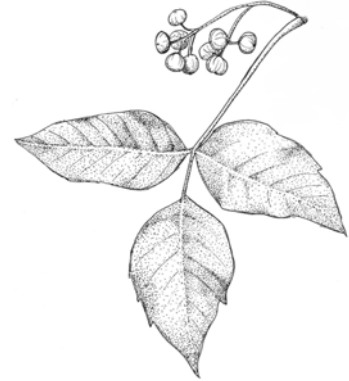


WARNING!!

Please be aware that there might be poison ivy or poison sumac in your woods and fields.

Poison Ivy is identified by its three typically glossy and bluntly toothed leaves. The subspecies found in Vermont lacks the hairy tree-climbing vine common to its southern cousins, but occurs as a rhizome creeping along the ground with 6 inch tall unbranched stems and no aerial roots. The leaves appear early in spring colored bright red or purple and are bright red when they fall in autumn. Clusters of small, waxy white berries on short upright twigs are a good winter identifier. Flowers are small and whitish green. It favors woodlands and rocky slopes. Most animals are not harmed by it and may be seen eating its twigs or berries. Do not confuse it with Virginia creeper or box elder.



Poison Sumac is identified by its leaflets of seven to thirteen smooth leaves and whitish flowers or berries. It grows as a tall, slender shrub or small tree, similar in form to its non-irritating cousins staghorn, winged, and smooth sumac. The non-poisonous sumacs have upright, red berry clusters, easy to distinguish from poison sumac's drooping white clusters. Poison sumac grows in bogs and wetlands, while the other sumacs favor well-drained fields and roadsides. Its leaves turn an attractive red in the fall.

Although these plants are relatively uncommon in northern New England, there are occasional patches of poison ivy and poison sumac with which people in the field may come in contact. These plants contain oil called *urushiol* that causes severe itchiness and blistering of exposed skin. Some people are more sensitive to urushiol than others, but scientists have determined that no one is completely immune to it, and repeated exposure will certainly lead to rash. Urushiol is extremely potent and can infect skin through direct contact with these plants, or indirect contact via pet's fur, clothing that has brushed a plant, and inhalation of smoke from burning plants any season of the year. Infection occurs within minutes of exposure, although rashes typically break out 24 – 48 hours later. If you suspect that you have come in contact with poison ivy or poison sumac, immediately wash the infected and surrounding areas with soap or detergent. Even if you are not able to wash within minutes of contact, washing will prevent the oil from spreading farther. Clothes that have touched these plants can be cleaned by normal laundering practices. Cortisone cream, calamine lotion, and jewelweed juice are recommended treatments for rash.