

POISON IVY

[*Toxiodendron rydbergii* (Small ex Rydb.) Greene]



POISON IVY

State Noxious Weed List: **No.**

Poison ivy is a native species commonly found in wooded areas and in brushy areas, especially those along streams or lakes. It can grow as a small shrub or vine and is found in North America from Canada to Mexico. The first published records of poison ivy in North America date back to the 1600s. A similar plant called poison oak (*T. diversiloba*) is found only in states along the Pacific coast.

Identification and growth form:

Poison ivy is a perennial native small shrub that spreads by both rhizomes and seeds. The leaves are alternate with trifoliate leaflets. Remember the rhyme: Leaves of three — let it be! The leaves are shiny green in the spring and turn yellow and deep red in the fall. The flowers grow in axillary panicles, are yellow-green and not showy. The fruit is globed shaped, resembling small pumpkins, and turns yellow or light brown when mature.

Why is this plant a concern?

The “poison” in this plant is from a white oil called urushiol found in the phloem that causes an allergic contact dermatitis in about 85 percent of the population. Plants retain urushiol even after desiccation and smoke from burning poison ivy can carry the oil. The reaction is to the oil, not the plant itself, so one can react by touching objects that have come in contact with the plant, such as tools, and when removing footwear. Since it is an allergic reaction, people not sensitive to poison ivy can become sensitized through time.

How do I control this plant?

The best control is avoidance, but if the plant is found close to walking trails, near a home or in your favorite fishing area, herbicides that contain triclopyr such as Garlon are very effective.