

About poison ivy

Toxicodendron radicans is the scientific name for poison ivy. A skin irritant for most people, this woody vine with far-reaching roots creates an itching rash (urushiol-induced contact dermatitis). Poison ivy is identified by its three leaf clusters. The leaves start out as bright green and then become darker as they grow. Virginia creeper is often mistaken for poison ivy (see below image). Both are often found growing together or in the same area and contain an extensive root system.

Poison ivy is not an ivy but was named so from its resemblance in growth form to ivy. Poison ivy and [poison oak](#) are members of the sumac family (Anacardiaceae). The plants do not contain a poison but rather a potent allergenic oil. Oils can be easily transferred from one part of the body to another, from one person to another, from a pet, or from clothing.

North American natives used the sap from poison ivy to cure warts and it has been used diluted in homeopathic remedies for musculoskeletal ailments.

A common saying helps one to remember the general description of the irritant plants, "leaves of three, let it be".



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See also [poison oak](#), [poison sumac](#).