Do You Know This Plant?



IT’S TRIPLE LEAF…POISON OAK

Recognize it at a glance—by its triple leaf pattern with prominent veins and shiny surfaces.

Learn to recognize poison oak, avoid contacting it, and get rid of it when possible. Poison oak is a very hardy plant which has spread throughout most parts of the state up to altitudes of five thousand (5,000) feet. This plant has another peculiarity—it takes the form of a vine, a bush or a spindly plant. In some regions the leaves remain green during the entire time they are on the stem. In other areas the leaves change to various colors with the changing seasons. Learn to know it on sight—the plant with the triple leaf—because it is a very common plant in California.

IMMUNITY?

Some people are less susceptible than others.

CAUSES

Poisoning is caused by irritating oil found in all parts of the plant, including the roots and fruit.

How do you get “poisoned”?

- from contact with the plant.
- from tools and animals that have touched it.
- from smoke while burning poison oak.
- from your hands which touched the plant.

TREATMENT?

Much of the irritating oil of poison oak can be removed by washing with soap and water at the first opportunity. Several new medications and well-established remedies such as calamine lotion benefit some people but have little effect on others. Severe inflammation or bleeding should be treated by a physician.

IS THERE PROTECTION?

Several protective creams are available which form a barrier against the irritating substance in poison oak. These may be used before entering a poison oak area. Also there are injections or tablets, which provide protection to some people.

WHAT IS THE BEST ANSWER?

Learn to recognize poison oak, avoid contacting it, and get rid of it when possible. Use protective creams and protective clothing, such as long pants, long sleeves, gauntlets, and neckerchiefs. Wash contaminated clothing before it is worn.

Destroy the plants before entering an area to be worked. One to four applications of a poison oak eradicating chemical should kill the plants depending upon the one you select.

Apply the chemical with caution—it can be dangerous.

New Growth may sprout during a warm winter or anytime during spring. The first leaves are usually small, round, and deep red.

Spring leaves are light, bright green with whitish-green flowers clustered on the stems.

Summer brings yellow-green, pink or reddish colors to some of the leaves with small white or tan berries following the flowers.

Fall fruit becomes darker, dried and wrinkled, and leaves turn bright red or russet brown.

Winter leaves and seeds fall, leaving stick or whip like stems or climbing vines.

All Seasons may bring many color changes such as yellow, pink, brown, or combinations with those shades previously mentioned.