

When working in the outdoors or simply enjoying outdoor activities, knowing the plants of the surrounding area can help prevent dangerous encounters. See below on how to identify these dangerous wild plants and seek proper care if coming in contact with them.

Wild Parsnip



Identification:

- Found along unshaded roadsides, lawns, and open fields
- Can grow to be about 5 feet tall
- Hollow, grooved, and hairless stems
- Yellow-green leaves with 3-5 leaflets
- Small, yellow, clustered flowers

Giant Hogweed



Identification:

- Found in roadside ditches, stream banks, and on unmanaged or vacant lots with moist soil
- About 10–15 feet tall
- Hollow stems, covered with coarse hairs, and often purple spots
- Large compound leaves that are deeply grooved, and 3-5 feet wide
- White, clustered, umbrella-shaped flowers

Care: Seek urgent care attention or see your primary care physician as soon as possible. Wash the affected area with soap and water right away. Immediately launder clothing and wash equipment with soap and water. Keep affected area covered for 48 hours to prevent exposure to sunlight. If reaction occurs, keep affected area out of the sunlight to prevent further burning.

Poison Sumac



Identification:

- Grows as a tall shrub or small tree in bogs or swamps.
- Each leaf has clusters of seven to 13 smooth-edged leaflets.
- Leaf color depends on season: orange in spring, green in summer, yellow/orange/red fall.
- Yellow-greenish flowers and whitish-green fruits which hang in loose clusters may be present.

Poison Ivy



Identification:

- Grows as a vine or small shrub trailing.
- Each leaf has three glossy leaflets, with smooth or toothed edges.
- Leaf colors depend on season: red in spring, green in summer, yellow/orange/red in the fall.
- Greenish-white flowers or whitish-yellow berries may be present.

Poison Oak



Identification:

- Grows as a low shrub in the Eastern US.
- Fuzzy green leaves in clusters of three are lobed or deeply toothed with rounded tips.
- May have yellow-white berries.

Care: Use wet compresses or soak affected area in cool water. Apply over-the-counter (OTC) topical corticosteroid preparations. Apply topical OTC skin protectants, such as zinc acetate, zinc carbonate, zinc oxide. Can use protectants such as baking soda or colloidal oatmeal to relieve minor irritation and itching. Aluminum acetate is an astringent that can relieve the rash. **Seek medical attention if** you have a temperature over 100 degrees Fahrenheit; if rash is not improving, is present in eyes, mouth, or genital area, and/or covers more than one fourth of your skin area; difficulty breathing.