



SAFETY MESSAGE



Provided by the UAA Environmental Stewardship Committee



Poison Ivy: Leaves of Three; Let It Be!

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Introduction

Eastern poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) and Western poison ivy (*Toxicodendron rydbergii*) are native to North America, but are an important safety concern for crews. Poison ivy commonly grow in woodland edges, streambanks, roadsides, ROW, and other disturbed or partially shaded areas. Both species typically have leaves divided into three leaflets, but Eastern poison ivy may grow as a trailing plant, shrub, or climbing vine with hairy-looking aerial roots, while Western poison ivy is more often a low-growing shrub or trailing plant. Because features can vary, workers should not rely on a single attribute alone when identifying poison ivy.

Safety Risks and Recommended PPE

Safety Risk: Poison ivy contains urushiol, an oily resin that can cause itching, redness, swelling, and blisters. *Urushiol is found on ALL plant parts and can remain active on living, dead, dormant, or cut material.*

Worker Exposure: Exposure can occur directly from all parts of the plant or indirectly through contaminated gloves, clothing, boots, tools, equipment, or animal fur.

Work Precautions: Never burn poison ivy. Smoke may carry urushiol and cause serious respiratory or eye exposure. Avoid touching exposed skin with contaminated gloves or clothing.

Spread/Contamination Prevention: Wash exposed skin promptly with soap or an approved poison-plant cleanser. Remove contaminated clothing and wash hands again. Wash clothing separately with detergent at the hottest safe setting. Clean tools, footwear, and reusable PPE. *Seek medical attention for severe rash, swelling, eye exposure, trouble breathing, or smoke inhalation.*

Recommended PPE: Wear long pants, long sleeves, sturdy boots, eye protection, and impermeable gloves. Use a face shield when work may propel plant debris. Follow all additional task- and product-specific PPE requirements.



Safety Glasses



Long Pants



Long Sleeves



Gloves



Boots

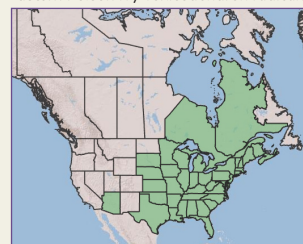


Face Shield or Respirator

Range and Distribution Map

Poison ivy is widespread across much of North America. Eastern poison ivy is common in the eastern and central United States, while Western poison ivy occurs broadly across northern, central, and western regions. Their ranges overlap in parts of the Midwest and Northeast. Workers may encounter either species along woodland edges, riparian areas, fence rows, roadsides, rail corridors, substations, and ROW with brushy or partially shaded conditions.

Eastern Poison Ivy *Toxicodendron radicans*



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Western Poison Ivy *Toxicodendron rydbergii*



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References/Works Cited

CDC/NIOSH [Protecting Yourself from Poisonous Plants](#)

USDA Forest Service FEIS [Eastern and Western Poison Ivy](#)

USDA Forest Service [Plant of the Week Western Poison Ivy](#)

NC State Extension [Eastern Poison Ivy](#)

Scan the QR code for additional guidance on identification and control.

