

POISON IVY FACT SHEET

What is poison ivy?

Poison ivy is found in many parts of New York City, including: wooded areas; wetlands; open lots; parks; and yards. This plant may cause a range of symptoms when people touch or eat the leaves, stems or berries, or breathe in smoke when it is burned.

What does poison ivy look like?

Poison ivy leaves always grow in clusters of three. The leaves may look shiny or dull with edges varying from smooth to deeply notched. Leaves are reddish in spring, green in summer and orange or bronze in the fall. Poison ivy can grow anywhere but tends to grow at the edge of pathways, roads, parking lots and fields where vegetation has been disturbed.



Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter

Vines are thick, hairy and still potent.



At the Beach

Leaves have more of a curly, waxy look.



Smooth edge (shiny and dull)



Notched Edge



Why should I avoid poison ivy?

Many people have an allergic reaction when the oil from poison ivy plants touches their skin. You may come into contact with poison ivy oil by:

- Touching the plant-- even dead plants may contain oil!
- Touching gardening tools, pet's fur, sports equipment, clothing, and anything else that has contacted the plant
- Burning the plant-- the oil that is released into the air may land on skin or cause breathing problems.

How may poison ivy affect my health?

Health effects from poison ivy usually occur 24 to 48 hours after contact with the plant but may appear as early as 30 minutes or up to two weeks later. Signs and symptoms include:

- Itching
- Redness
- Swelling
- Red rash that:
 - Consists of small to large bumps, pimples or blisters
 - May ooze
 - Lasts one to three weeks
- Respiratory problems after breathing in smoke from burning poison ivy plants

Is poison ivy rash contagious?

You cannot give a poison ivy rash to another person. However, if you have the oil on your skin and you touch a different part of your body or another person's skin, a reaction may occur.

May I grow poison ivy in my yard?

No. It is illegal to let poison ivy grow on a property in NYC.



How can I protect myself while removing poison ivy from my property?

When removing poison ivy:

- Know what poison ivy looks like and do not touch it with bare hands.
- Wear vinyl gloves, long pants, long sleeves, shoes, a hat, eye protection and a dust mask.
- Use hand tools to cut and remove the vines and pull up the plant from the roots.
- Do not use power tools, such as weed-whackers, lawn mowers, or hedge trimmers.
- Place all cuttings in a heavy duty plastic garbage bag. Seal the bag and throw it away with the regular trash.

NEVER BURN POISON IVY PLANTS!

After completing the work:

- Wash hands, tools, gloves and shoes with soap and water.
- Wash clothes with detergent and water.

How should poison ivy be treated?

If poison ivy touches your skin, do the following as soon as possible:

- Wash the skin with soap and cool water. Do not use hot water because it can make the reaction worse
- Speak to your doctor if you develop severe symptoms to poison ivy

How can I get more information about poison ivy?

Call 311 for more information on removing poison ivy or to file a complaint about poison ivy on a property.

For more information on how to treat poison ivy call the NYC Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or 212-POISONS. Poison specialists are available 24 hours a day, with translation services in more than 150 languages.



Additional Resources:

- The National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/plants
- National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/poisonivyoakandsumac.html>
- American Academy of Dermatology
http://www.aad.org/public/publications/pamphlets/skin_poison.html

Photos courtesy of www.poison-ivy.org