

Poison ivy *Toxicodendron radicans*



Perennial, high-climbing, woody vine. Leaves alternate, deciduous, pinnately compound; leaflets three, thin, bright green, shiny, ovate to elliptic, 2 to 12 cm long, 2 to 12 cm wide, entire to serrate to shallowly lobed. Flowers small, yellowish green, in clusters of two to six in lower leaf axils. Fruit a scarcely fleshy drupe, glabrous to short pubescent, 0.4 to 0.5 cm

broad. Found throughout the southern states east of the Mississippi River; most abundant in moist woods but also in pastures, fence rows, roadsides, and waste places.

Poison oak *Toxicodendron toxicarium*

Low shrub, 0.3 to 2 m tall; very similar in appearance to *T. radicans*; however, it does not climb, and leaflets are thicker, dull green, hairy on both surfaces, broadest above the middle, and often lobed or coarsely serrate. Fruit is densely pubescent rather than glabrous or short pubescent. Found throughout the South; most abundant on relatively dry, sunny sites in woodlands, thickets, and old fields.

Toxicity

The toxic principle is a phenolic compound called urushiol. It is a skin and mucous membrane irritant and is found in all parts of the plant. Some humans are quite sensitive to the effects of the toxin, whereas others show no ill effects from coming into contact with the plant. The toxin has little or no effect on animals, but pets may carry the irritating substance on their hair and thereby transmit it to humans.

Symptoms

Susceptible humans exhibit intense itching with inflammation and the formation of blisters at the areas of contact. Animals are rarely affected. Burning may be dangerous because the irritant may be transmitted by smoke.

Treatment

Consult a physician for proper treatment.