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## Poison sumac *Toxicodendron vernix*



Shrub or small tree, to 4 or 5 m tall. Leaves alternate, deciduous, pinnately compound; leaflets seven to 13, elliptic to oblong, 5 to 12 cm long, 2 to 5 cm wide, entire, rachis usually reddish and not winged. This species varies from the nonpoisonous species of sumac in that the leaflets are entire and the rachis is not winged; other species have serrate margins or if entire, the rachis is

winged. Flowers in panicles in axils of lower leaves. Fruit similar to *T. toxicarium* but glabrous and smaller. Found throughout the southern states east of the Mississippi River but limited in distribution to very moist areas; in bogs, pocosins, wet pine barrens, and stream borders.

### 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 while 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.