



earth-wise guide to

# Poison Ivy



*Toxicodendron radicans*

## description

Consistently has three leaflets with smooth, wavy or serrated edges; leaflets are alternate on the stem; clusters of whitish flowers and fruit are not showy

## growth habits

Persistent deciduous perennial; young plants can be 1'-2' tall and are herbaceous; mature plants can be woody and cover hundreds of square feet; can grow to be vine-like, shrubby or a groundcover; vine attaches to any object that will support it; spreads by rhizomes and seeds

## growing preferences

Prefers fertile, well-drained soil; most common in shady areas

## problem:

Oily resin can cause severe itching, skin inflammation and blisters; oil can bond on to the skin within 20 minutes of exposure and stay active on some surfaces for up to five years; allergic reaction may take as little as four hours or up to 10 days; three out of four people will have some type of reaction within 24-72 hours. IF EYES SWELL SHUT, SEE A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY

## Least Toxic Solutions...

### Physically Remove the Plant

- It is best to pull small plants when soil is moist - grab plants through a plastic bag and turn inside out over the plant
- Smother small plants with mulch
- If vine is growing up into a tree, sever vine at ground level
- Use a sharp shovel or grubbing tool to remove established plant roots
- Do not mow or string trim plants
- Salt is not recommended to kill the plants - the quantity necessary would stay in the soil and continue to kill anything planted until leached away
- Bag or bury the vegetation that is removed (do not burn foliage - may cause severe injury if inhaled)
- Might take persistence!

## Rash Prevention

- Prevent rashes by avoiding contact with the plant
- Wear gloves, long sleeves and pants
- Preventative blockers are available pre-exposure; special cleansers may help after exposure
- Avoid indirect contact- the oil can stay active for 1 to 5 years on clothing and equipment

**Leaflets of Three  
Let it Be!**

## If you must use an herbicide...

- Use herbicide as a last resort
- Follow label instructions carefully
- Don't use herbicide right before a rain - it can run off to harm our creeks
- Apply post-emergent product when plants are actively growing for best results
- Use a wiper applicator, weed wand or a foam formulation designed to apply herbicide directly on the vegetation to minimize drifting
- May require a series of applications
- Consult with your Extension agent or nursery professional for more information

## Treatment

- If you come in contact with the plant, wash the oil from your skin with cold water within 20 minutes of exposure
- Try over-the-counter anti-itch products for minor itching or swelling or check with your pharmacist
- If case is severe, consult with your doctor



New poison ivy growth



Leaflets with lobe variation



Poison ivy with flowers

# product toxicity comparisons

Evaluation of active ingredients only; does not include toxicity information on inert or "other" ingredients.

## Toxicity/Threat:

○ low   ○ low to moderate   ● high   ● highest   NA not applicable  
 ? unknown toxicity   🌱 earth-wise

## Hazards:



note	Product Name	active ingredient(s) / concentrations	human toxicity		aquatic life	birds, bees, pets	soil mobility	environmental persistence
			acute	chronic				
most toxic	Finale® Weed and Grass Killer Concentrate	Glufosinate-ammonium 1.0%	○	○	○	○	?	○
	Roundup® Poison Ivy & Tough Brush Killer Plus Ready-to-Use	Glyphosate 1% Triclopyr 2%	○	?	○	○	○	●
	Roundup® Weed & Grass Killer Super Concentrate	Glyphosate 50.2%	○	?	○	○	○	●
	Eliminator® Weed & Grass Killer	Glyphosate 1.92%	○	?	○	○	○	●
	Ortho® Max Poison Ivy & Tough Brush Killer Concentrate	Triclopyr 8%	○	?	○	○	●	●
	Spectracide® Poison Oak & Poison Ivy Brush Killer EZ Spray™	2,4-D 0.493% 2-methy-4-chlorophenoxy	○	●	●	○	●	○

**Resources:** American Academy for Dermatology / [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org)

**Photo Credits:** University of Texas Plant Resources Center  
 City of Austin Balcones Canyonland Preserve

**Poison Ivy & Pets**  
 Use pet shampoo or a mild dish washing soap to remove poison ivy oil from pet coats.

**Don't be fooled!** There are many plants that look like poison ivy.



\*Virginia Creeper



Boxelder



Peppervine



Sorrelvine

\*has also been know to cause allergic reactions

The City of Austin and the Texas AgriLife Extension provide this information as a comparative reference only. Listing of a specific product trade name does not constitute an endorsement of its use. Many other pesticides and pesticide products, other than those listed in these tables are available and may be suitable for use.

Products rated by Grady J. Glenn, Ph.D., B.C.E., of the Pesticide Safety Education Program, Texas AgriLife Extension Service who can be reached for questions at (979) 862-1035. The rating system was developed by Philip Dickey of the Washington Toxics Coalition.

### why grow green?

The Grow Green program is based on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles that encourage the LEAST TOXIC approach to pesticide and fertilizer use. The goal is to reduce the amount of landscape chemicals that degrade water quality when they run off into waterways or leach into our groundwater.

Grow Green is a partnership between the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department and Texas AgriLife Extension Service. Call 974-2550 or 854-9600 for more information or visit our website at

[www.growgreen.org](http://www.growgreen.org)



974-2550



Texas A&M System