Poison Plants

Common Florida Poison Plants

Poison Ivy
Toxicodendron radicans

- Grows in sun or shade.
- Woody shrub or a vine.
- Climbs high or trails along the ground.
- "Leaflets three, let it be" is a reminder of this consistent leaf characteristic.
- Leaflets may be toothed or have smooth edges.
- Flowers and fruit are always in clusters on slender stems that originate in the leaf axils, or angles, between the leaves and woody twigs.
- Berrylike fruits are round and grooved with a white, waxy coating.

Poison Oak
Toxicodendron pubescens

- Is a low-growing, upright shrub.
- Found in dry, sunny locations and does not tolerate heavy shade.
- The stem attaching the terminal leaflet is longer than the stems attaching the other two.
- One distinguishing feature of poison oak is its lobed leaves, which give it the appearance of an oak leaf.
- Leaflets emerge with a reddish tinge in the spring, turn green, and then assume varying shades of yellow and red in the fall before dropping.

Poison Sumac
Metopium toxiferum

- A deciduous woody shrub or small tree that has a sparse, open form.
- inhabits swamps and other wet areas, pine woods, and shady hardwood forests.
- Poison sumac leaves consist of 7-13 leaflets.
- Leaflets are elongated, oval, and have smooth margins with a smooth, velvety texture.
- Flowers mature into ivory-white to gray fruits resembling those of poison oak or poison ivy, but they are usually less compact and hang in loose clusters of up to 10-12 inches in length.

Poisonwood
Metopium toxiferum

- An evergreen shrub or tree that grows 25-35 feet tall in hammocks, pinelands, and sandy areas near saltwater.
- The tree has a spreading, rounded form with a short trunk and arching limbs with drooping branches.
- The bark varies in color from reddish brown to gray, depending on the habitat, and has oily patches of sap on the surface; older trees have scaly bark.
- Each leaf is comprised of three to seven oval leaflets, although five leaflets are typical.
- Leaves are glossy and dark green above, paler underneath, and have smooth margins (leaf edges).
- Irregular blotches of resin dot the surface of many of the leaflets.
- The fruit is 1/2 inch long, oval, yellow to orange in color, and hangs in loose clusters.

Poison Ivy How to Deal

- All four of these common plants contain urushiol, a plant oil that can cause a severe skin rash or allergic reaction when contact is made with any part of the plant or oil.
- The smoke from burning these plants contains oil particles that can be inhaled and cause lung irritation.
- If exposed, immediately cleanse exposed skin, tools, shoes, or other items with warm, soapy water and then rinse thoroughly with fresh, cool water.
- Clothes should also be washed thoroughly and separately from other laundry.
- The rash, once properly cleaned, can last for 2-5 weeks, but is not contagious and will not spread.
- Symptoms appear within 8-48 hours and can last for weeks. Itching and burning of the skin may be followed by a rash, redness, swelling, and watery blisters.
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