

Whatever you do, don't scratch

By Curt Harler/Managing Editor

If you're like me, just reading the words "poison ivy" makes you itch. But poison ivy's rashes, blisters and infamous itch are really caused by urushiol ("oo-roo-shee-ohl"), a chemical in the poison ivy plants' sap. Since urushiol is found inside the plant, brushing against an intact plant will not cause a reaction, experts say. However, an intact ivy plant is rare.

The urushiol can also reach your skin indirectly when you touch clothing, boots, tools, pets or anything it comes in contact with.

Quick action is required when contact is made because urushiol penetrates skin in minutes. "The earlier you cleanse the skin, the greater the chance that you can remove the urushiol before it gets attached to the skin," says Hon-Sum Ko, MD, an allergist and immunologist with FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. Cleansing may not stop the initial outbreak of the rash if more than 10 minutes has elapsed, but it can prevent further spread.

After you have been exposed to poison ivy, take these steps immediately:

1. Cleanse exposed skin with lots of isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol, says William L.

Epstein, MD, professor of dermatology, University of California, San Francisco. Don't return to the woods the same day. Alcohol removes your skin's protection along with the urushiol and any new contact will cause the urushiol to penetrate twice as fast.

2. Wash skin with water.

3. Later, take a shower with soap and warm water. Don't use soap before this point because "soap will tend to pick up some of the urushiol from the surface of the skin and move it around," says Epstein.

4. Clothes, shoes, tools and anything else that may have been in contact with the urushiol should be wiped off with alcohol and water. Be sure to wear gloves when doing this. Then, discard the gloves.

If affected areas are not cared for quickly, redness and swelling will appear in 12 to 48 hours. Eventually, the rash clears up without treatment. However, blisters and itching will follow. Since the rash and blisters don't contain urushiol, they aren't contagious. The rash, blisters and itch disappear in 14 to 20 days without treatment.

The only way to prevent poison ivy is to avoid contact with the plant resin and anything that has come in contact with it.



Curt Harler
Managing Editor

TURFGRASS TRENDS

TURFGRASS TRENDS • 131 WEST FIRST STREET • DULUTH, MN 55802-2065

Name: _____

Title: _____

Business: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: () _____

Fax: () _____

Charge my subscription to: VISA MasterCard American Express

Name on card: _____

Billing address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Account number — — — Exp. date: /

Charges will appear on your credit card statement as Advanstar Communications, which publishes and distributes TURFGRASS TRENDS

Signature (required): _____ Date: ■ MAG 04/01

ORDER

www.landscapemanagement.net

► YES, Send my subscription to

TURFGRASS TRENDS

(12 issues per year)

6 months / \$105.00

1 year / \$199.00

1 year international / \$230

Payment Enclosed

Please Bill Me

► For faster service

PLEASE CALL: 888-527-7008

OR

FAX your completed form to:

218-723-9417 or 9437