

ASK THE EXPERT

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Poison ivy remedies, warnings

A number of our employees working on landscaping jobs where there is poison ivy are affected by the plants upon contact. How is poison ivy spread from one part of the body to another? Does it get into the blood stream? What can be done to prevent this problem?

Solution: Poison ivy contains toxic oil (resin) produced from leaves, stems and roots. Secretion of oil occurs generally when the plants come in contact with skin. Reports indicate that irritation can result from touching a dormant plant or recently dead plant, or even from pruning tools which come in contact with the plant.

Symptoms of poison ivy contamination include a rash. Eventually affected areas turn red, producing blisters, swelling, burning, itching and may lead to fever in some instances. Medical attention may be required if the problem is severe. Reports indicate that poison ivy is not spread by the watery liquid within the skin blisters. Also, I am not sure whether or not the ivy oil enters the blood system. My guess is it spreads only on the external skin*. The oil from the plant causes the itchy rash reaction. Washing the skin immediately after coming in contact with poison ivy may reduce the symptoms.

The resin sets up in the skin five to 15 minutes after exposure, after which washing will not help.

People who are sensitive to poison ivy should learn to recognize it and where it grows, and if possible, avoid any contact. Your landscaping job probably makes avoidance difficult, so wear gloves, coveralls, long-sleeve shirts, etc., to protect your skin. Wash hands, arms and any other body parts that may have come in contact with the plant with soaps such as Fells naptha soap. Wash contaminated clothing.

When large areas of the body or delicate areas such as eyes are involved, get prompt, professional medical care.

Consider using materials such as Technu on the body of sensitive persons prior to working in an area having poison ivy plants. Reportedly, the material helps against poisoning if applied before and/or after coming in contact with the plants.

(*Ed. note: we checked with the editors of *Dermatology Times* magazine, who verified that the poison ivy resin remains on the skin surface.) Partially excerpted from an article, "Poison Ivy Cures Founded on Myth," by Sharon McDonald, resident in dermatology, Columbus, Ohio.

Getting the most out of broadleaf control

This year we had a lot of service calls from our clients related to poor broadleaf weed control in spite of using postemergent herbicides. Why do you think we are having this problem? Now, we are thinking of applying the herbicides in the fall. How effective would this be? (PA)

Solution: In general, broadleaf weed control service calls are the major service calls in our industry. This is partly because of the way the treatments are programmed. For example, most

practitioners would not include any broadleaf herbicide in treatments until late spring. Therefore, the clients' lawns treated prior to this time may present a weed problem before the second treatment is scheduled. Clients may not be willing to wait for weed control until the second treatment, creating a need for a service call. Perhaps explaining to clients how these materials work and how they manage the weeds would help minimize service calls. This would involve educating the practitioners as well as the clients.

Other factors to consider are the cold and wet conditions which existed this year in many parts of the country. Weed control is more effective if weeds are actively growing. Rain before the herbicide has dried on the weed foliage may reduce effectiveness.

Concerning fall treatment with herbicides, turfgrass researchers at Cornell University have found that fall is the best time to apply postemergent herbicides to control broadleaf weeds in turf. Winter annual broadleaves and perennials are easier and more effectively controlled at that time, and the turf has more time to fill in the open areas before spring weeds germinate. Cornell scientists suggest herbicide applications be made from mid-September to mid-October, or even as late as mid-November during mild years. Even though you will not see the response until next spring, the herbicide will be absorbed by the plants and move down to the roots, resulting in good control in the spring.

This approach sounds good from the agronomic standpoint. However, study this option on a small practical and business aspect of the program before planning to implement on a larger scale.

Another option would be to use preemergent broadleaf herbicides such as Gallery. Make sure this product is labeled for your use. Read and follow label specifications for better results.

Ronstar and newly sprigged bermudagrass Can we use Ronstar herbicide on newly sprigged bermudagrass? (GA)

Solution: Yes, Ronstar 50W and Ronstar 2G are now labeled for use on newly sprigged bermudagrass. However, it is not labeled for use on home lawns. Both the Ronstar 50W and 2G herbicide use is restricted for golf courses, commercial sites, etc.

Read and follow label specifications for best results.

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Mail questions to "Ask the Expert," LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow two to three months for an answer to appear in the magazine.