

## INFORMATIONS ON POISON IVY

### DISCRIPTION

Poison ivy grows as a shrub. A climbing vine variety can also be found in southwestern Québec.

Poison ivy is anywhere from 20 centimetres to a metre tall. This perennial multiplies from seeds or from its extensive network of underground stems.

Poison ivy can be found in all regions of Québec. It grows in a variety of different areas:

- In forests or fields
- In sunny or shady areas
- In dry or wet soil

The plant is particularly common:

- At the edge of forests
- Along fences, roads, cliffs, riverbanks and railroads

### IDENTIFYING POISON IVY

#### Leaves:

Poison ivy leaves are shiny. Each leaf is made up of 3 pointed leaflets (small leaves). The stem of the middle leaflet is much longer than those of the other 2 leaflets. (See image 1)

#### Flowers:

In the months of June and July, poison ivy produces cream-coloured flowers. (See image 2).

#### Fruit :

Round, waxy fruit appears in September. It grows in clusters, and its colour varies from green to yellow. (Voir image 3).



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

## LIMITING THE PRESENCE OF POISON IVY

As poison ivy has harmful effects on health, it is important to prevent it from growing and multiplying.

Before getting rid of poison ivy, make sure you should correctly identify the plant and protect yourself to avoid allergic reactions if your skin comes into contact with sap from the plant.

If you must handle poison ivy, protect yourself properly:

- Always wear protective rubber or nitrile gloves;
  - Wear a long-sleeved shirt and pants to prevent your skin from coming into contact with the poison ivy sap.

Even dead poison ivy plants can cause allergic reactions. Handle these carefully as well.

## PREVENT THE POISON IVY FROM GROWING

To control poison ivy, you must prevent it from multiplying by destroying its roots and stems.

To do this, you must:

### **Pull the poison ivy:**

- To obtain effective results, pull the plant and its roots, as well as the underground stems.
- Pull the plants in the spring, once the leaves are blooming and when the ground is still wet. Removal of the plant is thus more effective



### **Preventing the poison ivy from growing:**

- Work the soil often to destroy seedlings before they form complex roots.
- In the spring, smother the new shoots by covering them with mulch (ideally, thick black plastic). Leave the mulch throughout the summer, and even for more than a year.
- Bury dead plants at least 30 centimetres deep. You can also place them in a heavy-duty, tightly sealed garbage bag. Make sure you identify the contents of the bag to inform and protect those who may handle it. Throw the bag away with household garbage.
- Do not compost the plant.
- Do not use herbicides or chemical-control methods. These are only last-resort options.
- If you plan on using chemical-control methods, hire an expert. This way, you avoid harming your health and the environment.

**Never burn poison ivy plants. Inhaling the smoke produced by burning poison ivy plants can have very dangerous consequences. It can lead to extremely painful inflammation of the lungs and serious respiratory problems that can result in death.**

## AFTER HANDLING

Poison ivy sap that sticks to clothes and tools can be dangerous for a long time. After handling poison ivy, make sure you wash everything that could have come into contact with the plant, including your shoes and laces.

Wash clothes that could have come into contact with the sap separately from uncontaminated clothing. Machine wash them in hot water with soap. You should probably wash contaminated clothing several times to completely get rid of the sap.

Don't forget to wear rubber or nitrile gloves when handling items that may have been contaminated with sap.

## ALLERGIC REACTIONS CAUSED BY POISON IVY

When skin comes into contact with poison ivy sap, a painful allergic reaction called "contact dermatitis" or "Rhus dermatitis" may occur.

The substance that causes this allergic reaction is urushiol, a compound in the poison ivy sap. The sap is found in all parts of the plant except the pollen.

About 9 in 10 people are sensitive to poison ivy sap. They react to even minute quantities of urushiol.

### Symptoms :

The symptoms of an allergic reaction to poison ivy usually appear 24 to 48 hours after contact with the sap.

The first sign of an allergic reaction to poison ivy is a strong itching with redness at the site of contact.

Afterwards, lesions may appear:

- Inflammation
- Swelling
- Blistering
- Crusting when blisters burst and leak

Call Info-Santé 811 for further information on what to do in case of contact with poison ivy sap.

Source 1 : <https://www.quebec.ca/en/homes-and-housing/healthy-living-environment/identifying-and-getting-rid-of-poison-ivy>

Source 2 : <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/allergic-reactions-caused-by-poison-ivy>