



K-8 DISCOVER Poison Ivy

Did you know that poison ivy grows as a shrub or vine? Do you know how to recognize poison ivy? Do you know where poison ivy grows?

Look for three shiny, pointed, oval, lobed or toothed leaves. The plant has white, waxy berries. The flowers are greenish-white, found in clusters around the axils of the leaves (between the stem and the leaf).

This plant is a native to the Southwest. It is found in the woodlands and along streams. The plant produces a **dermatitis** (skin irritation) which varies from one person to another, depending on the person's sensitivity. An oil-resin chemical (**urushiol**) is released upon contact, causing dermatitis. Urushiol is found in the sap which is located in all parts of the plant.

The chemical is released when the plant is touched or bruised and also can be spread by animals, dust particles, pollens, ashes, and even clothing. The chemical can remain on the clothes for years if it is not washed out!

Avoid contact with poison ivy. If you discover you have had contact, wash carefully with a strong soap within five to ten minutes to help prevent irritation. Be especially alert during spring and summer months when the plants are full of sap and easily bruised!

