



# SafetyAlert

We're Serious About Safety

## Poisonous Plants

Any person working outdoors is at risk of exposure to poisonous plants, such as *poison ivy*, *poison oak*, and *poison sumac*. When in contact with skin, the plant sap oil (*urushiol*) can cause an allergic reaction. Burning these poisonous plants produces smoke that, when inhaled, can cause lung irritation.



Poisonous plants, from left to right: poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac.  
Images courtesy of U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### Protect Yourself!

- Wear long sleeves, long pants, boots, and gloves.
- Wash exposed clothing separately in hot water with detergent.
- Barrier skin creams, such as lotion containing bentoquatam, may offer some protection.
- After use, clean tools with rubbing alcohol or soap and lots of water. Urushiol can remain active on the surface of objects for up to 5 years.
- Wear disposable gloves during this process.
- Do not burn plants or brush piles that may contain poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac.
- Inhaling smoke from burning plants can cause severe allergic respiratory problems.

### Unavoidable exposure? Some Respirator Tips:

- Should be NIOSH-approved, particulate-filtering facepiece respirators rated R-95, P-95, or better.  
*\*Does NOT apply to wildland firefighters, who may require a higher level of protection.*
- Should protect against exposure to burning poisonous plants
- Must be worn correctly and consistently.
- Must create a tight seal against the user's face.
- Must be used in the context of a written respiratory protection program (see OSHA Respiratory Protection standard 29 CFR 1910.134).

For more information - <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/respirators/>



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### Worker Exposure and Skin-Contact Symptoms

- Direct contact with the plant
- Indirect contact (touching tools, animals, or clothing with urushiol on them)
- Inhalation of particles containing urushiol from burning plants
- Red rash within a few days of contact
- Swelling
- Itching
- Possible bumps, patches, streaking or weeping blisters NOTE: Blister fluids are not contagious

### First Aid

- Immediately rinse skin with rubbing alcohol, poison plant wash, or degreasing soap (such as dishwashing soap) or detergent, and lots of water.
- Rinse frequently so that wash solutions do not dry on the skin and further spread the urushiol.
- Scrub under nails with a brush.
- Apply wet compresses, calamine lotion, or hydrocortisone cream to the skin to reduce itching and blistering.
- Oatmeal baths may relieve itching.
- An antihistamine may help relieve itching.

*\*\*NOTE: Drowsiness may occur.*

- In severe cases or if the rash is on the face or genitals, seek professional medical attention.
- Call 911 or go to a hospital if you have a severe allergic reaction, such as swelling or difficulty breathing, or have had a severe reaction in the past.