

HOW TO IDENTIFY POISON IVY



"If butterflies land there, don't put your hand there."

Some butterflies land on poison ivy, since they are not affected, which provides them protection as their predators avoid eating the plant.



"Leaves of three, let it be."

This old rhyme refers to the grouping of three leaves that are most commonly associated with poison ivy. Though there are many other plants with three predominate leaves, this can be a good starting point for identification.



"Hairy vine, no friend of mine." & "Raggy rope, don't be a dope!"

Poison ivy vines on trees have a furry "raggy" appearance. These rhymes warn tree climbers to be wary. Old, mature vines on tree trunks can be quite large and long, with the recognizable leaves obscured among the higher foliage of the tree.

"Berries white, run in fright" & "Berries white, danger in sight."

The berry-like fruit, a drupe, mature by August to November with a grayish-white colour. Fruits are a favorite winter food of some birds and other animals. Seeds are spread mainly by animals and remain viable after passing through the digestive tract.



"Longer middle stem, stay away from them."

This refers to the middle leaflet having a notably longer stem than the two side leaflets and is a key to differentiating it from the similar-looking *Rhus aromatica* - Fragrant sumac.

"Red leaflets in the spring, it's a dangerous thing."

Sometimes in the spring new leaflets have a red appearance. (Note that later, in the summer, the leaflets are green, making them more difficult to distinguish from other plants, while in autumn they can be reddish-orange.)



"Side leaflets like mittens, will itch like the dickens."

This refers to the appearance of some, but not all, poison ivy leaves, where each of the two side leaflets has a small notch that makes the leaflet look like a mitten with a "thumb."