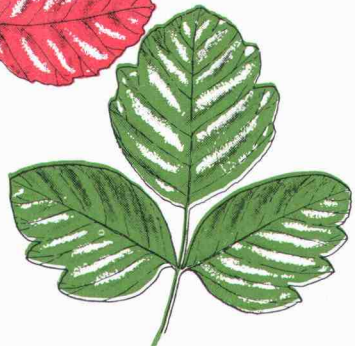
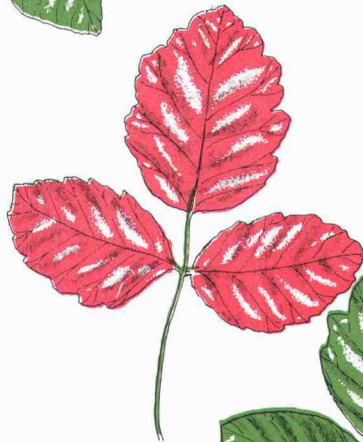
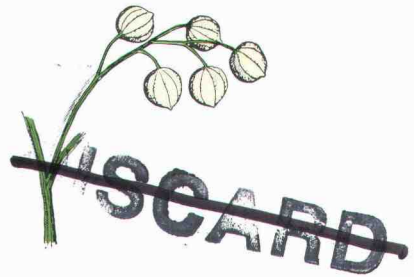


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# Poison Oak and Ivy

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POISON OAK — *Rhus diversiloba* — Showing branch with leaflets, individual leaf, male flowers, top, and female flowers, center.

PNW 108

March 1974

A Pacific Northwest Extension Publication

Oregon

Washington

Idaho

# Poison Oak and Ivy

Poison oak (*Rhus diversiloba*) is found in open woods, hill pastures, cut-over forest lands, and rocky banks in most western Oregon and Washington counties, extending southward into California. Its near relative, poison ivy (*Rhus toxicodendron*), is common in dry woods and thickets in eastern Washington and Oregon, and throughout Idaho and eastward. The two are similar in their general appearance, growth habits, and effect on humans.

This bulletin deals with poison oak, but since control measures for poison ivy are the same, it is applicable for both plants.

## Description

Poison oak will not stand cultivation. It has some value as a browse plant for livestock, especially goats and sheep, and is a source of good-quality honey. Its brilliantly colored fall foliage attracts, often to their sorrow, an annual new group of children, city people, or newcomers, who gather it for house decoration.

The shrub grows from 3 to 10 feet tall, erect, thick, and woody, or may grow as a vine and twine around trees. It reproduces both by seed and rootstocks. It often has aerial rootlets that adhere to the trunks of trees. Leaflets are from 1/2 to nearly 2 inches long, produced 3 in a group on a common stem. The leaflets somewhat resemble oak or ivy leaves. The leaf surface is glossy and may have a blistered appearance. Flower groups are about 1/4 inch across, greenish-white, borne in clusters, on a slender stem. The fruits are berry-like, glossy, and dry when ripe, with a striped stone inside the papery shell.

The entire plant contains at all seasons an oily substance extremely poisonous to some people, causing painful irritation of the skin that appears several hours after contact. Humans vary from extreme susceptibility to near im-

munity. A few cases have been reported where the poison covered such large areas of the body that death resulted. This is rare, but doctors should be consulted in all extreme cases. To cause poisoning, the skin usually must come into direct contact with the oil, either by touching the plant or by touching something that has touched it, such as clothing, gloves, livestock, or firewood. However, the smoke from poison oak wood fires often poisons persons who think they are immune.

After exposure to poison oak, the hands and arms should be thoroughly washed with strong soap and hot water. The soap should contain an excess of lye. A solution of water and alcohol in equal proportions will dissolve the poison, but the solution must be used liberally. Numerous lotions for relieving the discomfort of poison oak are on the market.

## Control Methods

**FOLIAGE SPRAYS.** Commonly used brush killers 2,4,5-T and mixtures of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D are effective for the control of poison oak. Best control has been obtained by using 3 to 4 pounds (3 to 4 quarts product) of the acid equivalent in 100 gallons of water (1 cup in 5 gallons of water). The foliage should be covered thoroughly for good control. Foliage spraying should be done in the spring after the poison oak plants are fully leaved out. Regrowth and missed plants should be resprayed with a similar spray the following year. The 2,4,5-T type sprays kill slowly and must be applied carefully in areas where susceptible plants are growing. Consult the label for grazing restrictions and other limitations in use.

Picloram is one of the more effective herbicides for controlling poison oak and poison ivy. Picloram is not registered for use on crop or grazing land. It can be used on non-grazed or non-crop areas.

Picloram, sold as Tordon, will control poison oak. The recommended rate is 1 to 1-1/2 pounds of active picloram per acre. This is usually applied in about 100 gallons of water per acre. The spray material should be applied after the plants are fully leafed. Dry material should be applied in the early fall, preferably October.

Picloram sprays or beads must be used carefully to prevent the spray materials from drifting to desired plants or to prevent the material from moving with water to nearby plants. Follow label precautions on the container.

Amitrole, sometimes called ATA or ATZ, with trade names of Amino Triazole, Weedazol, Amitrole T, and Cytrol, will control poison oak. Amitrole should be applied when the poison oak is in full leaf, preferably during the month of June. Later applications are effective but not as good as June applications. Use at least 1 pound of the 50 percent powdered form or 1 quart (1/2 pound) of the liquid form for each 12 gallons of water. The foliage of the poison oak should be thoroughly covered. One treatment usually eradicates poison oak. However, should regrowth occur, it should be resprayed with amitrole the following year. Amitrole will damage grassy plants. This chemical is not registered for use on crop or grazing lands.

Ammate-X (Ammonium sulfamate) is an effective, rapid-killing chemical for poison oak plants. This spray is mixed at the rate of 1 pound of Ammate-X per gallon of water. It should be applied after the plant is in full leaf. Ammate-X can be used successfully any time during the summer months. It is especially

effective around parks and playgrounds where rapid plant kills are important. Ammate does not volatilize, thus is safe to use in areas where 2,4,5-T susceptible plants are growing. Ammate-X is corrosive to spray equipment. Sprayers used for applying Ammate should be washed thoroughly after each use.

*Basal or dormant sprays.* One gallon (4 pounds active) of 2,4,5-T, when mixed with 25 gallons of diesel or stove oil, can be applied as a basal spray on poison oak. This spray can be applied during the dormant season. The lower 30 inches of the plants are sprayed with this method. Winter or basal sprays are especially well adapted for spraying fence rows and roadsides. They are generally applied when there is a minimum chance for injury to nearby susceptible plants.

*Soil sterilants.* Soil sterilants such as sodium chlorate, borate, and mixtures of borate-chlorate will kill poison oak. These chemicals are not selective and should not be used in areas where desired plants are growing. Sodium chlorate, after becoming wet, is a fire hazard. Soil sterilants must come in contact with the root system of the plant. In western Oregon and Washington the chemical should be applied in April. In eastern Oregon and Washington and in Idaho, October applications are best. More uniform dry applications of soil sterilants can be obtained if poison oak is burned before treatment.

#### Recommended Rates

Chemical	Rate (pounds product per sq. rod)
Sodium chlorate	4-5
Atlacide	5-6
Borate	12-15
Borate-chlorate mixture	8-10



Published and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the Oregon State University Extension Service, Joseph R. Cox, director; the Washington State University Extension Service, Arthur W. Peterson, acting director; the University of Idaho Agricultural Service, James L. Graves, director; and the United States Department of Agriculture, cooperating. OSU—4M; WSU—10M; I—2M.

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