

## Leaves of Three Leave It Be... Poison Ivy 101

Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron Radicans*) is a small woodland plant found throughout Oklahoma. It has three leaflets on a stem that are typically greenish-red in early spring, dark green through summer and turn red, orange or yellow in the fall. It has small waxy, cream-colored fruits that later turn white. Every fruit contains a seed, which is eaten and spread by birds and other wildlife. Virginia Creeper is a five-leaved plant that often grows side by side with poison ivy and is commonly mistaken for it.

Poison ivy grows almost everywhere. It's common along rural roadsides, in fencerows, and in forested areas in parks and golf courses. It grows in flowerbeds, trees, and shrubs around our homes. As a vine, it climbs fences, utility poles and trees. If there is no tree or other support to climb, it will grow along the ground or upright like a shrub. It blends in well and may be hard to spot.



All parts of poison ivy plants are toxic all year round. Urushiol, the toxic oil that we react to, is found in all parts of the plant. It can get on skin, clothes, shoes and pet fur. The oil can stay active for years in dry leaves and vines and on tools and clothing. Clean all tools that come in contact with the plant with strong soap to remove the oil.

### **Control**

Cultural controls, such as hand pulling or hoeing will only work if *all* underground roots (rhizomes) are completely removed. Never burn any part of poison ivy, as smoke will carry the oil droplets.

There are several herbicides available at your local garden store that will eradicate poison ivy over time. Always read and follow all directions on the pesticide label.

Products containing triclopyr are good for well-established poison ivy. Herbicides that contain a combination of dicamba and 2,4-D are another good choice. Triclopyr, dicamba and 2,4-D are all selective herbicides that only kill broadleaf plants such as poison ivy and can be used without harm to grasses. Even so, they should not be used where they may come in contact with delicate plants.

Glyphosate can be used for spot treating in late spring through mid-summer. Cut the vines to six inches above ground and apply directly to the fresh cut. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide will kill grasses as well as broadleaf weeds such as poison ivy so care must be taken when using near trees, shrubs, flowers or other desirable plants.

Selective or non-selective herbicides should be used during periods of rapid poison ivy growth. For best results, apply just before the plant is blooming. Poison ivy is a tough perennial plant

with thick, woody rootstocks so new sprouts and re-growth are likely. You may need to re-apply pesticide during the growing season and possibly the next to completely eradicate it.

[www.mastergardeners.org](http://www.mastergardeners.org), is a great place to learn about your plants and their common pest problems. You can get answers to your gardening questions by calling the Tulsa Master Gardeners Help Line at 918-746-3701, dropping by our Diagnostic Center at 4116 E 15<sup>th</sup> St. in Tulsa or by emailing us at [mg@tulsamastergardeners.org](mailto:mg@tulsamastergardeners.org).

**Sources:**

- E-832 2019 Extension Agent's Handbook
- E-1034 Master Gardener's Manual
- University of Missouri Extension "Poison Ivy: Identification and Control"
- Brian Jervis, OSU Extension Agent/Educator, MG Class Lecture September 5, 2018