

Lawn Care

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POISON IVY

"Leaflets three—let it be." This sound advice about America's most feared weed has come down through several generations. Years ago one would not have expected to find a treatise on this weed in a lawn publication but inquiries for advice in subduing it are becoming more and more common. Many botanists believe the pest to be spreading at an alarming rate, largely because its presence results in a hasty getaway. Few ever attempt to destroy it.

Favorite Habitats

Poison Ivy is sometimes called Poison Oak because its leaflets so closely resemble young oak leaves. It is perhaps the most universally distributed plant in the United States, being found all across the continent from Canada to the Gulf. The plants frequent fields, pastures, woodlands and thickets. You may find them along roadways and streams, in many city parks, cemeteries and suburbs, often mixed with shrubbery in such a man-

ner as to escape observation. Poison Ivy has gradually been coming to town as areas adjacent to cities are absorbed for building sites.

Description

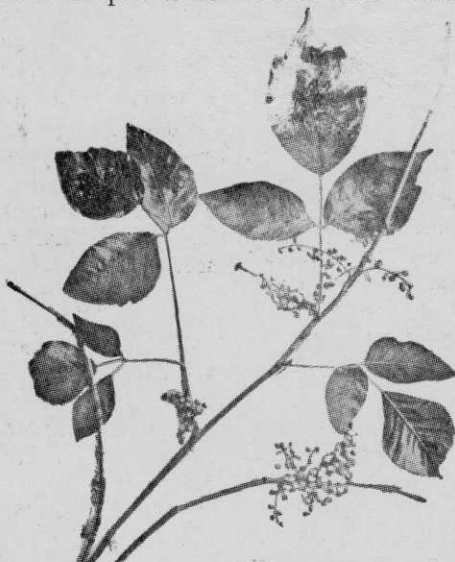
Poison Ivy is a perennial that grows in two forms. As an erect, bushy shrub it sometimes attains a height of 4 feet.

As a woody vine it climbs fence posts or tall trees, clinging tenaciously to the bark by means of numerous aerial roots growing out of the stem.

The easiest way to identify Poison Ivy is by its leaves, each of which consists of 3 pointed leaflets as shown in the illustration. The center leaflet has a long stem, the two outside ones, short stems. Vir-

ginia Creeper or Woodbine, which is often mistaken for Poison Ivy, has five leaflets instead of three.

The small, greenish white flowers appear in loose clusters from late May until July, then greenish white berries about the size of small currants form.



Branches of the Poison Ivy vine, showing the leaves, fruit, and aerial rootlets

They are smooth and waxy and dangle in bunches on the stem until late winter. Each berry contains one hard seed.

Crows and other birds eat the fruit, apparently without harm, and scatter the seeds along fences and telephone routes.

Means Of Control

Frequent cultivation will keep Poison Ivy under control. When it is growing next to planted shrubs or valuable trees where chemical sprays cannot safely be used, grubbing must be resorted to. Another method of control in such cases, is to apply a few drops of sulphuric acid to the woody stems near the ground.

Along fences, walks and roads where injury to other vegetation need not be considered, chemical sprays offer the best means of control. The advantage of this method is that it reduces the possibility of any contact with the plant.

Salt Spray

Hot brine is not only safe to use, but it is also easily obtained and inexpensive. Dissolve 3 pounds common salt in a gallon of hot and slightly soapy water. This solution is best applied to the foliage with an air pressure sprayer to make a fine driving mist. However, if all the leaves can be reached an ordinary sprinkling can will do.

In making this treatment it must be understood that underground stems creep in all directions a few inches below the soil surface. At intervals they send shoots up through the soil. These underground stems are fleshy and contain a liberal storage of food. This food supply is drawn upon for the production of new leaves. Repeated sprayings to keep the plant defoliated will eventually starve the roots and stems.

Oil Spray

Another treatment recommended by the United States Department of Agri-

culture is crank-case oil, thinned with kerosene until it sprays easily. This may be applied like the salt solution and is apt to be more effective than salt for late season defoliation. Oils should not come in contact with the bark of valuable trees.

Sodium Chlorate

Sodium Chlorate is a very effective chemical control. Not only does it kill the topgrowth but also penetrates the soil and kills the roots. It sterilizes soil for a period of about 6 months but thereafter the soil is as fertile as before.

The proper solution is one pound of chlorate in 1 gallon of water sprayed on 300 square feet. Either a power sprayer or a sprinkling can may be used. The treatment can be made at any time of the year but a second application should always be planned in order to kill any new sprouts.

Sodium Chlorate in contact with combustible materials is highly inflammable and must be used with caution. Make up the solution outdoors, using only metal containers. Do not spill any on your clothes and do not smoke around it.

Poisoning To Persons

It is known that a great many people can at times handle Poison Ivy without ill effects, while others suffer painful skin irritation. The poison is an oil found in all parts of the plant but particularly the leaves. In eradicating the weed, wear gloves and long sleeves and avoid contact with the plants.

1940 LAWN CARE COMING UP

Suggestions for subjects to be discussed in the 1940 series will be welcome. Within the next few months, topics to feature the five issues ahead will be under consideration. We solicit your help in so planning these bulletins that they will be of greatest practical value to the lawn owner.