Lawn Care
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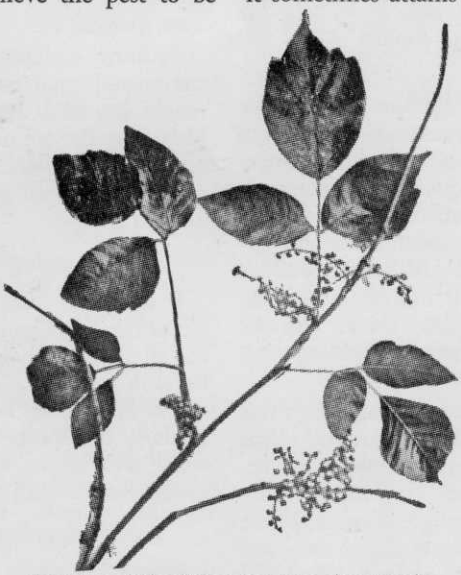
POISON IVY

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



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

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. Virginia 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.

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 of 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 Agriculture 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.

Poison Ivy Potency

Poison Ivy at the moment is occupying a rather unique position as an American defender. Research chemists have succeeded in extracting from this plant its toxic principle called Toxicodendrol. Toxicodendrol is the basic element of poison gas which will penetrate even the most up-to-date type of gas mask for civilian and soldier. The

soldier who must fight when faced by a Poison Ivy gas screen must wear an air tight rubber suit in addition to a new fangled mask. Even then his chance of escape from being incapacitated for several days is very remote.

Paradoxically this new gas promises to be a factor in peace as well as war for the same extract is being successfully used as an antitoxin so that all but the most sensitive persons may venture freely into woodland glens without fear of ill effects. Nine large American laboratories have been licensed to produce Poison Ivy extract for the purpose of introducing immunity to ivy infection. An age-old custom among the Indians was to eat the leaves of Poison Ivy early in the spring and thus become immunized against irritation to their skins later on, another evidence of Indian wisdom in medicinal matters.

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Layman Offers Good Maintenance Advice

"Just received No. 55 of Lawn Care and note with interest the various ways of controlling dandelions. Not having an elephant handy and our dog probably too old to learn to dig 'em up, I want to add my word to your quotation from E. M. Moore of Joliet, Ill.

"I don't think the suggestions of dropping acid on the centers of plants or shaking them out with toothpicks sounds like anything but a WPA 'project.' If one is going to take the trouble to locate and fiddle with a dandelion or plantain, why not eradicate it permanently when you come to it?

"I have gone about the place in a leisurely manner with a forked cutter which I keep sharpened with a file and only bother with the dandelion plants that have a bloom on them, which obviates any effort in searching for the plants in the grass. I then dig them out and put the whole plant in a small basket and then burn them in the incinerator as the blooms will continue to develop into downs if left to their own devices.

Plantain

"The plantains are still too small (and few) to bother with but in another two weeks the plants will be big enough and strong enough to locate easily and give a purchasing power while applying the cutter. I also started with a sharpened old kitchen knife but the cutter is cheap and about 18 inches long so the old back is thereby relieved of too much bending.

Crabgrass

"And now as to Crabgrass—it's too early yet to get very hot and bothered about that pest, but I used to have a difficult time with it and I contend that there is only ONE way to get rid of it, or rather to control it, and that is to pull it out. In the summer when it begins to grow and BEFORE it gets a good seed growth, I get little children from the neighborhood who are then out of school and give them 25 cents apiece for an hour or an hour and a half, pulling the crooked jointed pests out of the grass. It's doing a wonderful job of control, but I don't believe Crabgrass can ever be entirely eliminated."—E. C. Dekay, 84 William St., Darien, Conn.

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Chickweed Succumbs

"Some months ago I sent you some samples of Chickweed which you identified for me and recommended that I treat with calcium arsenate. I followed your suggestion and was able early in the summer to get rid of most of it. There still remain a few patches and I feel confident that we shall be entirely rid of it this fall."—Mr. William E. Hill, c/o F. E. Compton Co., 1000 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

English Authority Prefers Fall Sowing

A recent book entitled "Practical Lawn Craft" has come from the English press. The author is Mr. R. B. Dawson, Director of the Board of Greenkeeping Research, St. Ives Research Station, Bingley, Yorkshire, England. Because English lawns are famous for their beauty and since Mr. Dawson himself is a noted authority on turf, we believe this quotation from him to be significant:

"Generally speaking, there are two suitable periods of the year for sowing seed: the spring and late summer or early autumn. Experience has shown that late summer sowing will achieve success. This time of sowing provides a longer period of suitable weather for fallowing the soil. If the seedlings are well established in autumn, they are ready to go right ahead at the onset of spring weather. Further, there is less likely to be winter-kill of seeding in the cold weather following an autumn sowing than during the efforts of dessication in summer directly after spring sowing."

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"I find ordinary cider vinegar a very good ant remedy with no serious effects to the grass."—Chester T. Leikert, 448 East 240th St., New York City.

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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.

Scott Literature

Lawn Care—Subjects featured in previous bulletins include:

1828 Plantain, Sodium Chlorate.

1929 Compost, Moss, Web Worms, Iron Sulphate, Buckhorn.

1930 Ground Ivy, Yarrow, Earthworms, Heal-All, Ants.

1931 Speedwell, Creeping Buttercup, Moles, Knotweed.

1932 Sheep Sorrel, Quackgrass, Spurge, Trefoil, Goosegrass.

1933 Nimble Will, Knawel, Terraces, Shepherd's Purse, Ground Covers.

1934 Sedge, Shade, Purslane.

1935 Peppergrass, Crabgrass, Summer Injury.

1936 Clover, Poa Annua, Henbit, Fall Seeding, Foxtail.

1937 Honeycombed Soil, Grubworms, Orchard Grass, Soils, Injury from Excess Moisture.

1938 Dandelions, Chinch Bugs, Burlap Protection, Wild Garlic.

1939 Chickweed, Science of Mowing, Dandelions, Fall Seeding.

If your file is not complete, please be sure to ask for the missing issues. A full set of bulletins with index in stiff paper binding will be sent for 25c.

Binder—An attractive imitation leather, loose-leaf binder. Contains all Lawn Care bulletins, with ample room for future issues—$1.00 postage paid. For 20c additional, you may have a name printed in gold on the cover.

Creeping Bent Lawns—A practical discussion of the most beautiful of all grasses.

Good Lawns—The amateur gardener's guide to better lawns. Contains complete outline for building new lawns and improving old ones. Free.