

the ZANFEL ZONE

Your Information Resource for Poison Ivy, Oak and Sumac

Volume 1, Issue 2

Welcome to the second issue of the Zanafel Zone! One of the biggest weekends for poison ivy, oak, and sumac exposure is almost here – Labor Day Weekend. Below is some useful information to keep in mind as you head out to camp, hike, or just relax in your backyard during the last big outdoor weekend of the summer.

Identifying Western Poison Oak



Western or Pacific poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) grows along the entire Pacific coast and in Nevada. It grows as a shrub or climbing vine in a wide variety of soils and locations where it can find abundant water, especially in canyons. Western poison oak has rounded/oval leaves. Some of the leaflets resemble leaves of California live oak.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Identifying Western Poison Oak
- Identifying Eastern Poison Oak
- Fact or Myth: Are Dead Plants Toxic?
- Fact or Myth: Weeds Can Treat a Poison Ivy Rash
- How to Remove Urushiol From Clothing and Gear

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Identifying Eastern Poison Oak



Eastern or Atlantic poison oak (*T. pubescens*, aka *T. toxicarium*), is a small shrub that never climbs trees, and can produce berries when only 12 in. tall. It prefers sandy soil of ridge and valley areas amidst oak and pine trees of the Southeastern United States north to Illinois and west to Texas. The leaflets often resemble those of white oak .

Myth: Dead Poison Ivy, Oak, and Sumac Plants Are No Longer Toxic

Many people have developed a rash by touching dead poison ivy plants. Urushiol remains active for at least several years in the dead plants. Some sources say urushiol remains active on dead plants for 5 years in wet climates and 10 years in dry climates. If poison ivy plants are killed with a herbicide or other means, the dead plant material will be a concern for years to come.

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Myth: Rubbing Weeds On The Skin Can Help A Poison Ivy Rash

No weed, including Jewelweed* (*Impatiens biflora*), has been shown to help the eruption. There is no shortage of "old wives tales" about various wild plants that will have an effect on a poison ivy rash.

How To Remove The Plants Urushiol Oil From Clothing And Gear

The poison ivy, oak, and sumac plants' toxin is an oil, called urushiol. In order to remove this oil from clothing, garden tools, camping gear, etc., one could use a solvent or a soap. Solvents dissolve oils. Washing contaminated items with solvents like gasoline, kerosene, or alcohol would help to dissolve the urushiol oil, but all three are toxic and flammable.

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