

NRCS **NEWS RELEASE**

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Invasive Species Can Make Your Skin Crawl

Duluth, MN, November 15, 2012- Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans and rydbergii*) is a plant native to North America that is poisonous. While it is not a true ivy, it can look and grow like some ivy species. It is poisonous because it produces a resin substance called “urushiol”, a liquid compound found within the sap and outside of the plant. This compound can cause skin irritation, itching and severe rash. In Minnesota, it is considered a specially regulated plant. Plants that are designated as specially regulated have been determined to pose ecological, economical, or human or animal health concerns.

Poison ivy can be found as a trailing vine that is 4 – 10 inches tall, as a shrub 3 – 11 feet tall or as a climbing vine growing on trees or some other support. It can grow in a wide range of soil and moisture types, making it adaptable to different sites. It prefers somewhat wooded areas, typically on the woodland edges, but it cannot tolerate heavy shade. The leaves are dark glossy green in a trifoliate (leaves of three) pattern; leaflets are almond-shaped and may have large toothed ridges. The leaves turn a bright red color in the fall. The greenish/yellowish white flowers form in clusters and are inconspicuous. In the fall, the plant forms a cluster of grayish white berry-like fruits. The fruit is a favorite winter food for some birds and mammals. Seeds are spread primarily by animals through ingestion and passing.

If you have poison ivy overtaking an area or in an area that people frequent, you may want to control it. Hand pulling is one method that is effective for small infestations. Even if have not reacted to poison ivy in the past, you should wear thick leather or rubber gloves and a long sleeve shirt. You can become sensitive to poison ivy at any time. Continuous pulling will kill the patch. Another method is mowing; this works the same as pulling, but may take more cuttings. Spraying with herbicides is very effective for eradicating poison ivy if you don't mind using chemicals. A foliage application is needed to kill these weeds. Sometimes multiple applications are needed, but usually not more than two if done correctly and using the right mixture. Glyphosate is a common non-selective chemical that can be used. Since poison ivy is a woody plant, you must use the stronger formulation of glyphosate labeled for brush control. The chemical 2,4-D is another option that controls broadleaved plants such as poison ivy. This is sprayed on the leaves of the plant just like you would with glyphosate.

If you do not prefer the chemical method, but don't want to control it mechanically, there are organic methods to control poison ivy also. Horticultural vinegar is a more acidic formulation of vinegar than the regular vinegar used in your kitchen. It will kill many types of plants by burning the leaves due to the acidity. There are different levels of acidity from 10% to about 50%. The higher the acidity, the more effective at killing it will be. You may have to apply this more than

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once. Another organic spray can be used that is formulated from plant oils (eg. St. Gabriel Labs' Poison Ivy Defoliant ®, which is also a foliage spray application).

Once the poison Ivy is dead you may remove the plant material, but be careful because it can still cause irritation. Once removed, you should replant the area with native non-invasive species to prevent poison ivy from becoming reestablished. For options on what to plant, contact your local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Soil & Water Conservation District Office.

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Photos that can be used:



The photos below are referenced to the USDA plant Data base

