

## Poison Ivy

Poison ivy (*toxicodendron radicans*) is a plant whose irritating sap causes rashes. Crawling or climbing, it prefers moist, shaded or semi-shaded locations by wooded areas or waterways. While it can assume various forms, it is important to recognize it in order to avoid it.

The *toxicodendron radicans* has leaf clusters consisting of 3 oval leaflets whose edges can be jagged, smooth and occasionally both. Often shiny, the leaves are dark green in summer.

Even if you haven't been in contact with the plant, you could have an allergic reaction if you've been in contact with a piece of clothing, a shoe or a pet that have been. In fact, the oily sap ((oleoresin) adheres to various items or fabrics, but it is possible to eliminate it by washing the surfaces properly with soapy water. If you believe that your skin has been in contact with poison ivy, wash immediately with cold water.



Photo: Caroline Roy

Unfortunately, there is no easy way to get rid of poison ivy, and manual removal remains the most effective method. Before tackling this task, however, you must take a number of precautions to protect yourself. For example, 24 to 48 hours before you start, spray a low-impact herbicide like Safer's "TopGun" on all of the plant's visible leaves to weaken it. Note that, despite this measure, the plant will remain allergenic, and you must not touch any part of it with your bare hand, even if the leaves appear dry (roots, stems, live or dead leaves, fruit). Once you are well covered from head to foot, make sure you pull out as many stems as possible with your gloved hands, even those that run deep into the ground or under other shrubs. Dispose of all of these stems and other parts of the plant in a bag along with the gloves you used and, if need be, your clothing as well. Then put all the tools, accessories and footwear used into a waiting pail of hot, soapy water.

If any pieces of stem remain, chances are that the plant will resurface, but if you check the location often and pull out the poison ivy as soon as it appears instead of waiting for it to gain strength, you will most likely succeed in eradicating it. Spring is a good time for pulling out poison ivy, since there are fewer leaves and therefore, less of the surface is in contact with the sap. The use of a herbicide is not a preferred solution as it will only be effective if it is followed by manual removal.

A small percentage of the population has no allergic reaction to poison ivy. If you know anyone like this, ask them to remove it for you!



Photo: C. Roy

Whatever you do, **NEVER BURN POISON IVY**, and if you need help identifying it, contact the Town's eco-consultant, at 450 621-3500, ext. 3305.

For additional information:

Montréal Botanical Garden website:

[www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin/info\\_verte/fiches/herbe\\_puce.htm](http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin/info_verte/fiches/herbe_puce.htm) (French only)

Website of Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency:

[www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/pdf/pnotes/poivy-e.pdf](http://www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/pdf/pnotes/poivy-e.pdf) (English)