



Short Safety Subject

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www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

That Itching Feeling

Poison ivy, western poison oak, and poison sumac are among the most common skin rashes seen in a physician's office. These three plants are the most common on Fort Bragg.

Over 85 percent of the population will develop an allergic reaction if exposed to poison ivy. The rash can affect any part of the body but the commonly affected areas are the hands, forearms, and face. Once the oil of the plants touch the skin, it begins to penetrate in a matter of minutes. The rash appears as a line within 12 - 48 hours after exposure to the plant oil. Blisters and severe itching follow redness and swelling; within a few days the blisters become crusted and scaly. The rash will heal in about 10 days.

The most common way to get a rash from a poisonous plant is to come in contact with the plant oil. Once you have the rash it cannot be spread to other parts of your body or to another person by touching the blisters or the fluid. The plant oil on the hands, for example, spreads the rash wiping the forehead with the hand.

If you find the plants growing in your yards, use gloves to pull it up by the roots, and discard the plant carefully, then discard or wash the gloves. When walking through wooded areas, wear long pants and long sleeves. If you are exposed to plant oils, wash the affected area with cold water as soon as possible. Carefully remove all exposed clothing and wash it. Wash off all camping and sporting gear as well, if there is a chance that it has been contaminated.

Pictures on page 2 of this Short Safety Subject should help you in recognizing these plants.

Poison Ivy

A climbing vine with three serrated-edge, pointed leaves grows in the East, Midwest and South. In the northern and western states, poison ivy grows as a non-climbing shrub.



Poison Oak

Poison oak also has three leaves. It grows in the sandy soil of the Southeast as a small shrub. In the western United States poison oak is a very large plant which grows as a standing shrub or climbing vine.



Poison Sumac

A shrub or bush with two rows of 7 - 13 leaflets; most common in the peat bogs of the Northern United States and in swampy Southern regions of the country.

