



Poison Ivy: Leaves of three.....

Welcome to Memphis in May where you get a mixed bag of weather! It usually starts off with rain, gets hot and then the humidity starts to kick in. Due to the abundance of moisture from last month's rain, the flowers and trees are off to a wonderful start. Lately I have gotten a few calls about a certain vine that is off to a good start as well.

Poison ivy is woody, perennial vine that is commonly found in areas where it is often unwanted. It can easily attach itself to trees and other structures with hairy, aerial roots

which occupies its stem. Some of these stems can get pretty thick.

Remember hearing "leaves of three, let it be"? Poison ivy has compound leaves that occur in groups of three (trifoliate or leaflets). Describing the leaflets can be difficult because the edges of those leaflets can be smooth, wavy, lobed or serrated. The leaves are shiny, bright green and are quite attractive in the fall when they turn a red or reddish yellow color. The plant will flower and produce a cluster of white, waxy fruit.

Please understand that the entire plant is poisonous because all parts contain a toxic compound called urushiol. This oil is found in the leaves, stems and roots and it can remain active for months. Some people are more sensitive to the oil than others. Oil content is the highest in the plant in spring and summer.

If you come in contact with poison ivy the best thing to do is immediately wash off that area with running water. Don't use any soaps that contain oils because this could spread the irritating oil and make the rash worse. Use calamine lotion to help relieve itching.

To eradicate poison ivy you can cut the plant back. Please wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants along with gloves. If using an herbicide works for you, use one that contains glyphosate or triclopyr. Cut the plant back and then spray or paint the herbicide on the freshly cut stem or stump. Please read and follow the directions on the label.

Do be careful when dealing with poison ivy. It has a way of leaving a mark! Until next time, happy gardening!



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