

Poisonous Plants

According to OSHA, approximately 85 percent of the general population will develop an allergy if exposed to poison ivy, oak or sumac. Workers need to recognize the hazards of and avoid contact with potentially harmful plants.

The information in this topic may help workers recognize some types of harmful plants, how to avoid or minimize contact with them, and provides tips on what to do if contact is made with them.



- Preventing contact with harmful plants is the greatest safety precaution that workers can take.
- Harmful plants such as poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac release a harmful oil called urushiol which is highly allergic to most humans.
- Avoid direct contact with the plant as well as indirect contact by touching tools or clothing that has been contaminated by the oil or sap of the plant.
- Wear the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) when working outdoors and in areas where contact with harmful plants is possible.
- Long pants, shirts with sleeves, gloves and work boots can prevent accidental contact with poisonous plants.
- Wash tools and clothes with warm soapy water to reduce contact and spreading of the harmful oil.
- In addition to the proper PPE, using topical creams and ointments can help if you know you may contact a poisonous plant. Follow manufacturers and doctor's recommendations when using these products.
- Never burn plants or brush piles that may contain poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac.
- Inhaling the smoke from burning harmful plants or small particles from cutting/chopping can cause severe lung reactions!
- Wash your skin with soap and water if you come in contact with a poisonous plant.
- If you do have a reaction to the harmful plant avoid scratching and bursting the blisters which can lead to infection.

