The EHS Connection

Environmental Health & Safety Newsletter June 2017

Recognizing Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, and Poison Sumac

Poison Ivy: Found throughout the United States except Alaska, Hawaii, and parts of the West Coast. Can grow as a vine or shrub. Each leaf has three glossy leaflets, with smooth or toothed edges. Leaves are reddish in spring, green in summer, and yellow, orange, or red in fall. May have white berries.

Poison Oak: Grows as a low shrub in the eastern United States, and in tall clumps or long vines on Pacific Coast. Fuzzy green leaves in clusters of three are lobed or deeply toothed with rounded tips. May have yellow-white berries.

Poison Sumac: Grows as a tall shrub or small tree in bogs or swamps in Northeast, Midwest, and parts of the Southeast. Each leaf has clusters of seven to 13 smooth-edged leaflets. Leaves are orange in spring, green in summer, and yellow, orange, or red in fall. May have yellow-white berries.

Poison ivy and other poison plant rashes can't be spread from person to person. But it is possible to pick up the rash from plant oil that may have stuck to clothing, pets, garden tools, and other items that have come in contact with these plants. The plant oil lingers (sometimes for years) on virtually any surface until it's washed off with water or rubbing alcohol. The rash will only occur where the plant oil has touched the skin, so a person with poison ivy can't spread it on the body by scratching. It may seem like the rash is spreading if it appears over time instead of all at once. But this is either because the plant oil is absorbed at different rates in different parts of the body or because of repeated exposure to contaminated objects or plant oil trapped under the fingernails. Even if blisters break, the fluid in the blisters is not plant oil and cannot further spread the rash.

Tips for Prevention

- Learn what poison ivy, oak, and sumac plants look like so you can avoid them
- Wash your garden tools and gloves regularly. If you think you may be working around poison ivy, wear long sleeves, long pants tucked into boots, and gloves.
- Wash your pet if it may have brushed up against poison ivy, oak, or sumac. Use pet shampoo and water while wearing rubber gloves, such as dishwashing gloves. Most pets are not sensitive to poison ivy, but the oil can stick to their fur and cause a reaction in someone who pets them.
- Wash your skin in cool water as soon as possible if you come in contact with a poisonous plant. The sooner you cleanse the skin, the greater the chance that you can remove the plant oil or help prevent further spread.
- Use the topical product "Ivy Block" if you know you will come into contact with the poisonous plants. This FDA-approved product is available over the counter (OTC).

Tips for Treatment

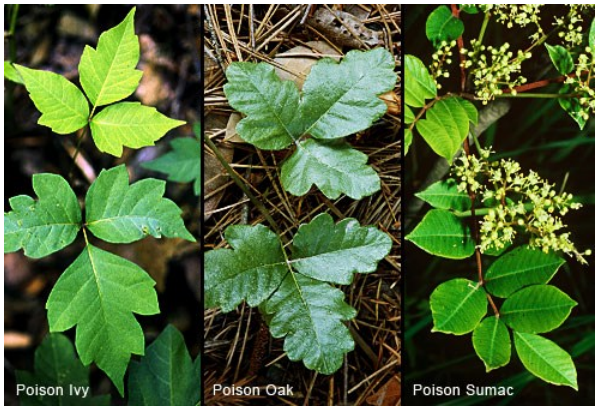
Don't scratch the blisters. Bacteria from under your fingernails can get into the blisters and cause an infection. The rash, blisters, and itch normally disappear in several weeks without any treatment. But you can relieve the itch by using wet compresses or soaking in cool water

applying OTC topical corticosteroid preparations or taking prescription oral corticosteroids

applying topical OTC skin protectants, such as calamine, labeled to dry oozing and weeping or to relieve itching and irritation caused by poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac

See a Doctor

- if you have a temperature over 100 F
- if there is pus, soft yellow scabs, or tenderness on the rash
- if the itching gets worse or keeps you awake at night
- if the rash spreads to your eyes, mouth, genital area, or covers more than one-fourth of your skin area
- if the rash is not improving within a few days



Our Polluted Lake

Take a walk along the beaches of Lake Ontario and you'll see plastic in the form of bottles, lids, bags, food wrapping, and unidentifiable bits of debris washed up on the shore.

If you're like most people, you see the garbage, shrug your shoulders and silently curse the litterbugs.

What you may not realize is that this debris is a symptom of one of the biggest threats to the health of lakes and oceans.

The debris is mostly plastic, which people are dumping into the world's waters at the rate of 8-million tons of plastic per year (and that figure is growing).

On the Great Lakes, plastics account for 80% of all debris. On the ocean, some estimates peg it even higher, at 90%. The famous "Great Pacific Garbage Patch" is a plastic-strewn stretch of the Pacific Ocean that may be as large as 15,000,000 square kilometers.

The debris you can see is just the tip of the plastic iceberg. Most plastic pollution is difficult to spot. The plastic is less than a few millimeters long. It often floats just under the surface.

Plastic wreaks havoc on the natural environment. It splits into smaller pieces, but it does not break down in the environment. Fish and animals mistake the tiny specs for food. Their bellies fill up with plastic, and they starve. Plastic debris also helps attract contaminants and can even create large floating mats that lure fish away from their natural habitat.

Where is this plastic coming from? Litter, obviously, is one source. Garbage is thrown or blown and washes into the water from land.

The other sources might surprise you. Clothes have tiny strands of plastic-especially microfleece. When you do your laundry, you are also flushing plastic down the drain.

Soaps and toothpastes are also a major problem. One tube of toothpaste can have 300,000 microbeads in it. The teeny tiny "micro-scrubbers" that are supposed to make your teeth and skin shiny wash down the drain. Then, because each bead is too small to be captured, they end up being flushed into the water from wastewater treatment plants.

Cigarette butts are some of the worst culprits. When you flick your spent butt into the water or onto the beach, it doesn't go away. It joins with hundreds of thousands of other pieces of plastic debris and hangs around for decades.

The plastic problem is one of the greatest challenges we face. With so many products used by so many people in every country on earth, it can seem overwhelming. But starting here, at home, on the waters we use every day, you can make a big difference.

Three simple ways we can help curb plastic pollution:

- Switch to refillable water bottles and food containers.
- Dispose of all your waste properly (including your cigarette butts).
- Avoid soaps and toothpastes with microbeads.

Next time you're walking the shoreline bring a bag along and take some time to pick up plastic debris and dispose of it properly. Every little bit helps!

REDUCE-REUSE-RECYCLE

IT TAKES MORE ENERGY TO MAKE A NEW PRODUCT LIKE A CAN OR BOTTLE FROM VIRGIN MATERIALS THAN IT DOES TO MAKE A PRODUCT BY RECYCLING. RECYCLING SAVES ENERGY, NATURAL RESOURCES, MONEY, TIME, LANDFILL SPACE , MAKES LESS POLLUTION INCLUDING LESS GREENHOUSE GASSES AND CREATES JOBS!

RECYCLING STEEL...When we recycle metal (steel), we: Use 40 percent less water than used to make virgin steel. Reduce air pollution by 86 percent. Reduce water pollution by 76 percent. For every can we recycle, we: Save enough energy to run a 60 watt light bulb for 26 hours. For every ton we recycle, we: Save 2,500 pounds of iron ore. 1,000 pounds of coal and 40 pounds of limestone.

Litter Facts: It takes steel cans up to 100 years to decompose.

RECYCLING PAPER...For every ton of paper recycled, we: Save 463 gallons of oil. Save 7,000 gallons of water. Make 60 pounds less air pollution. Save 3 cubic yards of landfill space. Save 4,100 kilowatt hours of energy. Save 17 trees. Reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 850 pounds per year!

Litter Facts: It takes paper up to one year to decompose.

RECYCLING ALUMINUM...When we recycle aluminum, we: Reduce energy use by 90 percent. Reduce air pollution by 95 percent. Save enough energy recycling just one can to run a TV for 3 hours. For every ton we recycle, we: Reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 13 tons! Save 237 Btu's of energy.

Litter Facts: It takes aluminum cans 200 - 500 years to decompose.

RECYCLING GLASS...When we recycle glass, we: Save 25 percent of the energy necessary to make glass with virgin materials. For every ton of glass recycled, we Save 1,330 pounds of sand, 410 pounds of soda ash, 380 pounds of limestone, and 151 pounds of feldspar. Reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 3.46 tons. For every bottle we recycle, we: Save enough energy to light a 100 watt light bulb for 4 hours. Save the equivalent in energy of 10 gallons of oil.

Litter Facts: Glass can last for thousands of years. It does not decompose.

RECYCLING PLASTIC...For every ton of plastic recycled, we: Save 76 million Btu's of energy. It takes 1,050 milk jugs to make one 6-foot plastic lumber park bench. It takes 5 soda bottles to make the fiberfill for one ski jacket. Litter Facts: Plastic bottles can take over 1,000 years to decompose.

From NYS DEC

Extension Cords

Extension cords are a convenient way to provide power right where you need it when working in or around your home, but using them improperly can be dangerous - even deadly. Keep safety in mind with these easy tips from Electrical Safety Foundation International.

Extension Cord Safety Tips:

- Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis.
- Make sure extension cords are properly rated for their intended use, indoor or outdoor, and meet or exceed the power needs of the appliance or device being used.
- Inspect cords for damage before use. Check for cracked or frayed plugs, loose or bare wires, and loose connections.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way.
- Do not run extension cords through walls or ceilings. This may cause the cord to overheat, creating a serious fire hazard.
- Do not nail or staple electrical cords to walls or baseboards.
- Make sure that cords are not pinched in doors, windows, or under heavy furniture, which could damage the cord's insulation.
- Keep extension cords out of high-traffic areas like doorways or walkways where they pose a tripping hazard.
- Insert plugs fully so that no part of the prongs is exposed when the extension cord is in use.
- Ensure that all extension cords are certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as UL, CSA, or ETL, and read the manufacturer's instructions.

Outdoor Extension Cord Safety Tips:

- When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant heavy gauge extension cords marked "for outdoor use." These weather resistant cords have the added safeguard of a protective coating designed to withstand the rougher outdoor environment and to prevent water from seeping in.
- Be sure amperage ratings for outdoor extension cords are higher than those of the electrical product with which they are used.
- Keep cords out of your path or work area. Throw the cord over your shoulder.
- Be sure to examine cords before each use. Damaged cords should be replaced immediately.
- Remember that extension cords are for short term needs and not for long term power solutions.
- Never alter or tamper with an extension cord in anyway.

Surge Protectors

Surges are sudden and unwanted increases in voltage that can damage, degrade or destroy the sensitive electronic equipment in your home or business, resulting in equipment damage or downtime, financial losses, and loss of data.

A surge protector is designed to protect your computer and other equipment from surges in power. The standard voltage in most outlets in U.S. offices is 120 volts. If the voltage rises above 120 volts, a surge protector helps prevent the increase from ruining your computer and its components.

To determine whether surges may be affecting your electrical equipment, look for:

- Computer lock-ups;
- An unexplainable corruption of data;
- Equipment shutdown;
- Loss of power; and/or
- Flickering lights.

Power Strips

A power strip is a strip of sockets that attaches to the end of a flexible cable and allows multiple devices to be plugged in to the same outlet. However, they can very easily create a fire hazard if not used appropriately. Power strips do not provide more power to a location, just more access to the same limited capacity of the circuit into which it is connected. The circuit likely also still serves a variety of other outlets and fixtures in addition to the multiple electrical items you might be supplying with the power strip.

Keep these safety principles in mind when using power strips and surge protectors:

- Remember that power strips and surge protectors are not the same thing. While some power strips are surge suppressors, be certain you are buying the equipment that matches your needs.
- Be sure you are not overloading the circuit. Know the capacity of the circuit and the power requirements of all the electrical items plugged into the power strip, and all the other outlets on the circuit.
- Surge protectors protect equipment, but they do not protect from the potential hazards of an overloaded circuit. Make sure the electrical load is not too great for the circuit.
- A heavy reliance on power strips in an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed by a licensed electrician where you need them.
- Consider purchasing surge suppressors with cable and phone jacks to provide the same protection to your phone, fax, computer modem and television.

Ergonomic Gardening Tips

"Gardening can be an ergonomic nightmare," explains Josh Kerst, vice president and ergonomics engineer at Humantech. Maintaining awkward movements and body positions – such as bending and twisting – for long periods of time eventually can wear out the body and cause discomfort. If you have done any amount of gardening, you have felt it: sore wrists, low back pain, neck pain or just all-around body aches.

Gardening should not hurt. As a gardening enthusiast himself, Kerst outlines some common things gardeners should do to prevent injuries.

Gardeners should know that having the right tools is key to maintaining the energy required to work outside and to remain injury-free.

- To avoid lifting, rake leaves onto a canvas tarp. When the tarp is full, pull it to the desired location and unload it.
- Always use gloves (knee pads can be used too) to provide padding and to prevent cuts and scrapes. Gloves should be form-fitting; thin gloves are preferred. Too much padding will reduce grip strength.
- Use ergonomic tools, but be aware that just because the tool is labeled "ergonomic" does not mean it is. If the tool feels good in the hand, it probably is.
- Pay attention to handle diameter, size and weight. Telescopic and pistol-grip handles require less energy to perform work; a curved handle provides more leverage with less wrist stress because it is designed to fit the natural curve of the hand.
- Maintain tools by keeping them sharp. A dull blade will require more effort and force and could lead to injury.

Keep Your Work in the "Comfort Zone"

According to Kerst, "All work should be kept in the comfort zone (as close to the body as possible) to eliminate or reduce unnecessary movements such as reaching, lifting and extending. The comfort zone is similar to the baseball strike zone (knees to shoulders at roughly an arm's reach distance away from the body).

"The farther you reach from the center of your body, the higher force you will experience," explains Kerst.

Regardless of the task, ergonomics is the practice of fitting the job to the person. Injuries occur when people begin to work outside their capacity. Here are some ways to keep the work in the neutral state:

- Keep elbows below heart level as much as possible. Use of long-handed tools or take periodic breaks to keep your body in a comfortable position.
- Avoid working with your thumbs pointing toward the ground. This arm position "wings" your elbow out to the side, reducing your applied strength and adding stress to the body.
- Work with wrists in a neutral position: straight – in line with the forearm – and with thumbs up. Remember to hold objects with a light grasp or grip.
- Avoid fine-motor repetitive movements such as pinching and pulling (often with the index finger and the thumb).
- Try to limit your continuous extended reaches to fewer than 10 to 15 seconds. Take short breaks between segments to prevent injury and overexertion.
- Minimize the time spent working with your head and neck in an extended position (looking up). Take periodic breaks to avoid fatigue.

Finding ways to keep work in the comfort zone puts our work directly in front of us, where we are strongest, have the best dexterity and visual acuity and can work in neutral postures.

From EHS Today

Why are improperly stored tires hazardous to your health?

Each tire in a yard, if improperly stored, can become a breeding ground for thousands of mosquitoes which can carry life-threatening diseases such as West Nile Virus and encephalitis.

The design of tires provides an ideal nursery for mosquito larvae. Tires fill with water after a rainstorm and retain the water as some of the inside areas of the tires are shaded continuously, preventing evaporation of the trapped water. Tires are somewhat insulated and retain heat for long periods of time that speeds up mosquito egg hatching and larval growth. They also collect leaf litter and debris that provides nutrition for the larvae.

Tires on playgrounds as part of climbing or swinging structures are another potential breeding site. Ensure that the tires, and other children's outdoor play structures have drainage holes and that the holes are kept unblocked by debris, such as leaves, to maintain water flow.

Tire Take Back Day!!!

Saturday, June 17th
8:00 AM-Noon
FREE disposal of up to EIGHT tires at these sites:
Bristol Transfer Station-3125 NYS Route 3 (315) 591-9211
Hannibal Transfer Station-1167 County Route 7 (315)564-5623
Hastings Transfer Station-1391 US Route 11 (315)668-8821
Oswego Transfer Station-700 East Seneca Street (315)349-3439
Pulaski Transfer Station-100 County Route 2A (315)298-6062

Help reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home by emptying standing water from flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, and birdbaths on a regular basis.

Ergonomic Assessment: Christine Body has been doing ergonomic assessments since 1996 and is available to do them here on campus. She can be reached at 312-2770 and would be happy to assist you with any questions or issues.

Have a safety issue or concern you'd like to report? Please contact a member of the Joint Labor Management Health and Safety Committee:

CSEA Members

Fred Matteson-Plumbing
Mark Sierson-Plumbing
Brian Bateman-BTC
Joe Scanlon-BTC
Mike Flack-Custodial
Donna Monette-Custodial
Melana Perkins-Custodial
Dan Hoefer-Electrical
Colleen Dewine-Grounds

Management Representatives

Eric Foertch-EHS
Mary DePentu-Maintenance and Operations
Christine Body-EHS
Nick Scaturro-EHS

June Word Search

For a chance to win a great prize (more like an OK prize, but-hey, it's a PRIZE!), complete the Word Search and send it via e-mail to lisa.drake@oswego.edu OR through Campus Mail: Lisa Drake, 110 Lee Hall. Make sure to put your name on it! The winner for May was Stanley McKelvey. Look for: Poison Ivy, Oak, Sumac, Leaves, Oil, Rash, Blisters, Long Sleeves, Pants, Gloves, Corticosteroids, Lake Ontario, Plastic, Pollution, Microbeads, Debris, Refillable, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Steel, Paper, Aluminum, Glass, Extension Cords, Surge Protectors, Power Strips, Ergonomic, Gardening, Tools, Diameter, Size, Weight, Reaching, Lifting, Extending, Comfort Zone.

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Limit Exercise on Hot Days

Take care when exercising your pet. Adjust intensity and duration of exercise in accordance with the temperature. On very hot days, limit exercise to early morning or evening hours, and be especially careful with pets with white-colored ears, who are more susceptible to skin cancer, and short-nosed pets, who typically have difficulty breathing. Asphalt gets very hot and can burn your pet's paws, so walk your dog on the grass if possible. Always carry water with you to keep your dog from dehydrating.

Dutchism for June

Golf

Hit the ball, walk a while

Gee, I wish it went a mile,

My second shot was not so hot

But par was still attainable

Now to prove I'm in the groove

My third was totally unplayable,

Alas and alack I went into the trap,

Does this sport really beat a nap?