

Quick Take on Safety

Wild Parsnip and Poison Ivy

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Overview: Covers common hazards, recognition and precautions to take around wild parsnip and poison ivy.
- Purpose: Refresh employees about the hazards of wild parsnip and poison ivy, and methods to prevent injuries.
- Preparation: Read and become familiar with this Quick Take. *Change as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your department.*
- Handouts: Quick Review of Safety—Wild Parsnip and Poison Ivy. Print in color if possible

Wild Parsnip and Poison Ivy Hazards

Generally, when we think about hazards at work, plants don't make the list. However, certain plants, such as wild parsnip and poison ivy, can pose hazards, ranging from itchy rashes to painful blistering. Fortunately, many of these hazards can be avoided by learning to identify and either staying away from the plants or wearing appropriate protective equipment, such as gloves and long pants or shirts, to prevent contact. So please pay attention; your health and safety are important to us; we don't want you to get hurt.

Recognition

Two of the most common noxious weeds in Minnesota are wild parsnip (shown at right) and poison ivy (shown on page 2). Both can commonly be found along trails or roads. [*Instructor Prompt:* The photo handouts are particularly helpful here.]

Some features to help identify wild parsnip include

- Hollow grooved stalk with small yellow flowers on a wide flat umbel (upside down umbrella) 2-6 inches across.
- Leaves at the base tend to wrap around the stem.
- Leaves at the base tend to have five to 15 leaflets, but higher up the stalk, they have smaller two to five leaflets. Stems are grooved and resemble celery.
- Is green, unless dead when it turns brown. Either state can cause injury if people contact the sap, though when dead it often dries up.



Wild parsnip

Some features of poison ivy are:

- Grows as a 1 to 2 foot native shrub with three shiny surfaced leaves. May also grow as a vine.
- Leaves are arranged in groups of three attached to a single stem [See image at below]. A good motto is: Leaves of three, leave it be.
- Leaves often appear hairy and may have smooth or jagged edges
- Female plants have small, creamy or tannish berries from August through September that may remain over winter.



Poison ivy



Wild Parsnip Hazards and Prevention

- Avoid contact with the plant, and stay away when possible.
- Contact with the sap of the plant can cause severe blistering and swelling; cover bare skin when working in areas where wild parsnip grows.
- When handling the plant, wear protective clothing, including gloves, long sleeves and goggles or face mask.
- If you contact the plant, cover the exposed area and keep away from sunlight. Wash exposed area thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Report any contact or injuries to a supervisor, and obtain medical treatment if needed.

Poison Ivy Hazards and Prevention

- Avoid contact with the plant, and stay away when possible.
- Contact with the sap and broken parts of the plant may cause blistering or rashes.
- Wear protective clothing, including heavy vinyl gloves with long sleeves if handling. The oil molecules are small and may penetrate rubber gloves.
- Wash clothing and equipment after handling poison ivy, as contact with the oils can still cause reactions up to five years later. For difficult-to-wash equipment, soaps with degreasers, such as dish soap, are effective.
- Avoid breathing in smoke from burning poison ivy, as it may damage lungs and airways.
- If you contact poison ivy, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible, ideally within one hour.
- Report any contact or injuries to a supervisor, and obtain medical treatment if needed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are the activities we do that could expose us to these plants?
- If we come into contact with these plants, what should we do?
- In the past, what specific areas have we found these plants?

Wild Parsnip and Poison Ivy Session Planning and Review

Trainer

Training
Date

Department(s)

TRAINING GOALS

- Inform employees of some of the most common hazards of wild parsnip and poison ivy
- Refresh employees about methods to recognize wild parsnip and poison ivy
- Refresh employees about methods to prevent injury from wild parsnip and poison ivy

RESOURCES

- Minnesota Department of Transportation with the United States Department of Agriculture Plants Database, “Minnesota Noxious Weeds,” DOT.state.mn.us
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture, “Minnesota Noxious Weed List,” MDA.state.mn.us

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

