

# POISON IVY

WHAT YOUR MOTHER NEVER TOLD YOU

ANACARDIACEAE (Cashew Family)

*Rhus radicans* L. (*R. toxicodendron* L., *Toxicodendron radicans* Ktze.). Poison ivy, Poison oak, Poison creeper, Three-leaved ivy, Picry, Mercury. Fig. 69.

Woody perennial; reproducing by seeds and creeping rootstocks. Dry rocky fields, pastures, fence rows, banks and waste places, also in rich alluvial woodlands. Widespread throughout the United States and southern Canada. Native.

The leaves, flowers, fruits and bark of stem and roots of poison ivy are very poisonous to the touch, frequently producing severe inflammation and blisters in susceptible persons.

For prevention of ivy poisoning after contact with the plant,<sup>1, 2</sup> wash the hands, face, or affected parts freely in a solution of 5 per cent iron chloride in a half-and-half mixture of alcohol and water. If this solution is applied either before or immediately after going into a region where poison ivy is known to grow, no harmful effects need be expected. This inexpensive and non-poisonous remedy can be obtained at almost any drug-store. Wash and rinse the skin thoroughly several times. Hot water and ordinary kitchen or laundry soap containing an excess of alkali is best. Do not use soaps containing oils, for the poison is soluble in oils and will, therefore, be spread over other parts of the skin. Make a heavy lather and rinse off repeatedly, at least three or four times.

As remedial measures when poisoning has begun, the following are of value. The application of baking soda, 1 or 2 teaspoonsfuls to a cup of water, generally relieves the pain caused by the inflammation. Soaking in hot water also gives relief. For soothing pain and for preventing the general spread of the inflammation, fluid extract of *Grindelia*, diluted with 6 to 10 parts of water, may be applied with a clean bandage which should be kept moist and frequently changed. Ointments or other remedies containing fatty or oily substances should not be applied until after the poison has exhausted itself. The use of sugar of lead is discouraged since the lead may itself cause poisoning, especially on open pustules. Other remedies are employed with success, but when possible it is usually desirable to consult a physician, especially in bad cases of poisoning.

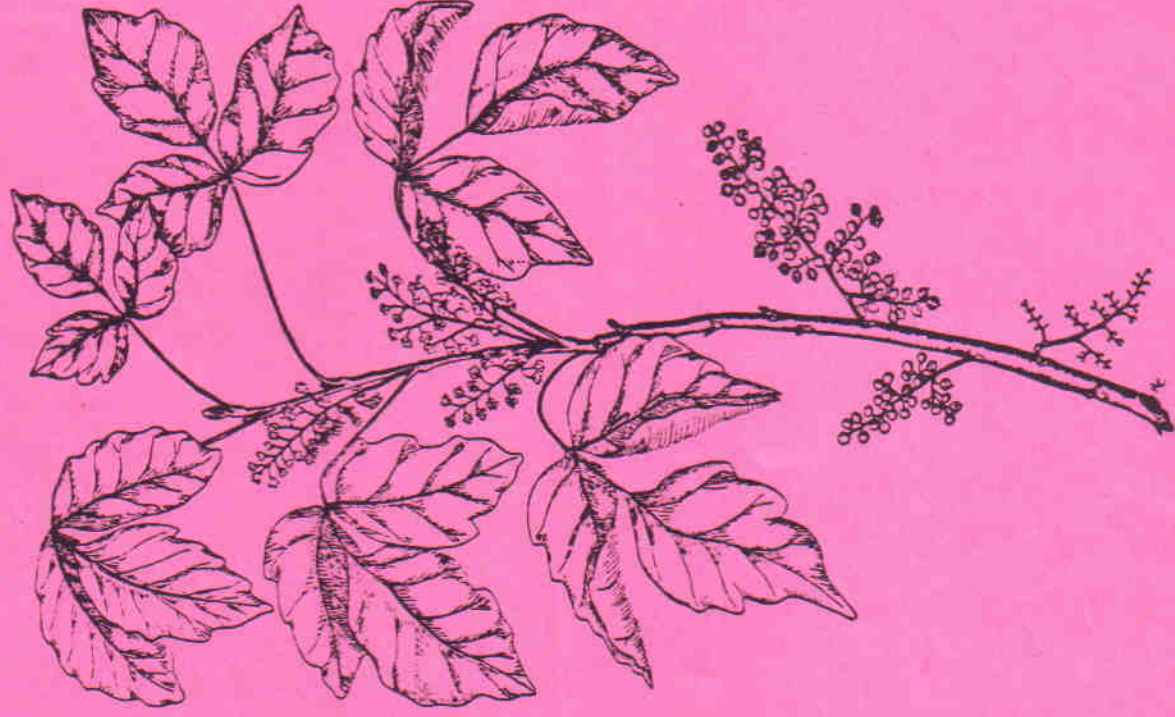


FIG. 69.—POISON IVY, *Rhus radicans*: A branch showing leaves and flower-clusters on the new growth and clusters of berry-like fruits persisting on the growth of the previous year (X 40).