

‘Tis the season for poison oak

Iris Chinook
IVN Contributing Writer

Although you can have an allergic reaction to poison oak any time of the year, spring is an especially dangerous time. According to the American Skin Association, "...about 85 percent of the population is allergic to poison ivy, poison sumac or poison oak, and about 10 to 15 percent are extremely allergic. This is the most common allergic reaction in the U.S., and affects as many as 50 million Americans each year." If you are one of the 10 to 15 percent of people who are highly allergic to urushiol, the oil the plant produces that causes the allergic reaction, a heavy exposure can even be life-threatening. If you belong to the 15 percent of people who are not allergic to urushiol it may be because "...your body doesn't produce CD1a—a protein playing an important role in our immune systems— that triggers a skin-based allergic reaction when we come into contact

with urushiol," according to researcher Jerome Le Nours from the Monash University in Australia.

There are many myths and much misinformation surrounding the treatment of poison oak exposure. For newcomers to this area, what to do if you have an itchy, painful encounter with the plant can be confusing. Local naturopathic physician Margaret Philhower, ND recommends using rubbing alcohol to remove the sticky oil. After the oil is removed, she recommends, "...use of homeopathic remedy rhus toxidendron with 30C potency. Hyland's brand "Poison Oak" tablets also work well. Grindelia herbal tincture applied topically works wonders at healing blisters caused by poison oak."

The dangerous aspect of exposure occurs when someone breathes the smoke of burning plants, precipitating a systemic allergic reaction. The oil is volatilized and inhaled into the lungs. This can happen during wildfire events or



Poison Oak
Toxicodendron pubescens

when a neighbor lights a burn pile containing the plant. According to *Science Daily*, "If poison oak is burned, and the smoke then inhaled, this rash will appear on the lining of the lungs, causing extreme pain and possibly fatal respiratory difficulty."

One prevalent myth is that individuals can be desensitized by eating the leaves of the plant. The truth is that it is very difficult to desensitize an allergic individual to urushiol. Again, according to *Science Daily*, "If poison ivy is eaten, the digestive tract and airways

will be affected, in some cases causing death. Symptoms that include swelling of the throat and eyes and overall swelling of your body, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and sudden wheezing are indicative of a case of systemic poison ivy (or sumac, or oak). Systemic poison ivy is an extreme allergic reaction to the plant oils."

A useful way to think about the invisible oil coating your skin, and how to remove it, is to imagine trying to remove heavy motor oil. The best technique involves dissolving the oil and using friction to scrub the residue away. The University of Kansas' Director of Dermatology. Daniel Aires, MD said he's seeing more cases of extreme poison ivy (oak), even affecting people never before allergic. "There is a growing consensus that a possible explanation is the increase of CO2 in the atmosphere causing changes in the plant." He offers some important do's and don'ts for avoiding and surviving this

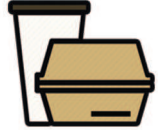
stronger version of urushiol-containing plants. "Oils on clothing or pets can transmit oil. Warm water and soap can help spread oil. Use rubbing alcohol and cold water. Within the first 20 minutes is best to get oil off skin, clothes, tools, etc. For people who can't avoid exposure, pretreatment with products such as Ivy Block can help prevent reaction. Topical steroids need to be reapplied regularly. Hard to treat places such as eyelids, lips, genitals, etc. are more effectively treated by internal steroids." Since rubbing alcohol can build toxicity, especially in people with liver disease, high proof vodka can be used." If alcohol is unavailable, Dawn detergent applied to the skin can be effective is dissolving the oil.

Poison oak is everywhere in Southern Oregon and can take on many different appearances. Find out what it looks like in its seasonal brush and vine forms to avoid contact with the plant.



WILL STAY OPEN!
TO GO ORDERS ONLY
Curbside carry out

Regular Hours
Carlos's 11 am - 9 pm
CJ Coffee 7 am - 7 pm



The **HOLE IN "1" Cafe**

Fresh Soups made daily
Homemade pies by order
Daily Specials
Take out only

Winter Hours
Tuesday - Sunday
8 am - 3 pm
(Closed Monday)

I.V. Golf Club
541-592-3525
25320 Redwood Hwy

Open to Public

Sportsman Tavern

145 Redwood Hwy, Cave Junction, OR 97523
(541) 592-6663



While Sportsman Tavern is closed we are taking the opportunity to deep clean and remodel.

Thank you
to all of our loyal customers!



Oregon Caves Chevron
541-592-3080



Serving the Illinois Valley for 33 years

Complete Auto Truck repair

- Align Tires • Towing • Oil Changes
- Propane • Snacks

Open Everyday 6:00am - 9:30pm

240 N REDWOOD HWY #226
CAVE JUNCTION, OR 97523
541-592-4367



PAPAllc

Providing All Patients Access

The SPOT

Closed until further notice

541-592-5220

No LIVE MUSIC

DELI IS OPEN

CURBSIDE SERVICE
AVAILABLE FOR
TAKEOUT CALL

541-592-5358

Taylor's Country Store

Wild River
HANDCRAFTED FOOD & ALE

No live music

NO DINING

TAKEOUT ONLY

Call 541-592-3556

Sportsman Tavern

CLOSED FOR NOW

BUSY
DEEP CLEANING &
REMODELING
FOR OUR LOYAL CUSTOMERS

KXCJ
105.7 FM

Valley News & Views

Tuesdays

6 - 7 p.m.

streaming at www.kxcj.org

Closed until further notice

@ McGrew's!

Call
541-596-2202