

POISONOUS PLANT!

SURVIVAL CODE



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POISONOUS PLANT!

Compared to the many edible ones, there are few poisonous plants in temperate areas. Learn well the ones shown.

CONTACT POISONS

Contact with Poison Sumac, Poison Ivy and Poison Oak produces severe irritation and rashes. Wash effected parts immediately (see Poisons in Health).

1. **Poison Sumac** (*Toxicodendron vernix*) reaches **2-6m** (6-18ft), hairless, with many oval leaflets in opposite pairs, dark-spotted smooth bark and clusters of white berries; in swamplands in south-eastern North America.



2. **Poison Oak** (*Toxicodendron quercifolium*) resembles Poison Ivy but is smaller, always upright, and with oak leaf-shaped leaflets and white berries, in wooded parts of North America.



3. **Poison Ivy** (*Toxicodendron radicans*) is smaller, **0.6-2.1m** (2-7ft), trailing or upright, with three-part very variable leaves, but always with greenish flowers and white berries; in wooded areas of North America.



4. **Jewelweed** (*Impatiens*), often found near Poison Ivy, with pale yellow or orange spotted flowers and seed pods that pop, provides a juice to ease irritation from contact with these and other plants.



POISONS BY INGESTION

5. **Death Carnas** (*Zigadenus venosus*) reaches 30-60cm (1-2ft), with long, strap-like leaves arising from the base and loose clusters of greenish-white, six-part flowers; in North America, in grassy, rocky and lightly wooded places. DEADLY: do not confuse with Wild Onions or Lilies.



6. **Thorn-apple or Crimson Weed** (*Datura stramonium*) averages 90cm (3ft), with jagged-toothed oval leaves and large solitary trumpet-shaped white flowers and spiny fruits; widespread in most temperate areas and also in the tropics. Sickly smelling. All parts DEADLY poisonous.



7. **Foxgloves** (*Digitalis*) grow to 1.5m (5ft), with a rosette of basal leaves topped by a tall, leafy spike of purple, pink or yellow tube-shaped flowers; widespread in waste and disturbed places. ALL parts are highly toxic, affecting the heart.



8. **Monk's-hood** (*Aconitum*) reaches 1.5m (5ft), leafy, with palm-shaped, deeply segmented leaves and hairy, hood-like purplish-blue or yellow flowers; in damp woods and shady places. The most common kinds have purplish-blue flowers. VERY poisonous.



9. **Hemlock** (*Conium maculatum*) may reach 2m (6ft), much branched, with hollow purple-spotted stems, coarsely toothed leaves, lighter below, dense clusters of tiny white flowers and white roots; in grassy waste places. Bad-smelling. Very poisonous.



10. **Water Hemlocks or Cowbanes** (*Cicuta*) average 0.6-1.3m (2-4ft), branching, with purple-streaked stems, a hollow-chambered rootstock, small 3 lobed, toothed leaflets and clusters of tiny white flowers, always found by water. Smells unpleasant. ONE MOUTHFUL CAN KILL.



11. **Baneberries** (*Actaea*) reach 30- 60cm (1-2ft), with leaves made up of several toothed leaflets, small, usually white flowers clustered at the end of a stem, and white or black berries; mostly in woods. ALL parts cause dizziness, Vomiting and severe internal irritation.



12. **Deadly Nightshade** (*Atropa belladonna*) may reach 1m (6ft), well branched, with oval leaves, solitary, bell-shaped, purplish or greenish flowers and shiny black berries, in woodland and scrub in Eurasia. ALL parts, especially berries, are VERY poisonous.



Some poisonous plants are easy to mistake for food plants if you are not careful in your identification. Do not take risks.

Hemlock and Water Hemlock are the two most important poisonous plants to learn, found in both Eurasia and the Americas in a wide range of country. Both are umbel lifers, of which there are many kinds, and with many tiny flowers in dense clusters, like an umbrella inside-out and difficult to tell apart.

The umbel lifers include some edible plants, but NEVER collect any unless certain they are neither of these two, which can be lethal in very small amounts.

Learn to recognize the following common poisonous plants in addition to those illustrated.

1. **Buttercups** (*Ranunculus*) occur in great variety, from a few centimeters to over a meter tall, in north and south, including far into the Arctic. All have glossy, waxy bright yellow flowers with five or more overlapping petals. AVOID all, they cause severe inflammation of the intestinal tract.
2. **Lupins** (*Lupinus*), 30-90cm (1-3ft) tall, like the garden kind, growing in clearings and grassy places. Often with small leaflets in a palm shape or radiating like the spokes of a wheel, and spikes of 'pea-flowers': blue, violet, occasionally pink white or yellow. Any part can cause fatal inflammation of stomach and intestines.
3. **Vetches** or **Locoweeds** (*Astagalus* and *Oxytropis*), 15-45cm (6-18in) tall, growing in grassland and mountain meadows, usually with many small spear-shaped leaflets in opposite pairs and showy spikes of five-petal led 'pea- flowers': yellowish-white, pink to lavender and purplish. Some are very poisonous. AVOID all.
4. **False Helleborines** (*Veratrum*) 60cm-2.6m (2-8V2ft), grow in wet, swampy places, some species in grassy ones. Oval ribbed leaves resemble a Lily-of-the-Valley's, drooping clusters of whitish or greenish-yellow flowers. Can be lethal.
5. **Henbane** (*Hyoscyamus niger*) medium to large, growing on bare ground, often near sea (Europe). Sticky hairs, toothed oval leaves (upper ones unstaked), creamy flowers streaked purple. Unpleasant smell. Deadly poisonous.
6. **POISONOUS BERRIES Canadian Moonseed** (*Menispermum canadense*) North American vine-

1 like climber, clusters of soft black berries. Could be mistaken for Wild Grape but lacks tendrils and has only a single crescent-1 like seed in each berry.

7. **Nightshades** (Solanum) medium to large, untidy, bushy plants liking scrubby places, leaves usually long- stalked, spear-shaped. Berries ripen from green to black, red, yellow or white. Plants producing similar but edible berries are usually more compact and woody, the berries smaller and more numerous. If in any doubt assume to be poisonous and AVOID.
8. **Virginia Creeper** (Parthenocissus quinquefolia) vine-like North American climber (introduced to Europe). Long- stalked palm-shaped leaves, toothed leaflets, tendril and clusters of small blue berries, smaller than wild grapes. No plant with edible blue berries is vine-like and with tendrils.
9. **Buckthorns** (Rhamnus), shrubs sometimes small trees growing in scrubby and woody places, sometimes damp. Leaves oval, finely toothed; berries black and bitter tasting, clustered along stems. Can be violently purgative.

There are many field guides available which will help you extend your knowledge of temperate plants, detailing many local forms.