

About poison oak

Atlantic poison oak and Western poison oak are closely related. Atlantic Poison (Toxicodendron pubescens) oak grows up to 3 feet tall and can be found growing in forests, thickets, and dry, sandy fields throughout the eastern U.S.

Western poison oak (Toxicodendron diversilobum) is found on the Pacific Coast of North America and is common from southern Canada to Baja California. Often found in oak woodlands and Douglas fir forests, it can also be found in damp, shady areas near running water and out of direct sunlight.

All parts of these plants contain urushiol, which causes severe dermatitis in some individuals (approximately 85% of humans will develop allergic reactions). Common symptoms are an irritating, itchy rash, often accompanied by blistering of the skin.

Poison oak is not an oak but was named so from its leaves' resemblance to white oak. Poison oak and [poison ivy](#) are members of the sumac family (Anacardiaceae). The plants do not contain a poison but rather a potent allergen in oils of the plant. Oils can be easily transferred from one part of the body to another, from one person to another, from a pet, or from clothing. A common saying helps one to remember the general description of the irritant plants, "leaves of three, let it be".

See also [poison ivy](#), [poison sumac](#).