

# Poisonous plants

## Explain dangers

When working in vegetated areas of Ontario, you might come into contact with poisonous plants that can cause you harm.

Several poisonous plants grow in Ontario:

- **Wild parsnip:** An invasive plant that typically grows along roadsides and unmaintained areas and produces yellow flowers.
- **Giant hogweed:** An invasive, umbrella-shaped plant that produces small, white flowers.
- **Poison ivy:** Often found in trail openings, forests, and meadows, the plant forms the shape of three leaflets.
- **Pokeweed:** Typically found in meadows and waste areas, this plant has a distinct red stem and large egg-shaped leaves.

You can be exposed to poisonous plants through inhalation (i.e., breathing), skin contact, eye contact, or ingestion (i.e., swallowing). These plants contain toxic compounds found in the sap of their stems, leaves, or flowers. These toxic compounds may become absorbed by your skin and energized when exposed to light from the sun on both sunny and cloudy days.

Symptoms of exposure to poisonous plants include:

- **Wild parsnip:** Itchy rash, blisters, and skin discoloration
- **Giant hogweed:** Itchy rash, light sensitivity, and skin burns
- **Poison Ivy:** Itchy rash after contact
- **Pokeweed:** Sweating, blurred vision, abdominal pains, or vomiting (if ingested)

## Identify controls

- Use EDDMapS (EDDmaps.org), a digital tool that marks reported sightings of poisonous plants on a map, alerting you to poisonous plants you might encounter at work.
- If you work outdoors, make sure you are able to identify common poisonous plants that grow in Ontario. Notify your supervisor if you

are concerned about a plant on your worksite.

- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when working outside or in high-risk areas. PPE may include:
  - Rubber gloves
  - Long-sleeved shirts
  - Long pants
  - Eye protection
  - Long socks
- Wear disposable clothing, if possible. If you use non-disposable clothing, be sure to launder it before you wear it again.
- Wash any exposed skin with soap and cold water as soon as possible.
- If you use herbicides, always read the label for proper application and use.
- Do not burn wild parsnip plants. Let the stems dry out completely before handling.
- Contact your local municipality to determine whether plants can be dumped at a landfill.

## Demonstrate

Review images of poisonous plants with your crew so they are able to identify different plant species. Refer to the Ontario Invasive Plant Council's website: [ontarioinvasiveplants.ca](http://ontarioinvasiveplants.ca).