Poison Ivy and Sumac

or,

Why Batman Wont Bring his Family to Takayama

by

Rod Thomas

Cabin 12

Poison Ivy and Sumac

There are 3 poisonous plants at Takayama and they are all members of the Sumac family.

1. Poison Ivy (蔦漆, Tsutaurushi, Rhus ambigua). This is a climber and is found on the ground and around the base of trees. It is a colonising plant and often grows over dead logs and stumps.

And two small trees;

2.Lacquer Tree (山漆, Yamaurushi, Rhus trichocarpa).

3."White Glue Tree" (白膠木, Nurude, Rhus javanica).

Treatment

The poison is a wax on the surface of the leaves and stems and works by contact with the skin. It causes a strong allergic response in most people. Areas where the skin is thin like the face and underside of arms are more sensitive. If you think you might have touched it you should wash in strong soap. After contact the affected area will itch and if scratched will swell into a raised red rash. The rash may take hours or a few days to appear. Continued scratching makes it spread over the body. If you can avoid scratching it will subside in 3-4 days. The only effective treatment is hydrocortisone cream prescribed by a doctor. All 3 plants go by the name "urushi" in common Japanese and clinics around here are used to treating it. If you treat yourself (or your children) you shouldn't confuse urushi poisoning with impetigo ("tobihi" in Japanese) which is a series of raised watery itchy infectious spots that also spread when scratched.

You cannot get the rash just by being near poison ivy. Nor can you get it from someone else's rash. Nor by looking at these photos.

Identification

1. Poison Ivy (蔦漆, Tsutaurushi, Rhus ambigua) has compound leaves with three leaflets. The leaflets are often edged in red and

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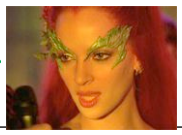

the stalks are often red, especially where the leaflets join together. The leaflets unfortunately are variable in size and shape depending on their environment:

There is a strong central vein from which others veins branch at regular intervals. The area between veins appears raised. The middle leaflet has a longer stalk than the two side ones. The leaflet edges can be smooth or toothed but serrations but don't exceed 5 per side.

The plant propagates by thin underground stems until it reaches a tree which it then climbs. It

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flowers in May/ June with pale yellow racemes.

Here are some plants that are <u>not</u> poison ivy:

None of these have the leaflet structure or shape of poison ivy.

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2.Lacquer Tree (山漆, Yamaurushi, Rhus trichocarpa)

This is a small tree growing to about 5m common at Tak. It has compound oddly pinnate (=featherlike) leaves. Each leaf has 11,13 or 15 leaflets. Like poison ivy the stalks are often red. In shade the leaflets are crowded together and radiate like spokes from a wheel. In well-lit areas space between leaves is more extended.

3."White Glue Tree" (白膠木, Nurude, Rhus javanica)

This is similar to the Lacquer Tree above except that the leaves have 'fins' on the stalks between the leaflets. (Don't confuse this with the Winged Spindle, "Nishikigi" which has fins on its branches and an even number of leaflets). Nurude is poisonous to fewer people than the other sumacs.

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Other similar trees

Not every tree with pinnate leaves or red stalks is sumac. Here is how to distinguish some of the others;

A= Angelica Tree (spines on the leaves and branches), B= Walnut (long fleshy leaflets), C= Red Elderberry (thin pointed leaflets), D= Cherry (alternate leaves and red stalks), E= Nurude, F=Lacquer Tree, G=Wisteria, H= Nishikigi (evenly pinnate)

Control

Poison ivy cannot be controlled by cutting; it needs to be pulled up because the runners are underground. For this reason it is very hard to eradicate. The runners break easily and unless they are all pulled up will re-grow.

Lower branches of sumac trees can be trimmed so that they are out of the way and the smaller trees can be cut down.

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Poison ivy and sumac can't be burnt because the smoke is poisonous. Instead let it dry out and then bury it.
If you are clearing poison ivy you should wear long sleeves and pants and elbow-length gloves (available in the shed). After you use the gloves please wash them (before taking them off) in strong detergent so that they can be handled.
We should try to eradicate poison ivy from Takayama. While we have to remove it wherever it poses a danger, piecemeal removal will not be effective. We need to keep an increasing area completely free from poison ivy: 'clear and hold' is a more effective strategy than 'search and destroy'.
As far as I know this area is now clear of poison ivy (June 08). Please add to this. The challenge is to keep it clear.