SUMMER PLANT IRRITANTS

When outdoors this summer, watch out for plants that can cause rashes, blisters, and more! Here, we look at these plants’ itchy compounds and the remedies for reactions they cause.

**Rashes**

- **Poison Ivy**
  - Some plants cause rashes on contact. Poison ivy leaves contain urushiol, an oily mixture of compounds that trigger allergic reactions on the skin. Urushiol is also found in poison oak and mangoes.
  - ![Poison Ivy Urushiol Catechols](image)

- **European Ivy**
  - Poison ivy grows in North America and in parts of China, but not in Europe. The common ivy species in Europe causes milder allergic reactions due to the presence of falcarinol in the sap.
  - ![Falcarinol](image)

**Phytophotodermatitis**

- **Giant Hogweed**
  - Some plants contain furanocoumarins, which can cause a condition called phytophotodermatitis. When these compounds get on skin and are exposed to ultraviolet light from the sun, they react with the bases in our DNA to cause blisters and skin damage.
  - ![Psoralen](image)

- **Cow Parsnip**
  - ![Bergapten](image)

**Treatments**

- **Cortisol**
  - No matter which plant you’ve bumped into, the best initial action is to wash exposed skin with soap and water to remove plant sap and oils. Don’t expose the affected area to sunlight.
  - ![Prednisone](image)

- **Topical steroids**, such as cortispolin hydrocortisone cream, help relieve mild dermatitis caused by these plants. **Antihistamine tablets** may reduce itching.

- **For more severe reactions**, a doctor might prescribe oral steroids such as prednisone to reduce inflammation.

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