

EVENTS CALENDAR			For the most complete listing of natural resource education events, visit the on-line events calendar at http://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu		
Contact	Date	Location	Event	Time	Fee
DCR	July, Aug., & Sept.	Virginia's State Parks	A variety of events and activities For a complete list, visit: www.dcr.virginia.gov/parks	Varies	Varies
MP	Year-round	State-wide	Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer basic training www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/chapters.html	Varies	Varies
ABFFC	July 12-14	Morgantown, WV	The Future of Ginseng and Forest Botanicals This 3-day symposium will provide a forum to bring together a diverse array of stakeholders involved in the management and regulation of forest botanicals in Appalachia.	All day	Varies
EP	July 19-20	Charlottesville	Teaching Trees This 2-day professional development workshop will introduce middle and high school science teachers to pine and hardwood forestry, sustainable forest management, and forest products.	8:30 - 4	\$50
ABFFC	Aug. 11-13	Wise	Forest Site Assessment and Planning This field-based workshop will include assessing site suitability for forest farming, propagation, and Good Agricultural Practices training.	11:00 Friday - 1:00 Sunday	Varies
JG	Aug. 18-20	Abingdon	SW Virginia Beginning Landowners Weekend Retreat This weekend retreat program was designed for those new to landownership or new to managing woodlands. A combination of classroom, field trip, and hands-on activities will introduce participants to the concepts of good woodland management in a relaxed atmosphere.	Sat. 8 - 7:30; Sun. 8 - 1	TBA
JG JF NC	Aug. 22 & 29 Oct. 17 & 24 Nov. TBA	Radford Pittsylvania SE Virginia	Preparing for Generation NEXT Are you prepared to pass the environmental and heirloom values rooted in your forest to the next generation? By researching and planning ahead of time, you can ensure your wishes are met and minimize the financial costs and emotional challenges while securing your woodland legacy.	12 :30 - 7	TBA
JG	Sept. 22-24	Providence Forge	SE Virginia Beginning Landowners Weekend Retreat See SW Virginia Beginning Landowners Weekend Retreat above for details.	Sat. 8 - 7:30; Sun. 8 - 1	TBA
SPI	Oct. 3-5	Galloway, NJ	4th Biennial Shortleaf Pine Conference Join natural resource professionals and landowners by New Jersey's own Pine Barrens. The conference will feature sessions by 20+ shortleaf experts and an in-person look at forest restoration and land management practices.	All day	\$125 full conference
AD BW JF NC	October	Augusta Pulaski Buckingham Suffolk	Fall Forestry & Wildlife Field Tours Join fellow landowners, natural resource professionals, and interested citizens on tours of active woodland & wildlife management. Details available in July. Locations are tentative.	8: 00 - 4:30	TBA*
*meals included; **meals and lodging included					
EVENT CONTACTS					
Contact	Name/Affiliation		Phone	e-mail/website	
DCR	Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation		804/786-1712	www.dcr.virginia.gov	
MP	Michelle Prysby		434/872-4580	www.virginiamasternaturalist.org	
ABFFC	Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition		http://www.appalachianforestfarmers.org/		
EP	Ellen Powell		434/977-6555	ellen.powell@dof.virginia.gov	
JG	Jennifer Gagnon		540/231-6391	jgagnon@vt.edu	
JF	Jason Fisher		434/476-2147	jasonf@vt.edu	
NC	Neil Clark		757/653-2572	neclark@vt.edu	
SPI	Shortleaf Pine Initiative		http://shortleafpine.net		
AD	Adam Downing		540-948-6881	adowning@vt.edu	
BW	Bill Worrell		276/889-8056	bworrell@vt.edu	

You ARE From Around Here! Opportunistic Native Species of the Quarter: Poison Ivy

By: Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech

Each quarter I find inspiration for selecting a species to write about for this column. I found this quarter’s inspiration in my own backyard. Those of you who receive my monthly e-Update know I have an on-going battle with the exotic invasive English ivy in my flower beds. What I didn’t share was that another ivy was also lurking in the flower beds....the poison kind. Unfortunately, since it was before leaf-out, I wasn’t aware of its presence as I rototilled through the root systems. Wearing shorts and a tank top. The next morning, I was aware.

I’m no stranger to poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). As a kid, I refused to wear shoes in the summer – resulting in months of poison ivy-covered feet. I’ve worked in areas where the poison ivy/oak reach heights of over 5’ by August. I’ve shared an office with herpetology technicians who spent late winter days innocently digging through poison ivy roots to create pitfall traps, and regretfully heading to the Baker County Health Clinic for steroid shots the next. I routinely get poison ivy from petting my dogs. I know I am allergic. I know it can get bad. But never in my life have I experienced the type of reaction I had this spring. I finally gave in and went to the doctor. She took one look and said “You need steroids.” Inspiring, right?

Plants like poison ivy are native but act invasive. Depending on where you live in Virginia, the list of these types of plants can include Virginia creeper, trumpet creeper, black locust, eastern redcedar, redbud, sweetgum, wild grapes, Virginia pine, and blackberry. I’m sure many of you can add to this list. But how can this be? Aren’t all native plants good plants? While I’ll argue I’d much rather have an infestation of native Virginia creeper than exotic multiflora rose (of course, I have both, so no need to choose), natives that act invasive can be damaging and costly.

My tendency is to call these species native invasives. However, according to the USDA NRCS, only exotic or introduced plants can be called invasive. They call invasive-acting native plants opportunistic native plants. Since everything in the world needs an acronym, let’s call them ONPs. An ONP is a native plant that is able to take advantage of disturbance to the soil or to existing vegetation and spreads quickly and out-competes other plants on the disturbed site. Using this definition, all ONPs are not bad. In fact, many ONPs are great for reclaiming disturbed sites, protecting soils, and providing wildlife habitat after a disturbance. A year-old clearcut filled with blackberries comes to mind.

But some ONPs can be problematic for woodland owners. For this article, I’ll just focus on my recent nemesis, poison ivy. Poison ivy is in the *Anacardiaceae* (cashew) family (which also includes mango and sumacs). Poison ivy’s scientific name is quite descriptive. *Toxicodendron* means poison tree; *radicans* means bringing forth roots, a reference to the hair-like aerial roots that grow on the twigs.



Opportunistic native plants on my property include eastern redcedar, Virginia creeper, and poison ivy. Photo by: Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech.

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Of course, poison ivy isn’t all bad. In fact, the fruits are a great source of food for many wildlife species including birds, deer, and insects. The leaves turn a brilliant red early in the fall. And the pollen is a major component of honey. So removal efforts should be concentrated in areas where you or your family are most likely to come into contact with it. The poison ivy in remote areas can be left alone.

How to identify poison ivy:

Form: Typically a woody, hairy, perennial vine that either carpets the ground or climbs up trees; may also be in the form of a small shrub. Some poison ivy plants climb right away and others do not. Individual populations of these plants often contain a mix of climbing and non-climbing plants.

Leaves: Alternately arranged compound leaves made up of three leaflets (so the saying “leaves of three, let it be” would be more accurately stated as “leaflets of three...”); leaf margins can be smooth, wavy, toothed, or lobed. Shiny green above, paler below.

Flowers: Small, yellowish-green, in clusters; bloom late spring into early summer.

Fruits: Greenish-white, round drupes, ¼” in diameter, hanging clusters, ripe in late summer.

Twigs: Slender gray to red-brown, slightly fuzzy or smooth, slender aerial roots; older twigs become densely covered with aerial roots and look hairy.



The shape of poison ivy leaflets varies quite a bit, from oak-shaped (left) to smooth (center). But, they will always occur in threes. Small aerial roots tend to give poison ivy vines a hairy look (right). Photos (from left to right) by: Paul Wray, Iowa State University, Mark Czarnota, University of Georgia, and the Ohio State Weed Lab, The Ohio State University.

How to control poison ivy:

Mechanical: For light infestations, individual plants can be dug up. Wear long sleeves, pants, and gloves for this activity (trust me!). Wash your clothes with an urushiol-removing formulation. Products that shield your skin, like Ivy Block*, are also available. You may also repeatedly cut plants back to ground level. Repeated cutting will deplete root resources and eventually eliminate sprouting.

Chemical: Use an herbicide that contains glyphosate (apply 2 weeks before or 2 weeks after full bloom), or triclopyr (apply after leaves are fully expanded in spring and before leaf color changes), or a 3-way herbicide that contains 2, 4-D amine, dicamba and mecoprop (apply in late spring/early summer). These will also kill desired species, so use sparingly. To minimize effects on desired species, you may cut the vines and paint the cut surfaces or paint the herbicide mixture directly on the leaves. If no desirable species are present, you may broadcast spray. Repeated applications may be necessary.

Biological: Goats may be a good option for you. There are a few rent-a-goat options available. Since goats also eat many desirable species, have an assessment done to help ensure these are protected.

Right now, I am very keen on the idea of buying some goats to come clean up our hedgerows and edges. We have problems in these areas, not only with ONPs, but also with exotic invasives such as Japanese honeysuckle and multiflora rose. Of course, this will add more animals to our household and make finding a pet sitter even more difficult.

One last poison ivy story. There are a number of rites of passage for forestry students. One of them is dendrology class (tree identification). A favorite pastime of dendrology instructors is to have students identify a large tree covered in poison ivy. As the instructor stands back and laughs maniacally, students will unwittingly examine the poison ivy leaves, thinking they belong to the larger tree. Thankfully, my dendrology instructor was kind enough to stop students from actually tasting the leaves.

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