

# WATCH OUT FOR...

## Poison Ivy and Stinging Nettle!

### Poison Ivy

*Toxicodendron radicans*

#### Identification Features:

- ALTERNATE leaves.
- PALMATELY COUMPOUND leaves, with 3 irregularly TOOTHED leaflets. Leaflets are OVAL shaped.
- Poison ivy can grow as a groundcover, vine, or shrub.
- The vine has a hairy appearance.
- Its small flowers bloom in Spring and are green or white.
- Berries are small and whitish gray and grow in clusters.



Poison Ivy – leaves of 3

#### Habitat:

- NATIVE to Pennsylvania
- Can live almost anywhere. Dry or moist sites. Woods or fields. Roadsides and paths.

#### Wildlife Value:

- At least 75 species of birds eat the fruits and seeds of poison ivy. These birds are not allergic to the oil. Poison ivy berries are an important food source for over-wintering birds in Pennsylvania.
- Mammals including bears, deer, muskrats, rabbits, squirrels, mice, and rats eat the leaves, stems, and fruits of poison ivy.

#### Human Concerns:

- May cause skin reactions for humans who come in contact with any part of the plant including the leaves, stem, flowers, fruit, and roots. The skin reactions can be redness, itching and/or blistering as a result of an allergic reaction within the affected human's body to the oil, urushiol, found on all parts of the poison ivy plant. Poison ivy is generally removed where humans may come in contact with it.

Leaves of 3, leave them be



**Poison Ivy  
Hairy Vine**



**Poison Ivy  
Flowers**



**Poison Ivy  
Berries**

# Stinging Nettle

*Urtica dioica*

## Identification Features:

- Perennial wildflower that grows upright 3 ½ - 6 feet tall. Grows in colonies and is present all of Spring and Summer.
- OPPOSITE leaves.
- SIMPLE leaves, OVATE to LANCE shaped with a HEART-SHAPED base. Leaves have coarsely TOOTHED margins and are coated with stinging hairs.
- Stems also contain stinging hairs.
- Flowers throughout Spring and Summer. Flowers grow in CATKINS at the base of the leafstalk. They are whitish green and are not easily seen or noticed.
- Fruits are small and egg-shaped and ripen in Spring.
- Plant has the ability to grow from seeds and also from its root system.



Stinging Nettle

## Habitat:

- NATIVE to Pennsylvania.
- Prefers moist areas and can be found in waste places, riverbanks, fence rows and roadsides and paths near water.

## Wildlife Value:

- Black bears will strip the young plants of their leaves in the Spring and white-tailed deer will occasionally feed on nettle leaves.
- Many species of butterflies and ladybugs will eat the leaves.
- Many species of birds will eat their seeds.

## Human Value:

- Stinging Nettle has a long history of human use as fiber, food, and medicine.

## Human Concerns:

- The stinging hairs on the leaves and stems rapidly cause skin irritation when touched. The skin irritation includes welting, blistering, itching, burning, and reddening. The stinging hairs are hollow “needles” that inject a strong irritant (a combination of chemicals) into the skin.



## Stinging Nettle Skin Irritation



**Stinging Nettle  
Stinging Hairs  
on  
Underside of Leaf  
and  
Stem**



**Stinging Nettle  
Catkins**