

Leaves of Three

Poison ivy is similar in appearance to several common plants, but the pruritic, erythematous rash it can produce in those who unwittingly make contact is distinct. Can you identify these backyard banes, not all of which are benign?

Match the plant to the photo by letter

a. Boxelder
b. Skunkbush

c. Poison ivy
d. Boston ivy

e. American red raspberry
f. Virginia creeper



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Jennifer Anderson, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database.



Robert H. Mohlenbrock, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA SCS. *Southern Wetland Flora: Field Office Guide to Plant Species*. Fort Worth, TX: South National Technical Center; 1991.



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USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Herman DE, et al. *North Dakota Tree Handbook*. Bismarck, ND: USDA NRCS ND State Soil Conservation Committee; NDSU Extension and Western Area Power Administration; 1996.

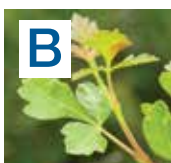


Robert H. Mohlenbrock, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA NRCS. *Northeast Wetland Flora: Field Office Guide to Plant Species*. Chester, PA: Northeast National Technical Center; 1995.

ANSWERS



D **Boston ivy** (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*), also known as *cottage ivy*, *Japanese ivy*, *Japanese creeper*, *Boston creeper*, *grape ivy*, and *woodbine*, is technically considered an invasive plant species. Originally native to Japan, it has been grown across the United States from Boston to Dallas. A member of the grape family, this deciduous perennial vine has glossy leaves that are 3-lobed; new growth is bronzy to reddish, deep green in summer, and bright red in the fall. Easily mistaken for poison ivy, every Boston ivy leaflet is attached to the vine by a stalk. Only the terminal leaflet in poison ivy has a stalk.



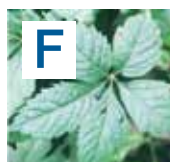
B **Skunkbush** (*Rhus trilobata*) is a deciduous shrub in the sumac family. The common names, including *polecat bush*, *stinking sumac*, *squawbush*, *squawberry*, *basketbush*, *sourberry*, *lemonade sumac*, and *three-leaved sumac*, either derive from the odor of the leaves (especially when bruised) or reflect how Native Americans used the plant (eg, food, beverage, medicine, material for basket weaving). The plant is native to western North America from Saskatchewan and Alberta, across Texas and California, and into Mexico. The leaves are unstalked and compound, containing 3 shiny leaflets of various sizes with coarsely toothed margins. In the summer, the foliage is shiny green, turning orange or reddish in the fall. In the same family as poison ivy, skunkbush bears red, hairy berries, while poison ivy berries are whitish or yellowish.



C A member of the sumac family, **poison ivy** (*Toxicodendron radicans*), also known as *Eastern poison ivy*, is native throughout the United States except Alaska, Hawaii, and parts of the West Coast. Weedy or invasive, this perennial vine or small shrub can be found growing on the ground or climbing on low plants, trees, and poles. Shiny or dull, each compound leaf has 3 glossy leaflets, with smooth or toothed edges. Leaves are reddish in spring, green in summer, and yellow, orange, or red in fall. It may have greenish-white flowers and whitish-yellow berries. Poison ivy's appearance can vary greatly, but in all cases, it has compound leaves that consist of 3 leaflets.



A Native to North America, **boxelder** (*Acer negundo*), also known as *ash-leaf maple* and *three-leaf maple*, has been used extensively by Native Americans for medicinal purposes—although, it is also a severe allergen. Unlike most other American maples, boxelder has compound leaves ranging from 6 to 8 in long, with 3 to 5 (sometimes 7) irregularly toothed leaflets. Young seedlings of the boxelder bear a striking resemblance to poison ivy and are often mistaken for it. Distinctively, however, its leaves are directly opposite each other on the twigs, while those of poison ivy are alternate.



F Also known as *woodbine*, *false grapes*, *American ivy*, *five-leaved ivy*, and *thicket creeper*, **Virginia creeper** (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is a native, fast-growing, perennial, woody vine relative of the grape that may climb or trail along the ground. Its distribution includes eastern North America, as far west as Kansas. The leaves are compound, containing 5 leaflets, ranging in size from 2 to 6 in, with toothed margins. The leaflets are red when they first emerge but turn green as they mature. In the fall, leaves turn a bright red to maroon color. Virginia creeper berries are highly toxic to humans and may be fatal if eaten. Its sap can also cause skin irritation in some people. Virginia creeper is often confused with poison ivy because very young plants may have some leaflets that appear in threes. However, a clear distinction between the species is that poison ivy has 3 leaflets and Virginia creeper has 5.



E A member of the rose family, the **American red raspberry** (*Rubus idaeus*) is a native North American species found throughout most of the temperate regions of the world. Also known as *black-haired red raspberry*, *smoothleaf red raspberry*, and *grayleaf raspberry*, this perennial, deciduous shrub has pinnately compound leaves with 3 to 5 leaflets. The flowers are white to greenish white and drooping and occur in single or in small grapelike clusters. The fruit, which matures from July through September, is a red raspberry (rounded, 2 cm long, and broad). Although often confused with poison ivy, the red raspberry shrub sports copious thorns, while poison ivy has none. **CR**

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