

a rejuvenation or tonic. Following up on this lead perhaps, the USP listed the leaves of *R. toxicodendron* as a stimulant and narcotic. Potawatomi poulticed pounded roots onto swellings. Some say that drinking impatiens tea serves as a preventitive, while others keep frozen tea on hand to rub the dermatitis if the preventitive did not work. "The idea that American Indians chewed a leaf of poison-ivy to confer immunity is a myth that has never been documented."²⁷⁸ I would prefer drinking the milk of a goat (but not milking her, as the poison is transmitted on animal hairs) that has eaten poison oak as the folkloric preventative.

Contains urushiol and ureshenol (3-[8-pentadecenyl]-brenzcatechin), the latter probably the worst dermatogen (leaves contain 3.3%, the twigs, 1.6%, the unripe fruits, 3.6%). Also present: the flavone derivatives myricetin, quercetin, kaempferol, fisetin (C₁₅H₁₀O₆), up to 25% tannins, gallotannic acid, gallotannic methylester, and rhamnose. Fruits contain he-neicosandicarboxylic acid (C₂₃H₄₄O₄), the fruit walls with myristic- and palmitic-acids as the chief fatty acids. The seed oil contains oleic and linoleic acids.³³ The poisons are not volatile and cannot be contracted "out of the air", but tiny droplets (nonvolatilized) may be transmitted in the smoke of burning poison ivy. Dry seeds of *R. radicans* contain 10.6% protein and 22.4% fat.²¹

Toxicity — The syndrome has been known since the days of primitive Indian cultures. Natural immunity is originally present in all persons, but is reduced to one or another threshold of sensitivity by contact with the poison. A dermatitis is manifested by reddened and itchy skin in mild cases to blisters which exude serum in severe cases. Mucous and alimentary canal membranes may be affected; serious gastric upset, even death, may result from ingestion of leaves or fruits. Eating a leaf, contrary to many old wives' tales, does *not* confer immunity. Infection or other complications may bring about death on occasion even when only the skin is affected.¹⁴

To the physician — Kingsbury suggests topical treatment with patent lotions and creams. This treatment is symptomatic only; there is no known cure. In severe cases, physicians administer ACTH or cortisone derivative under carefully controlled conditions. Injections should generally be avoided since they produce sporadic results, often disastrous — especially when administered during an attack.¹⁴ Indian herbal "remedies" for poison oak and ivy included *Astragalus nitidus* (Cheyenne), *Fagus grandifolia* (Rappahannock), *Grindelia robusta* (Pacific Coast Indians), *Hedeoma pulegioides*, *Impatiens balsamifera* (Meskwaki, Potawatomi), and *Lepidium virginicum* (Menominee), as well as *Atropa*, *Bryonia*, *Cornus*, *Grindelia*, *Pycnanthemum*, or *Verbena*.⁴³