**Objective: Identify plants that can cause skin irritations and ways to avoid skin irritations.**

**Trainer’s Note**

Many plants can cause skin irritations, not just poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac.
For this module:

 • Review the information below on types of skin irritations and ways to avoid them.

 • Ask workers to describe skin irritations they have experienced.

 • Review the important points.

 • Have workers take the True/False quiz to check their learning.

**Background**

Many plants can cause skin irritations in humans. Some workers may be more sensitive to certain plants than other workers. Generally, there are five categories — poison plants, allergenic plants (and plant parts), skin irritant plants, stinging plants, and thorn plants.

* **Poison plants** include poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. They all contain a toxin called urishiol. This toxin is present in the sap of the plant. Touching this type of plant can cause skin rashes and blisters. See the Tailgate Safety Training module *Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, and Poison Sumac* for more detail.
* **Allergenic plants** (and plant parts) include, among others, orchids, tulip bulbs, chrysanthemums, and dahlias. They cause allergic reactions in some people. The pollen in these plants can cause hay fever or asthma.
* **Skin irritant plants** include, among others, poinsettias, penciltrees, daffodils, hyacinths, and buttercups. These plants can cause skin irritations.
* **Stinging plants** have nettles. Touching a nettle can cause a toxic reaction. However, the reaction does not last long and has no lasting effect.
* **Thorn plants** include, among others, roses, blackberry and raspberry bushes, and black locust and honey locust trees. Infection can result from an embedded thorn. A scratch can also cause an infection especially if dirt gets into the scratch. See the Tailgate Safety Training module *Thorn Bushes* for more detail.

**How to Avoid Skin Irritations**

* If you handle plants, wear gloves, a long-sleeve shirt, and long pants. Wear work shoes or boots. Do not wear open-toed shoes or sandals.
* Never burn plants that may be toxic. Toxins can be present in the smoke.
* Learn what problem plants grow in your area and how to identify them.
* If you touch a poisonous plant, obtain treatment immediately. See the Tailgate Safety Training module *Poison Ivy, Poison Sumac, and Poison Oak* for more detail.
* Never eat wild berries or plant leaves.
* After handling plants, always wash your hands and other exposed skin before eating, drinking, smoking, or going to the bathroom.
* Wash your clothes separately in hot water. Clean your shoes with rubbing alcohol and water.
* If you have a severe reaction to a plant, such as a rash or blisters, see a doctor.

**Review These Important Points**

* Learn to recognize what problem plants look like, such as dahlias, hyacinths, daffodils, and blackberry bushes.
* Wear proper clothing to lessen the chance of plants touching your skin.
* Always wash your clothing separately in hot water.
* Never eat wild berries or plant leaves.
* Never burn plants that may be toxic. Toxins can be present in the smoke.
* Obtain treatment immediately if you develop a rash or blisters.

**Verbal Quiz**

1. Wash your shoes separately in hot water after handling plants. **T F**

2. Burning plants can release harmful toxins into the air. **T F**

3. After handling plants, always wash your hands and other exposed skin before **T F**
 eating, drinking, smoking, or going to the bathroom.

4. Eating wild berries is okay if they look ripe. **T F**

5. Wear short-sleeved shirts so you can spot skin reactions easily. **T F**

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| Answer Key |
| 1 | F |
| 2 | T |
| 3 | T |
| 4 | F |
| 5 | F |