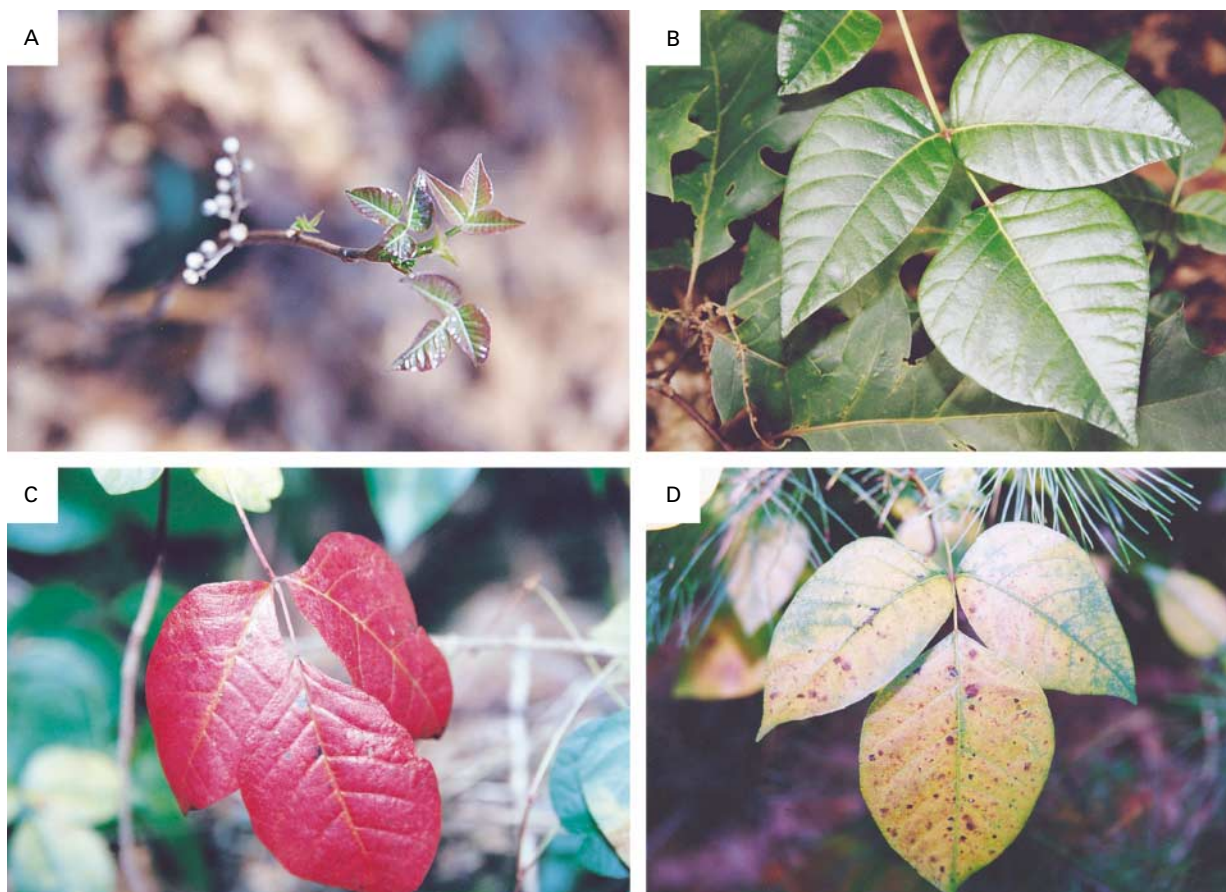




Images in Clinical Medicine



The Many Faces of Poison Ivy

Poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*) is a woody shrub or vine found throughout the United States. Red-tinged leaves grow in groups of three and have smooth, fine-toothed, or lobed margins, and small, yellow-green flowers form cream-colored fruit. The allergen, predominantly 3-n-pentadecylcatechol, is found in the resinous sap material uroshiol, which is produced by the leaves, fruit, stem, and bark. Therefore, although delayed-hypersensitivity dermatitis induced by contact with poison ivy is usually considered a summer problem in the northeastern United States, it can (and does) occur year-round.

These photographs, which were taken in southeastern Massachusetts, show the changing appearance of the plant during its growth cycle. In mid-May, before the leaves fully emerge, the vine and the cream-colored fruit are visible (Panel A). In July, the red tinge and shiny appearance of the leaves have faded (Panel B). In October, the leaves change color (Panels C and D) and are shed.

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Another Image in Clinical Medicine (Boctor FN, Uehlinger J. Malaria and Sickle Cell Disease. N Engl J Med 2002;347:e1) has also been published in this issue and can be seen at <http://www.nejm.org>.