

## Poisonwood

The information below will tell you what it looks like, how to avoid exposure, and some treatment options if you are exposed.

The Florida Keys are home to hundreds of plant species, but few can ruin your day (and the coming weeks) as much as exposure to Poisonwood. Contact with this common Keys plant can cause reactions that range from nothing to a severe allergic reaction that may cause you to seek medical treatment. Read on to learn how to identify the plant, how to avoid it, and what to do if it's too late.

Photos of Poisonwood and examples of the rash:



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**Poisonwood**

- Probably the most common poisonous plant in the Keys.
- Related to poison sumac and poison oak, also referred to as Florida poison tree or Hog gum.
- The sap contains alkaloids that cause serious skin and mucus irritations after skin contact.

**Risk Levels**

- Your risk of having a reaction to Poisonwood and the severity of the reaction may depend on your age and the extent of the first contact or first few contacts with the plant. Other influences include physical activity and immune system function.
- Some studies have shown that how allergic you are may be inherited.

**Symptoms**

- Itching.
- Red streaks or general redness where the plant touched the skin.
- Blisters filled with fluid that may leak out – in rare cases the blisters may be blood-filled and turn black.
- Severe symptoms include swelling of the neck, face, mouth, genitals, and eyelids – seek immediate medical attention.

**Treatment**

- If you know that you've made contact with the plant, wash the area with soap and water immediately. Sometimes the rash may be completely avoided if washed thoroughly within 10-15 minutes.
- Apply wet compresses or soak the area in cool water to relieve itching and help dry blisters.
- Antihistamine and calamine lotion may help relieve symptoms.
- If infection develops, seek medical attention.

Also see: "Identification of Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, Poison Sumac, and Poisonwood"  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep220>