

TOXICODENDRON RYDBERGII (Small) Greene  
Northern Poison-ivy

FAMILY: Anacardiaceae

SYNONYMS: *Toxicodendron radicans* (L.) Kuntze var. *rydbergii* (Small) Erskine  
*Rhus rydbergii* Small  
*Rhus radicans* L. var. *rydbergii* (Small) Rehd.

HABIT: Upright, woody sub-shrub to 3 m. from a stoloniferous rootstalk; flowers, May-June; fruit, July-September.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Superficially similar to *Toxicodendron radicans*, the common poison-ivy, which is a high-climbing vine with aerial rootlets. Northern poison-ivy is an upright shrub which lacks the aerial rootlets.

TOTAL RANGE: N.S. to B.C., s. to PA, OH, KS, TX, and AZ, and in higher elevations to WV and VA (dot map in Gillis, 1971).

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): There are post-1980 records from Ashtabula and Lake counties.

HABITAT: Open, sunny habitats, especially in sand or gravel; Ohio populations on bluffs and beaches along Lake Erie.

HAZARDS: Overgrowth by taller species; purposeful eradication because of its poisonous nature.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but possibly good due to its stoloniferous habit.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect mature specimens with flowers or fruits; make careful notes on growth habit; avoid prolonged exposure to all parts of the plant; wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible after handling the plant.

COMMENTS: The poison-ivies are not well-known biologically. Few references agree on the generic or specific status of the taxa. This neglect easily is accounted for by the dermatitis which afflicts most people who come in contact with the plant and thus discourages collectors. Northern poison-ivy is one of the better-defined entities in this group. It differs in habit and habitat from the widespread *Toxicodendron radicans*. In Ohio northern poison-ivy apparently is restricted to sites bordering Lake Erie. More fieldwork is needed, of course, to accurately assess the status of this species in the state.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

Brizicky, G.K. 1962. The genera of Anacardiaceae in the southeastern United States. Jour. Arnold Arb. 43: 359-375.

Crooks, D.M. and D.L. Klingman. 1945. Poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. U.S. Dept. Agr. Farmer's Bulletin No. 1972. 30 p.

Gillis, W.T. 1971. The systematics and ecology of poison-ivy and the poison-oaks. *Rhodora* 73: 72-159; 161-237; 370-443; 465-540.



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