

Several Types Of Plants Can Cause Dermatitis

Dear Plant Doctor: Behind the garage in my old house there was a type of green leafy plant with microscopic stinging hairs on it. When this plant brushed up against my legs, the plant hairs produced a tingling, burning feeling that sometimes resulted in lot of red, itchy bumps. What kind of plant could cause this reaction and what can you tell me but this weed?

—Hampstead

ANSWER: Many plants can cause the dermatitis you describe. Positive identification requires a plant sample. If you will carefully clip a stem from the plant, place it in a plastic bag and take it to your county office of the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, Sandra Maddox and her staff will be glad to help positively identify the mystery plant for you.

Some of the plants I would suspect as culprits are the wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) or stinging nettle (*Urtica sp.*). However, it would be unusual to find these plants in Hampstead since both plants are normally found in the Piedmont or mountain regions of North Carolina. Some folks react strongly to Trumpet creeper or cow-itch vine (*Campsis radicans*), which is a common weed throughout North Carolina.

Be sure to take a sample to the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service!

Dear Plant Doctor: We have been struggling to get rid of this horrible thorny vine (leaves enclosed) that keeps coming up in our yard at Bald Head Island. We dig and dig but the enormous sweet-potato-like roots are hard to remove intact...and they keep coming back!

Is there some kind of weed-killer for plants with tough, leathery leaves?

I hate using poisons but this vine is so tenacious. I think this plant is good for dunes and beaches but would prefer not scratching my ankles each time I go out in the yard to walk the dog. Any help you can give will be most appreciated!

—Bald Head Island

ANSWER: The plant you sent me is called greenbrier or catbrier (*Smilax sp.*). Greenbrier is in the lily family and a close relative of asparagus. This tough, weedy vine produces huge rhizomes that are used by the plant to store starch. The rhizomes and fresh stems were reportedly used by early colonists and native Americans as a food source during hard times.

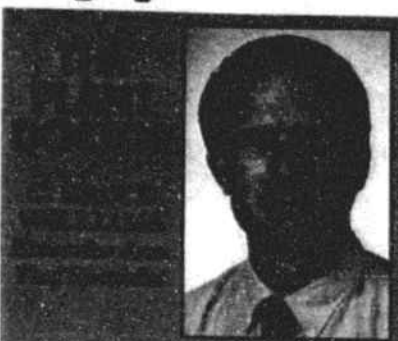
Bald Head Island is one of the most beautiful spots on the North Carolina coasts. Ancient live oak and palm forests crown sand and limestone ridge that gradually give way to sand dunes, beachgrass and sea oaks. Greenbrier covers the ground in areas between the forest and the frontal dunes creating huge, lush, green hummocks that cover the near sterile sand.

I suggest you select a small area in your yard just for the dog and concentrate on killing only the thorny types of greenbrier. Greenbrier stems can be thorny or smooth. Leave the smooth type of greenbrier for a ground cover.

You can spot-treat foliage with glyphosate (Roundup) or dicamba (Banvel). Be careful when treating your greenbrier since spray drift can severely damage or kill many desirable plants. Repeat treatment in 4 weeks if the targeted plants are not dead. Late summer and early fall are prime time for control for this woody plant. Follow all pesticide label instructions.

Dear Plant Doctor: I read your article in the newspaper about Euonymus scale. Last year, I had a bush that was covered with scale. I happened to have been spraying a fire ant mound with "Raid" aerosol insecticide. I sprayed the entire bush with Raid and the scale disappeared beautifully.

I also find that spraying Raid on



fire ants mounds kills the ants in a matter of minutes. Using this met-

hod seems so much quicker and more thorough than using Amdro or other types of bait controls.

I just thought I would pass this bit of information along to you.

—Hampstead

ANSWER: Thank you for your letter. However, please follow the label instructions on whatever pesticide you are using. To my knowledge, Raid is not labeled for euonymus scale or fire ant control. The following quotation comes from the 1994 North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual, College of Agri-

culture and Life Sciences, North Carolina State University:

"It is a violation of law (state and federal) to use any pesticide in a manner not permitted by its labeling. To protect yourself, never apply any pesticide in a manner or for a purpose other than as instructed on the label or in labeling accompanying the pesticide product that you purchase. Don't ignore the instructions or use of protective clothing and devices and for storage and disposal of pesticide wastes, including containers."

Before you purchase any pesticide, be sure it is labeled for the pest you intend to kill!

Dear Plant Doctor: Why does my pumpkin plant fail to develop fruit. Many times I have pollinated the "female" flower but no further development takes place. The embryonic fruit fails to develop and falls off. Is it the weather or what?

—Sunset Beach

ANSWER: I suspect what. Pumpkins (*Cucurbita pepo*) are nothing more than big squash and thus are susceptible to many of the

same cultural problems, diseases and insects of the squash. A lot of factors could have caused the abortion of the immature fruit. I would suggest you first soil sample and then read the publication "Growing Pumpkins and Winter Squash—Horticulture Information Leaflet #24, which I will send to you. Good luck!

Send your gardening comments or questions to the Plant Doctor, P.O. Box 109, Bolivia NC 28422. Please send a SASE if requesting information or a reply.

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