



SAFETY GUIDE FOR VOLUNTEER GROUPS – *Supervised Projects*

June 2020

Working outdoors presents some natural risks – Volunteers should stay aware of their surroundings, and the possibility of encountering: animals; insects; snakes; tree roots, branches, thorns; poison ivy; heat or cold; mud; etc. Volunteers should take the following precautions for a SAFE and REWARDING Volunteer experience. These guidelines will be updated regularly; and will be sent to Volunteer group leaders and/or individual Volunteers upon registration for a public project; or upon confirmation of a corporate/community group project.

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COVID-19 – Guidelines are included for extra safety during and after the coronavirus health situation. **Park & Recreation will comply with current County or State restrictions, whichever is the most stringent. ALL VOLUNTEERS are required to sign off on the Volunteer Liability Waiver and the COVID-19 Acknowledgement of Risk.**

If you feel ill, have had a fever in the last 14 days, or suspect that you have been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, PLEASE DO NOT participate in Volunteer activities.

- Volunteers for Park projects must be at least 12 years old; and anyone under the age of 16 MUST be accompanied by a parent/adult who is at least age 21.
- Wear **long pants** and long sleeves, for protection from scratches and/or poison ivy.
- **Wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes – REQUIRED, NO sandals or flip-flops.** Wear OLDER shoes that you don't mind getting dirty, wet or muddy.
- Wear heavy-duty work gloves – ***bring your own gloves for health and safety.***
- Wear a hat and sunscreen for protection from sun exposure; and bring your own preferred mosquito/insect repellent.
- Wear a face covering when in the vicinity of other people – ***bring your own face covering for health and safety.***
- Maintain physical distance of at least 6 feet (2 arm-lengths) from other people.
- Bring your own water in a large, refillable water bottle – to stay hydrated, avoid the need to refill, and to protect the environment from single-use plastic bottles.
- **Avoid sharing tools** – all Park & Recreation-owned tools will be disinfected before and after each use.
- **Be aware of where you are walking at all times**, to avoid fire ants (loose dirt mounds), bees or wasps, poison ivy, low branches, tree roots or other trip hazards, wet/slippery areas, snakes or other animals, branches or vines with thorns, etc.
- **Avoid picking up sharp or hazardous objects you may encounter** – these may include broken glass, sharp metal, needles, animal waste, condoms, etc. ****Alert Park & Recreation staff to the location of these items.***
- **Stay out of streams, creeks, rivers, etc.** – Park & Recreation property ends at the banks of bodies of water.

IF USING TOOLS:

- NO POWER TOOLS are to be used by Volunteers!
 - o *The only exceptions are string trimmers and backpack blowers – if these are used, **disposable eye and ear protection** will be provided; and Volunteers must be trained in the equipment's use.*
- Be aware of sharp edges or teeth/tines on clippers, loppers, rakes, pitchforks, etc.
- Be aware of people around and/or behind you, to avoid accidentally striking another person with a tool handle.
- Carry tools “business-end down,” and WALK cautiously.
- If setting down a rake or pitchfork either: lean the tool upright against a tree or post; or make sure the teeth/tines are facing DOWNWARD to the ground, not sticking up.
- Place shovels with the end/blade facing downward.
- **Avoid sharing tools** – all tools should be disinfected before and after each person uses them. Park & Recreation-owned tools will be disinfected regularly.
- **Wheelbarrows:** Avoid overfilling; lift and walk carefully. Transport materials only, not people! Wheelbarrows should be individually assigned and handles disinfected before and after each use.

***Park & Recreation staff will have the following items on-hand**, in case Volunteers are unable to bring their own:

- Heavy-duty gloves (disposable or coated work gloves)
- Disposable face masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Disinfecting wipes and/or supplies (paper towels and spray)
- Bottled water

ALL VOLUNTEERS are required to sign off on the Volunteer Liability Waiver and the COVID-19 Acknowledgement of Risk.

PARK & RECREATION STAFF WHO ARE SUPERVISING THE GROUP may provide additional safety instructions related to the specific task(s) the group will be completing.

CONTACT THE PARK & RECREATION VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

Karen.Howard@MeckNC.gov or 980-314-1046 (office) or 704-200-7074 (mobile)

POISON IVY is extremely common in the United States. The only geographical areas it is not found in are Alaska, Hawaii, and parts of the west coast. It is one of the most common triggers for rashes every year for both kids and adults who spend time outdoors. For some people, poison ivy does not affect them at all. On the other hand, many people are severely allergic to the plant and can end up in the hospital if they are not careful. It is important to know what poison ivy looks like and how to avoid getting a rash from the plant.

Poison Ivy Characteristics

(source: www.webmd.com)

- It has three pointed leaves
- The leaves can be shiny
- The leaves can change colors depending on the time of the year- reddish in the spring, green in the summer, and yellow or red in the fall
- It is able to grow as a vine (looks “hairy”) or bush



Poison Ivy Rash Care

- Use a cold compress, calamine lotion, non-prescription hydrocortisone cream, or an antihistamine to ease itching.
- Call your doctor if the rash is near your eyes or covers a large part of your body.
- Get emergency medical help or call 911 if you have a severe reaction.

The severity and characteristics for a rash from poison ivy may vary from person to person. The worst symptoms are often seen during days 4 to 7 after coming in contact with the plant. The rash may last for 1 to 3 weeks.

Safety Tips

- Stay out of areas where you know poison ivy can be.
- Poison ivy vines look fuzzy or “hairy” – DO NOT TOUCH, as ANY part of the plant contains oils!
- Wear long pants, a long sleeve shirt, boots, and gloves when entering any area where poison ivy can be. The less skin exposed the better.
- If exposed, wash the skin as soon as possible. If you get most of the oils off quickly it will help to limit the rash. **Hand sanitizer will also help to remove poison ivy oils.*
- Wash any items or tools that may have been in contact with poison ivy. The oils of the plant can remain on the objects for long periods of time and you can indirectly get a rash this way.

From <https://www.safetysideas.com/safetytalks/poison-ivy/>