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"WHAT EVERY CAMPER SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT POISONOUS PLANTS"

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COMPILED AND PRESENTED BY

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GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE

"WHAT EVERY CAMPER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT POISONOUS PLANTS"

The objectives for presenting this topic are: 1) to familiarize campers with the types of poisonous plants common to this area; 2) to illustrate the hazards of plants that may cause skin irritations, illness, or death if eaten; and 3) to familiarize campers with the first aid measures to be taken if external or internal plant poisoning is suspected.

The majority of our poisonous plants are cultivated, ornamental plants, introduced from other countries. They are occasionally planted for their beauty, and overlooked as any possible threat, through lack of knowledge or disbelief.

Our least poisonous plants are those that cause the most problems as far as suffering internally or externally. The problems may range from headache or respiratory difficulty to acute illness, causing fear and worry and resulting in expensive medical treatment.

Sometimes a day or two may pass before the symptoms of plant poisoning may appear, making it difficult to determine which plant is responsible.

The susceptibility of individuals varies greatly as well. Some people are highly susceptible, others may appear to be immune. Even this can be temporary, depending on the physical condition of an individual, and the particular season of plant growth.

Some plants are completely poisonous in every respect. Others may be poisonous depending on the degree

of contact, either externally or internally.

There are five categories of poisonous plants. These plant categories are: 1) Cultivated Plants (contains the majority of poisonous plants); 2) Wild Plants; 3) Vegetables; 4) Trees, and 5) Ornamental Seeds. Each of these five categories is broken down with several plants in each group listed. There are two lists for each category. The first list is to be used with the corresponding drawings. The second list is a handout for the campers to use as a reference.

With the exception of "Vegetables" and "Ornamental Seeds", all the other categories have two lists. On the "Vegetable" list, there is also a short list on a few of the edible fruits and their poisonous parts.

CULTIVATED PLANTS COMMON TO THIS AREA
(To be used with corresponding drawings)

- 1) Azalea-in the rhododendron family. A common outdoor plant, sometimes displayed in the home. It's colorful, bushy or tree-like, and grows up to 20 inches. There are several varieties and colors. It is poisonous if eaten.
- 2) Castor Bean Shrub-grows up to 10 feet tall. It has mottled seeds. Sometimes after a delay of one to three days, symptoms of poisoning may appear, if the seeds were eaten. Death may occur in up to 12 days from uremia. This plant is native to Africa. The beans are sometimes used as jewelry, and the plant is cultivated for its castor-oil.
- 3) Dieffenbachia-very common house plant and office plant. Its leaves are large and mottled (green and white). It is sometimes planted outdoors in south Florida. This plant is poisonous if eaten.
- 4) Lantana-a shrub, growing to five feet tall. It has toothed leaves that are pointed at the ends. The flowers are "small bouquets", very colorful in white, yellow, pink, orange, and scarlet. The green fruit later turns to dark blue. This plant can be fatal if eaten. It has an unusual pungent odor, and is very common.
- 5) Oleander-a shrub or tree growing to 20 feet tall. The stems are heavy, and the green leaves are stiff and pointed in whorls of 3 (8 inches long). The flowers are single or double in red, white, or pink, and up to three inches across. All parts of this plant are poisonous. Contact can cause dermatitis, but if eaten, can cause death. Using the branches for skewering meats, stirring food, or for roasting marshmallows can cause extreme poisoning. Smoke of the burning Oleander is very poisonous as well. The Yellow Oleander (same family) contains two deadly heart poisons; all parts of this plant is also poisonous.
- 6) Atamasco-Lily-(Rain-lily), the leaves are grass-like. The flowers are white to pink. The onion-like bulbs are poisonous. All bulbous plants in the Amaryllis family are poisonous, such as daffodils, iris, and hyacinth.
- 7) Physic-Nut-a tree, growing to 15 feet tall. It has three five-lobed leaves, rounded, up to six inches across with long petioles. Yellow flowers and fruit; fruit later turns black. The three seeds are especially dangerous because they have an agreeable taste. Sometimes it is mistaken as a "pistachio tree". There are

no true pistachio trees in Florida. Eating the seeds can cause death.

- 8) Pokeweed-has lined and pleated pale-green leaves, growing up to four feet with large fleshy roots. The stems are thick, and the flowers are whitish. The fruit is purple-black juicy berries growing in clusters. All roots and foliage are poisonous. It is a slow poisoning process which becomes painful and violent, resulting in death (respiratory failure). The young leaves are edible when cooked and drained twice. They are known as "greens" in the deep south.
- 9) Balsam Pear-a vine with deeply lobed leaves and yellow flowers. The fruit is pointed at each end and is orange-yellow when ripe. It (the fruit) opens, showing scarlet-red arils. Eating the seeds is poisonous. These are found on the beach nature trail.
- 10) Black Nightshade-there are several varieties. These are low-growing with green spreading stems. The alternate flowers are star-shaped with yellow centers. The round black fruit has many seeds. The leaves and unripe fruit are poisonous.
Bitter Nightshade-similar, but with deep purple star-shaped flowers with gold anthers. The berries are ruby-red, also called "Deadly Nightshade".
- 11) Poinsettia-the flowers are highly colored leaves in red, pink, or white, with tiny blooms of greenish-yellow in the center of bracts. It is a shrub, growing to 10 feet. It has lanceolate leaves which are entire or lobed and alternate on the stem. All of this plant is poisonous. Death resulted to children who ate the stems and leaves.
- 12) Night Blooming Jessamine-a sprawling shrub, growing to 12 feet. It has glossy green leaves (8 inches), with tubular flowers of greenish-white to cream. The fruit is small, white berries. The flowers have a heavy scent at night, which can cause severe headache, nausea, and dizziness, and respiratory irritations to sensitive persons. The fruit is poisonous.

CULTIVATED PLANTS COMMON TO THIS AREA

- 1) Daphne-a low woody plant. Bright red berries appear with a single seed in summer months. Children are attracted to the berries. The bark, leaves, and berries are poisonous. There have been fatalities among children involving this plant.
- 2) Foxglove-grows to six feet tall and has large leaves. The flowers grow to three inches long. They are tubular in shape, and droop down. The colors range from white, yellow, pink, rose, and purple. They are found in the wild and in woodlands. They are severely poisonous, they can cause heart failure!!
- 3) Larkspur-common in all of the United States. The blossoms are white to violet-purple. Leaves resemble the general outline of a bird's foot. The leaves and seeds are poisonous; it affects the nervous system. Death may come due to stoppage of breathing.
- 4) Lily-of-the-Valley-a common garden plant grown for its fragrance. It's also sold by many florists. It has large green leaves, and small white bell-shaped flowers drooping down. It has red to orange-red fleshy berries in late summer and early fall. The roots, leaves, and fruit are all poisonous. The reaction from this plant is similar to that of the Foxglove-heart failure!!
- 5) Crown-of-Thorns-a low growing, very thorny plant with milky sap. There are few leaves, usually at the ends of new growth. The flowers are small in clusters, usually a bright red. The milky sap is very irritating to some people. It can produce blisters.
- 6) Yellow Allamanda-a vine with milky sap; grows to 10 feet. Often pruned to a shrub. It has thick glossy leaves with smooth edges. The flowers are yellow and bell-shaped. There is a prickly pod-shaped fruit. All parts of this plant are poisonous.
- 7) Rubber Vine-a woody vine with milky sap and many stems. The leaves are dark waxy-green (up to 5 inches long). The flowers are purplish in color, about 2 inches across and funnel-shaped. All parts are poisonous and the foliage has proved to be fatally toxic to man.
- 8) Glory-Lily-a climbing plant with narrow green leaves, and orange and yellow lilies. The fruit is capsule-like. All parts are poisonous; can cause death.
- 9) Bellyache Bush-a shrub to 4 feet. It has 3-lobed palmate leaves, sometimes 5-lobed. It is dark

purple when young, with long and hairy petioles. The flowers are red and small. Violent vomiting occurs.

- 10) Coral Plant-a shrub which grows to 15 feet. The leaves are deeply cut to one foot across, with the underneath side being hairy. The flowers are scarlet in color with yellow fruit. Violent vomiting, purging occurs after eating.
- 11) Wax-Leaf Ligustrum-a small tree or shrub which grows to 15 feet. The leaves are glossy dark green with small creamy white flowers in panicles. The fruit is a small berry. Both the leaves and fruit are poisonous.
- 12) Slipper-Flower-a shrub with smooth green stems (fleshy-like). It has a milky sap. The leaves are alternate and pointed. The flowers are red and clustered at the end of the branches, resembling small red birds. The fruit is small and capsule-like. All parts poisonous.
- 13) Aralia-a shrub, growing to 20 feet. It is used mostly as a hedge. It has pinnate leaves which are toothed and blotched with cream. This plant causes dermatitis.
- 14) Chalice-Vine-a woody, hairy vine with large leaves. The flowers are white to yellow; up to 12 inches long, and tubular shaped. The leaves, sap, and flowers are poisonous, and can cause death.
- 15) False Poinciana-a shrub or tree, growing up to 10 feet. The leaves are alternate, about 4-8 inches long. They are pinnate with 6-20 pairs of leaflets. The flowers are pea-shaped, orangish-red in color, hanging in clusters. The green pods turn to dark brown when ripened. They are about 2-3 inches long, with 4 lengthwise keels. The seeds are brown in color. The seed is the most toxic part of the plant. If enough is eaten, it can cause death.
- 16) Golden Dewdrop-a drooping shrub with trailing stems, thorny, and often growing to 18 feet. The rounded leaves are toothed. The flowers are lilac with a yellow eye. The yellow fruit hangs in clusters, and is poisonous. It has caused death to children.
- 17) Yaupon Holly-a small tree or shrub, growing to 25 feet. It has small leathery leaves usually one inch or less. The tips are blunt and have a scalloped margin. It has bright red fruit. The leaves and twigs contain caffeine, but the fruit is poisonous. It will cause vomiting.

WILD PLANTS COMMON TO THIS AREA
(To be used with corresponding drawings)

- 1) Jimson-Weed-Stinkweed or ThornApple; a plant which grows to five feet tall with alternate, smooth light green leaves (8 inches) pointed at each end. The flowers are white to a pale, bluish-purple, and the fruit is a hard capsule, covered with prickles. The roots, leaves, and seeds are poisonous. Downy ThornApple-same family; grows to four feet and has purplish, hairy, heart-shaped leaves and large flowers. The fruit is round with prickles. Roots, leaves, and seeds are poisonous.
- 2) Angels Trumpet-a small tree, growing to 15 feet. The soft, hairy leaves grow up to 12 inches in pairs; the flowers are white and drooping, in a trumpet-like shape. The foliage is poisonous.
- 3) Crape Jasmine-a shrub with many upright branches, growing to 8 feet. It has a milky sap and glossy-green leaves. The flowers are double, ruffled, and waxy-white (2 inches across). The roots and bark are poisonous and can cause dermatitis.
- 4) Mushrooms-a large fungus. White mushrooms with brown scales growing to 12 inches across. It is found mostly in woody areas, along roadsides, waste places, and near pine trees. It has a fleshy, bulb-like base. All parts are poisonous, raw or cooked! Some are certain death. Leave all mushrooms alone.
- 5) Poison Ivy-Poison Oak-both have a three-leaf appearance with prominent veins, woody vine, and climbing aerial rootlets. Sometimes they appear tree-like. Each leaflet is shaped like an oak leaf. During the fall, the red and yellow leaves can be mistaken for harmless trees. The small, greenish-yellow to white flowers grow in clusters. The smooth, round, waxy-white fruit also grows in clusters. All parts are poisonous. This plant can contaminate things for months! Remember: "Leaves of three, leave it be." Also, be wary of any plant with white berries.
- 6) Poison Sumac-Coral Sumac; a shrub which grows to 35 feet tall. It has alternate leaves, compound, with 3-7 leaflets (usually 5); leathery and ovate. The small yellow-green flowers have one seed. This plant can also contaminate things for months! All of it is poisonous.

WILD PLANTS COMMON TO THIS AREA

- 1) Jack-in-the-Pulpit-this plant has one or two three-parted leaves, all on a single stem. A striped hood archs over an erect stalk, inside of which the tiny blooms form a cluster of red berries. These appear in late summer, and are the fruit of this plant. It is found in woodlands, thickets, and semi-shaded areas. The foliage and berries are poisonous.
- 2) Milkbush-a shrub growing to 20 feet with milky sap. It is also known as a pencil tree. The small, green leaves are inconspicuous, and located at the ends of the branches. The leaves fall as new branches form. The flowers are in small clusters. All parts are poisonous.
- 3) Water-Hemlock Cowbane-This plant has white blossoms in loose, misty clusters, branching off from a dull colored stem. The leaves are alternate, compound, and dark green. The stalk is streaked and spotted with magenta. It is related to the Hemlock which killed Socrates! It is extremely poisonous. One bite can cause a painful death!!

VEGETABLES
(only one list here)

- 1) Potato Foliage-all potato foliage is poisonous, do not eat it! The potato itself is a very good source of food starch and is edible, but the foliage is not.
- 2) Rhubard Greens-are also poisonous, although rhubard is edible.
- 3) Tomato Leaves-are also very poisonous. Be sure there are no leaves on the tomatoes that you cook with or eat!

Fruit-Bearing Plants

- ** Elderberry-although it is not a vegetable, it is commonly known as a fruit. It's used in making jams, preserves, and wine. All parts of the elderberry plant is very poisonous, except the rippened fruit! Make sure the fruit is ripe before you touch it; try to avoid touching or eating any other part of this plant!
- ** Cherry Twigs-this particular part of the cherry tree is very poisonous. Don't touch it or use it for skewering foods. There are several varieties of cherry trees, and many are good to eat, however, don't mess with the twigs or branches if possible, they are poisonous.
- ** Peach Leaves-these leaves are very poisonous as well. Even though the fruit is edible and delicious, the leaves are poisonous, don't eat them.

TREES COMMON TO THIS AREA
(It's to be used with corresponding drawing)

- 1) China Berry Tree-a deciduous tree, growing to 40 feet tall. It is symmetrical and spreading. The leaves are two-pinnate with toothed leaflets. The flowers are purple and give off a fragrance (usually in spring). The fruit is yellow with one seed. All parts are poisonous, especially the fruit pulp. The pulp, if eaten, affects the nervous system and can cause death by paralysis.

OTHER COMMON TREES

- 1) Sandbox Tree-a large tree growing to 50 feet tall. It grows symmetrically, with sharp pointed spines. The sap is milky and acrid. The leaves are somewhat heart-shaped, thin and alternate. The reddish flowers are small, with fruit about 3 inches across. Eating these seeds causes abdominal pain and possibly death. The sap is irritating to the skin. The fruit may explode violently when mature and dry.
- 2) Mango Tree-the tree grows to about 50 feet tall. The trunk is stout and the leaves are lanceolate, stiff, and densely growing among the tree. The flowers are pinkish white in panicles. The fruit itself is smooth with a large flat seed. The sap causes a rash to some people. This tree belongs to the Poison Ivy family, and has the same reaction as Poison Ivy on some people.
- 3) Tung-Oil Tree-grows to about 25 feet tall, and has syrupy sap. The leaves are alternate and heart-shaped. The flowers are pale pink to white. The fruit droops on stalks, and has three chestnut-like seeds. All parts of this tree are poisonous.
- 4) Boxwood Tree-a shrub which seldom grows over 5 feet tall. It is mostly grown as a hedge. The branches grow upright. The leaves are small, oval, thick, and leathery. It is a common plant here in north-west Florida. All parts of this tree are poisonous and cause abdominal pain, convulsions, and dermatitis.
- 5) Kopsia Tree-this particular tree grows to 15 feet tall. It has a milky sap, and dark green leaves. The leaves are thick and opposite. The flowers are cream-colored with scarlet fruit. The fruit is very poisonous.

ORNAMENTAL SEEDS COMMON TO THIS AREA
(To be used with corresponding drawing)

- 1) Castor Bean-from the Castor Bean Shrub; some seeds are mottled and look like an engorged tick. Other varieties are solid black. Death can occur if eaten. These beans have also been used as ornamental jewelry.
- 2) Rosary Pea or Bean-(Crabeye) this seed is scarlet with a jet-black spot on the tip end. It grows to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. It is used as an ornament or as pieces of jewelry. This rosary pea can be fatal if eaten!

"WHAT EVERY CAMPER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT POISONOUS PLANTS"

In addition to the previous lists of poisonous plants, below is another list of plants causing dermatitis, and similar skin irritations. This lists the names of the plants and the areas which are poisonous on those plants. Be familiar with these plants as well as the others listed, then avoid them!

PLANTS CAUSING DERMATITIS

- 1) Rag Weeds - leaves
- 2) Trumpet Creeper - leaves
- 3) Bird Pepper - fruit
- 4) Red Spurge - all parts
- 5) Wild Poinsettia - sap
- 6) Red Silk Oak - flowers
- 7) English Ivy - leaves
- 8) Spurge Nettle - leaves and stem
- 9) Barbados Cherry - (Acerola), the new growth
- 10) Punk Tree - (Cajeput), sap
- 11) Pithecellobium - sap
- 12) Plumbago - all parts
- 13) Frangipani - sap
- 14) Primrose - leaves
- 15) Oyster Plant - sap
- 16) Dock Sorrel - leaves
- 17) Brazilian Pepper Tree - leaves and pollen
- 18) Hunters-Robe - sap
- 19) Purple Queen - sap
- 20) Stinging Nettle - poisonous leaves and stem

"WHAT EVERY CAMPER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT POISONOUS PLANTS" POISON PREVENTION PRECAUTIONS

In addition to plants, there are hazards of poisoning associated with many medicines and common household products. Here is a list of some precautions to take to prevent possible poisoning:

- 1) Lock up all dangerous substances
- 2) Warn small children not to eat or drink drugs, chemicals, plants, or berries they find unless you give permission.
- 3) Do not eat or serve foods which smell or look abnormal.
- 4) Safely store candied flavored or colored medicines, since children may eat them like candy.
- 5) Use a prescription drug only for the patient for whom the physician ordered it.
- 6) Date all drugs and supplies when bought, weed out leftovers regularly from medicine cabinet. Flush down toilet and dispose of containers.
- 7) Read all labels and carefully follow "caution" statements.
- 8) Do not store poisonous or flammable substances in food or beverage containers.

FIRST AID MEASURES TO TAKE

If, for some reason, the prevention precautions failed, or an unavoidable poisoning incident occurred, the following information and steps may save a life.

*When poisoning occurs through ingestion, these are the symptoms that are generally noted in determining what actually happened (when it is known or unknown as to what caused these symptoms to begin with). *General symptoms for ingested poisoning (plants) - severe headache, fever, abdominal pain, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, rapid heart beat, convulsions, cold clammy skin, and dilation of pupils.

FIRST AID MEASURES TO TAKE

FIRST AID: 1) give glass of water with some raw egg white, or glass of milk. This helps to induce vomiting and will dilute or neutralize some of the poison; 2) Induce vomiting by tickling back of throat with blunt end of a spoon or finger, or give one tablespoon of powdered mustard in luke warm or cold water every 15 minutes. If there is no mustard, use a strong salt solution in warm water. Or, if you have a poison-kit, use the syrup of ipecac and activated charcoal as directed; 3) After vomiting, position the victim's head below their waist so the vomit will not be drawn back into their lungs; 4) Save the vomited material for analysis; 5) IMMEDIATELY take the victim to the Emergency room of a Hospital, or to the POISON CONTROL CENTER.

*When poisoning occurs through external methods, such as touching, rubbing, brushing up against, or being in the vicinity of poisonous plants, the following symptoms are generally noted to occur. *General symptoms for external (or contact) poisoning (plants) - redness, rash, blisters, swelling, burning, itching, and fever.

FIRST AID: 1) Remove any clothing worn while in contact with poisonous plant and wash thoroughly; 2) Wash thoroughly all exposed areas of the body with soap and water as soon as possible; 3) Follow with rubbing alcohol; 4) Apply calamine or other skin lotion if rash is a mild one; 5) Seek medical attention if a severe reaction occurs, or if there is a known history of sensitivity to poisonous plants.

Below is listed all the POISON CONTROL CENTERS in northwest Florida, a useful list that should always be kept handy (in cases of such emergency).

- 1) PENSACOLA-Baptist Hospital; the Life Flight Program is an efficient method for rescue in

cases of emergencies where poisoning is involved.

- 2) PANAMA CITY-Bay County Memorial Hospital
- 3) FT. WALTON BEACH-Ft. Walton Beach Hospital
- 4) TALLAHASSEE-Tallahassee Memorial Hospital

In conclusion, I'd like to briefly mention some important facts to remember. First of all, the majority of our poisonous plants are cultivated, ornamental plants, which were imported from other countries. Our least poisonous plants can cause the most problems, with several hours passing before the symptoms of plant poisoning appear. Also, susceptibility varies greatly-don't take chances! There are five categories of poisonous plants, all of which have some examples growing right here in our park!

When in doubt about a plant, don't touch it! Be wary of any plant with white berries, or milky sap. Plants in the Amaryllis family, grown from onion-like bulbs are all poisonous. Remember, "Leaves of three, leave it be." Also, if you have any known allergies or sensitivities, you may need immediate medical attention when coming in contact with a poisonous plant, because your reactions may be more severe!

Know your first aid for plant poisoning. Be aware of what these poisonous plants look like, then stay clear! Camping is a learning experience, don't let it become an unfortunate experience through carelessness.

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