

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

The Eccentric welcomes letters for this column. All must be signed, but signatures will be kept confidential upon request. Letters must be limited to 500 words.

To the Editor: I have been interested in comments you have published with reference to methods used by the local police in trying to make our streets safer by reducing needless accidents through complying with our laws.

The writer recently was ticketed for making a U turn at an intersection where prohibited. I had not noticed the warning. The young officer wasn't any happier to give me the ticket than I was to receive it. Others on the street had witnessed the violation. It was proper police conduct to ticket me.

It is an untenable position one takes who desires all the gains and protections of the law, yet becomes angry and unreasonable when penalized for violation. Unfortunately in our country there are those who join in the resentments of others who dislike having the law applied to them.

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IT IS A favorite pastime of communists, anarchists, their fellow travelers to arouse, when possible, anger against law-enforcing officers. They hate the law and they try often to lead the foolish in unwise moves against officers trying to do their job. In strikes, too, officers trying to prevent violence are subject to insults and beatings by lawless mobs.

I wonder how many of us would like to see the individual or the crowd have its way regardless of the law?

And the law is anything but oppressive, I find. It deals so lightly with offenses. It is understandable the juvenile at times resents the law. But he has no use, either, for a firm parent.

FOR AN ADULT to protest enforcement of laws made for protection against lawless there is no excuse. The person who wants our streets reasonably safe, who believes our streets and our alleys should be patrolled through the night, who would like to have potential killers on the highways brought under control—well, he better back up the law and the police to the limit. Unless, of course, he favors chaos and anarchy.

JOHN E. MARTIN,
329 Southfield Ave.

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GEORGE B. WEINHOLD, son of Mr. and Mrs. George A. Weinhold, 451 Pilgrim, and student at the University of Rochester, checks a Ruxgate compass of the U. S. Navy's Advanced Training Command, Corpus Christi, Tex. Weinhold is one of 1600 NROTC Midshipmen training at the Air Station. (Official U. S. Navy Photograph)

NATURE NOW

By
LYDIA
KING
FRESHSE

Although plants are the foundation of the great pyramid of life, there are some among their numbers that are deadly poisonous to man and animals. Others, like poison ivy and poison sumac, are only skin irritants. However, if encountered in the fields or woods or on any casual vacation stroll, these can send you to bed or even put you in a hospital, simply because you have never bothered to recognize and avoid them.

Consult a manual for pictures and descriptions of these poisonous plants, study the shapes and arrangement of their branches, leaves and fruits. Next observe their habits and manners in the field. If you do not own a plant manual, consult the dictionary which contains a veritable gold mine of botanical information. Plants, like people, have a certain "look" about them which cannot be described by the most gifted pen or portrayed by any

photograph, but which, after careful observation in the field, reveals itself to you.

POISON IVY is a greater hazard than poison sumac because it is so widely dispersed and is likely to be encountered in any field, wood-lot or along any fence or border. The old warning "leaves three, let it be, berries white, hide from sight," is worth remembering. It eliminates many plants often confused with poison ivy.

One of these is woodbine, which has a similar climbing habit, but always has five leaflets. However, the three-leaf pattern is so common in plant structure that if followed, one would have to avoid unnecessarily a large number of harmless plants.

Since poison ivy varies greatly in its manner of growth and shape of leaf, there has been much disagreement about its classification. Some botanists call the shrubby variety poison ivy and the climbing variety poison oak. Cecil B. Bunting, in his recent edition of "Shrubs of Michigan," records only one species for all the variations found in our state and calls it "Rhus radicans".

IN OUR STERILE and sandy pine barrens in the north part of the state, poison ivy grows as a low spreading shrub. In richer soil it becomes a trailing or climbing vine covering old fences, stumps and trees. Recently I took a group of children to Belle Isle to find that we were barred from all the wooded area in the eastern part of the park because poison ivy had not only taken over the ground cover, but was so pronounced in its climbing habit, that it reached a height of 50 feet or

more giving many of the trees the appearance of producing poison ivy leaves.

The stems had reached the thickness of small saplings and were wound around the trees in a vine-like grasp held there by brown rootlets thickened at their tips into small suction cups. As the season advanced, the stems and leaves turned red and the fruit appeared as a small cluster of cream colored berries arranged like a bunch of grapes. These remain on the stem well into the late summer and winter.

MORE RESTRICTED in its range is poison sumac (Rhus venia), our most poisonous shrub. It hugs the borders of ponds and streams and thrives in swampy thickets where the botanist and hunter are likely to roam. Its fondness for low places and its smooth greenish white berries (very similar to those of poison ivy) will easily distinguish it from the harmless sumac which usually grows in dry, sandy, gravelly soil and whose dark red velvety berries are produced in a terminal cluster. The compound leaves with their long narrow leaflets are similar in all sunnacs and cannot be used as an identification tag.

The poisonous principle of both these plants is a slightly volatile substance called "urushiol". It occurs in any part of the plant and one may contract it at any season. It is more difficult to avoid these plants when they are barren of leaves. One must then rely on such characteristics as the arrangement of branches and the color and texture of the bark. This applies especially to poison sumac, which is a harmless looking gray-barked shrub which is very easy to touch when it is leafless and one is out exploring the

swamps and marshes in winter or early spring.

THE SAFEST way to eradicate these poisonous plants is to burn their foliage repeatedly with either a torch or chemicals. After several seasons of this treatment, the roots will die because they have used up all their stored food and are no longer being fed by the "food factory" which operates only in the green leaf.

The autumn scenes of roadside and meadow which decorate magnolias, colored slides and motion pictures are vivid with the yellow-reds and oranges of sumac and ivy. Their colors are among the first to announce the dying year, when they contrast sharply with the most trees and shrubs which are still wearing their summer green. They so remain well into late October and many times their flaming colors outlast the first snows.

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