Most people don’t react to the urushiol immediately. Reaction time varies from 6 or 8 hours and up to 3 days before the rash occurs. The ultra sensitive may react sooner. Therefore, there is a window of opportunity when urushiol can be removed from the skin and a rash avoided, or, dramatically cut down on the severity.

GOOD NEWS—A WINDOW OF TIME

Poison oak will re-sprout readily if mowed or cut. In small areas with moist, loose soil, the roots can be grubbed out. But avoid grubbing in dry or rocky soil because the roots break easily and will re-sprout from root fragments.

Goats, sheep and other animals will browse poison oak but the plants will come back.

Herbicides that work on poison oak include glyphosate (Roundup, Accord, Glypro, etc) and triclopyr (Garlon). Glyphosate should be sprayed late in the season for best effectiveness – when the leaves are still green but the plants have fruited. For early season applications use Triclopyr. Repeat applications will probably be necessary. Follow all label directions. You can spray the foliage or apply the chemical on freshly cut stems.

DECONTAMINATING TOOLS

Use Original Tecnu applied full strength onto a cloth or directly onto the tool and wipe it down. After two minutes rinse or wipe off with a clean towel. Other products available to remove resins from tools should work, too. (NOTE: If something has a porous, synthetic handle it may be compromised by Tecnu. Just test a small area with Tecnu first, before coating the item.)
REMOVING OIL (URUSHIOL) FROM THE SKIN
THERE ARE THREE OPTIONS

Soap and water—helpful only if you can get to soap and water within 10 minutes after exposure. Fels Naptha soap works well. Soap and water is only helpful on clothing if washed in a laundry machine.

Tecnu original—is a liquid skin cleanser that can be applied directly to skin or gear. According to OSU’s Mark Christensen, “Tecnu breaks the bond that the urushiol has with the skin. Tecnu can be used with or without water. Without water, apply Tecnu, rub it around fairly aggressively and wipe it off with a cloth or paper towel. In extreme situations, even scraping off the used Tecnu (and urushiol) with one’s hand can be helpful.

Tecnu Extreme—was developed in 2005 after direct input the field. Tecnu Extreme has micro-fine scrubbing beads and special surfactants to remove embedded urushiol from the skin and is the best choice if there is access to water. Tecnu Extreme can be used to prevent a rash, stop the itching or stop an existing rash from spreading. Use Tecnu Extreme within 8 hours after exposure to urushiol to avoid the rash. Using it at any point before the rash actually starts can be helpful. Be extra diligent when washing areas where skin creases (behind the knees, the bend at the elbow, fingers) because urushiol accumulates in these areas.

IT IS CRUCIAL TO REMOVE URUSHIOL FROM FIBERS IN CLOTHING/GEAR.

The contaminant can accumulate on fibers. Removing urushiol from clothing/gear. Gear/clothing contaminated by urushiol is utterly detrimental because a person coming in contact with that gear/clothing will be re-contaminated and can get the rash without even coming in contact with the plants. According to Dr. Christensen, “Tecnu’s emulsifying properties will remove the urushiol from fabric fibers in clothing and gear.

Remove urushiol from cuffs & rims of gloves. The wrist area is a prominent place for urushiol to accumulate—even when one is wearing gloves and a long sleeve shirt. Twice a day, if possible, completely saturate cuffs with Tecnu and massage the fabric. After 2 minutes rinse off the cuff or glove rim with water. Removal from the fabric is important especially before resting/sleeping so that the urushiol does not re-contaminate the interior wrist (tender skin that is especially receptive to the rash).

Urushiol is like a resin. Heat and per-spiration work as a vehicle to transfer it. From gloves it will move to the hand & upper arm. Forearms & hands should be treated with Tecnu or Tecnu Extreme, as part of a regular regimen

REMOVE URUSHIOL FROM SHARED GEAR: UNIFORMS & OVER GARMENTS, ETC.

Urushiol will be present on over-garments that have been exposed to poison oak/ivy. If it is not removed, a person coming in contact with the clothing at a later date can be contaminated. It is advised that a way be found to remove the urushiol at some point. Tecnu doesn’t currently have a product. Use a degreasing type detergent and HOT water. Keep contaminated articles separate from other laundry.

STOP THE RASH FROM SPREADING

The original contamination of urushiol tends to spread all over the body by different means. The rash will break out in one area, then another, and so on. The severity and spreading of the rash can be lessened if Tecnu Extreme is used quickly to remove any remaining urushiol that is on the body. Treating as much skin as possible the moment it is noticed (best is a full body wash in a shower) can dramatically reduce the severity of the reaction and contain the rash before it becomes fully realized and debilitating. An untreated rash can take weeks to overcome.

Tecnu Extreme has an active ingredient to help with the itching and healing. Tecnu original is a cleanser and does not have this active ingredient. Although, if Tecnu Extreme is not available, original Tecnu may be helpful to remove urushiol after a rash appears.

HEALING THE RASH

Using a topical product for drying up rashes can help the healing process. Tecnu makes a product called Calagel. There are other products on the market. You may already have something you like or that an occupational nurse may recommend (i.e. Benadryl, etc.) Calagel is unusual in that it has an antiseptic and a skin protectant added to it.