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### Herbal Remedies for Common Camping Ailments

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by Kirsten Hudson

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I plan to go camping this summer but don't want my fun ruined by bug bites, bee stings or poison ivy. With my luck though, I'll spend most of the camping trip itching my legs rather than enjoying the wilderness. Preventive measures – bug sprays and campfires – can only go so far; try our herbal remedies to soothe those common camping complaints.

#### Camping Ailment #1: Poison Ivy

Prevent poison ivy rashes by learning how to identify them. Poison ivy grows as a vine or a shrub. Most often it coils around trees or along the ground, but it can also form into upright bushes.

The leaves of [poison ivy](#) consist of three pointed leaflets. The leaves have a reddish color in the spring, are green in the summer, and have various shades of yellow, orange or red in the fall.

If you do catch poison ivy, try these herbs to soothe the itching:

- [Grindelia](#), also known as gumweed, contains resins and tannins that help relieve pain and itching. Apply a grindelia tincture or spray directly to the rash.
- [Jewelweed](#) tends to grow near poison ivy. For instant relief, pick a branch, crush it and apply the juice directly to the rash. To keep jewelweed handy, make this [jewelweed vinegar](#), which stays good for about a year.
- [Oatmeal](#) also works well to soothe irritated skin because it pulls out any remaining toxins. Use oatmeal for rashes that have already set in. Try adding a pot of oatmeal to a bath or grind together oatmeal and cold water to make a paste to spread onto the rash.



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#### Camping Ailment #2: Poison Oak

Poison oak grows mainly in the western United States. It usually grows as a shrub but can also grow

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as a vine.

Like poison ivy, poison oak usually has three leaflets; sometimes it has five. Its leaves are green in the summer, but red or pinkish in the fall.

The remedies for poison ivy work equally well for poison oak.

### Camping Ailment #3: Bug Bites

To prevent bug bites, try diluting [these herbs](#) with vinegar or oils such as olive, almond, grapeseed, sesame or walnut, to deter mosquitoes, chiggers, gnats, ticks and biting flies.

- Lemongrass
- Eucalyptus
- Lavender
- Lemon Thyme
- Mountain Mint
- Citronella
- Sandalwood

Unfortunately bug sprays don't repel against all bugs all the time. Plus they evaporate quickly and require frequent reapplication. If you get bitten, try these herbal remedies for itching relief.

For mosquito or chigger bites, rub [tea tree oil](#) on the affected area.

For other bites, try peppermint essential oil or witch hazel extract. With its high concentration of [menthol](#), peppermint works to curb itching caused by bug bites. Distilled witch hazel has astringent, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties, which help soothe insect bites.

[Lemon juice](#) also relieves itching from bug bites. The juice works against bug saliva, the source of the itching. Baking soda and apple cider vinegar work similarly.



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### Camping Ailment #4: Bee Stings

Apply the end of an [onion](#) (any type works) to an insect sting. The onion draws out venom and creates a soothing sensation.

Plantains also soothe stings. Crush a few leaves of the plant and apply the juice to the affected area.

Lotions or creams that contain calendula or chamomile can also soothe mild stings.

Enjoying the great outdoors can come with an itchy price. I hope these herbal remedies help. Do you have any natural remedies for soothing common summer ailments? Tell me about them in the comment section.

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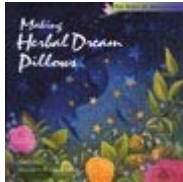
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