Poisonous Plants: Reference Material

Rules, Guidelines and Definitions

This page is a brief synopsis of how to deal with poisonous plants in general.

* DON’T EAT them or TOUCH them!!!
1. Two General Types of Poisoning

1. Dermatitis: inflamation or irritation (rash) to the skin; therefore, one gets poisoned by handling or touching the plant.

2. Internal Poisoning: nausea, vomiting, dizziness, hallucinations; therefore, one gets poisoned by ingesting (eating) or inhaling (breathing in or absorbing through the skin).

1. General Rules for Berries
2. White berries (mistletoe, red osier, white snakeroot, white baneberry) are almost always poisonous.
3. Green berries usually represent immature or unripe berries and cause nausea or the “green apple quick step.”
4. Red berries can be poisonous: baneberry, snakeroot, nightshade, yew; but can also be edible: strawberry, cherry, raspberry, currents, chokecherry.
5. Blue or black berries are the safest to eat.
6. Rules for Distinguishing Mushrooms
7. Never eat a mushroom until you are ABSOLUTELY sure of its identity.
8. Be sure that all edible mushrooms collected are FRESH.
9. In general, brightly colored forms are poisonous.
10. Reject all forms of mushrooms that have a “cup” on the stem or head; or have a sac-like envelope at the base of the stem.
11. Avoid the early stage mushrooms (button stage) as it is very difficult to identify characteristics.
12. It is not wise to handle mushrooms when collecting or observing. Many are poisonous even to the touch or you may handle food which you eat. Always wash your hands after handling mushrooms.
13. Four species of mushrooms that are usually NOT poisonous:

1) Morels, 2) Puffballs, 3) Sulphur Polypores and 4) Shaggy Mane.