

Parks Staff Battle Poison Ivy and Rash of Other Weeds at Little Bennett Campground and Area Parks | Montgomery Community Media

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The Wears discovered poison ivy at their campsite at Little Bennett Campground.

When Florida residents Washburn and Courtney Wear pulled their motorhome into a campsite at [Little Bennett Campground](#) this past week in Clarksburg, the first thing they noticed was a large patch of poison ivy.

The Wears said they were concerned about the proximity of the poison ivy to their campsite because they had their dogs with them, and they didn't want to get the blistering rash.

Campground director Jacob Holland said maintenance crews routinely inspect all 91 campsites, and somehow they missed this patch or misjudged the proximity to the campsite. He said the poison ivy patch would be treated once signage was posted to alert passersby of the herbicide application.

Similar treatments are being dispatched at parks across Montgomery County this month.

Jody Fetzer is the green management coordinator and a plant health horticulturist for Montgomery Parks. She is also in charge of the Montgomery Parks pesticides program.

“This year, while the growth of poison ivy looks to be the same as previous years, both Parks patrons and Parks staff are noticing poison ivy more,” Fetzer said. “Due to the recent rain, weeds are growing at a faster rate and the rain slows down the treatment process since parks staff can't get out there to assess and treat the ivy.”



Parks officials say poison ivy and other weeds are growing at a faster rate this season because of all the recent rain.

According to Fetzer, Montgomery Parks uses several strategies for poison ivy treatment with the goal of making the parks and trails safe for all users.

There are more than two dozen parks and fields that are scheduled to be treated for weeds and noxious weeds this month in Montgomery County, according to the [Parks website](#).

As for preventing the spread of poison ivy, Fetzer said that's difficult because more than 50 species of birds have been reported to eat the seeds and deer also munch on the weeds and move or spread the seeds.

That may be how poison ivy suddenly showed up in Derwood resident Joelle Modderman's yard.

Modderman was walking by her garden bed last spring when she decided to pull a dandelion weed out of it. That's when she realized there was a poison ivy plant next to it that she had touched. Modderman said she's lived in Derwood for ten years and had never seen the noxious weed in her yard before that day. Knowing that she had come in contact with poison ivy, she washed her hands and changed her clothes but it was too late.

"It was horrible," Modderman recalled. She said it took more than two weeks and a visit to the doctor to get rid of the itchy rash. At the doctor's office, she was told they were seeing more people come into the office for poison ivy treatment after contact with the plant.

Montgomery County Health and Human Services spokesperson Mary Anderson said she does not have any statistics on the number of poison ivy cases locally.

Fetzer said Montgomery Parks does not have any information on its website about poison ivy and Holland said the campground does not include information about it in the information packet they provide to campers. Both agreed it would be a good idea to share that information with visitors to the Montgomery Parks system.

On July 27, Montgomery Parks is hosting a special event to teach residents about poison ivy at the Meadowside Nature Center. You can find out more, [here](#).

The University of Maryland's extension office has posted information about recognizing poison ivy plants on its website, [here](#). For more information about Montgomery Parks pesticide use and pesticide free areas, visit the Parks website, [here](#).

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About Sonya Burke

Sonya Burke is the Multimedia Manager at Montgomery Community Media (MCM). You can email story ideas at sburke@mymcmedia.org or reach her on Twitter [@SonyaNBurke](#).