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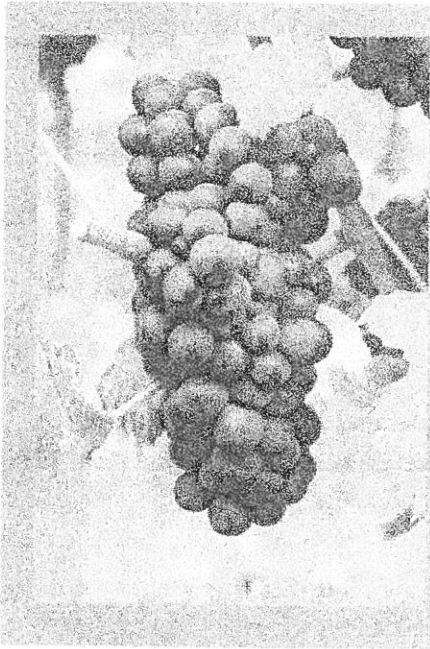
# Pokeberries: A Grape Look Alike

## The Bottom Line

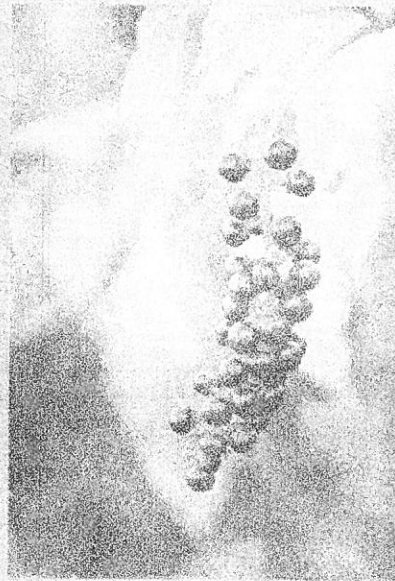
Pokeberries are shrubby plants with purple-red stems and clusters of purple berries that look grapes. Eating several berries can cause pain, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Adults have eaten the roots, mistaking them for medicinal plants. Serious gastrointestinal problems have occurred, including bloody vomiting, bloody diarrhea, and low blood pressure.

## The Full Story

These purple berries look alike. But are they both good to eat? Can you tell them apart? Can your child tell them apart?



Grapes



Pokeberries

The berries on the left are grapes. Of course, they are good to eat! The berries on the right are pokeberries. Eating them can make you sick.

Poison Control gets a lot of calls about children who ate purple berries. Usually, they picked pokeberries growing in their yards. The tell-tale clue is purple stains in and around the mouth, on their hands, and on their clothing.

To a child, pokeberries look like grapes: clusters of purple berries hang from stems, usually at a child's level. Adults can easily tell pokeberries from grapes by their red stems, which don't look like woody grapevines at all.

Pokeweed is a shrub with multiple red stems. Individual plants may be a few feet tall or adult height. In the spring, young poke leaves are cooked as "poke salad"; leaves must be boiled and drained twice to be eaten safely. During the summer, clusters of white flowers turn into green berries. By August, many or most of these berries have become shiny and purple. The plants grow from deep tap roots which are hard to dig up.

Children who eat a berry or two are not likely to develop symptoms. Eating several berries, though, can cause a lot of stomach distress: pain, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Adults have eaten the roots, mistaking them for medicinal plants. Serious gastrointestinal problems have occurred, including bloody vomiting, bloody diarrhea, and low blood pressure.

Pokeweed will die back in the frost. It's difficult to keep it out of your yard because of the deep root. How can you prevent children from eating pokeberries?

- The best way to keep very young children safe is to watch them closely outdoors.
- Consider digging up pokeweed plants or cutting them down, though that might be difficult when the plant is large.
- If you find pokeweed in your yard, you might consider keeping it cut down when it reappears next year.
- Children should be taught never to eat wild berries unless they first check with an adult.

If your child eats pokeberries, rinse out his or her mouth and give some water or milk to drink. Then, use the [webPOISONCONTROL®](https://triage.webpoisoncontrol.org) (<https://triage.webpoisoncontrol.org>) online tool for guidance or call Poison Control 24 hours a day at 1-800-222-1222. You will be asked some questions about your child and what he or she ate. Then, you'll be told what to do. Often, watching a child at home will be enough. If emergency room care is needed, you will be directed to the emergency room.

Rose Ann Gould Soloway, RN, BSN, MSEd, DABAT *emerita*  
Clinical Toxicologist

## For More Information

Pokeweed poisoning and its treatment (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002874.htm>) (Medline)

## HOW TO GET RID OF POKEWEED? ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW!

Perhaps you are an avid gardener who does their very best to grow and maintain the garden to the best of their abilities. Whether through rain or shine, summer or winter, you are always outside tending to your lovely plants, vegetables, and flowers for the sake of keeping them beautiful and healthy.

That said, perhaps you have noticed recently that there have been some red stemmed, purple berries growing out just right next to your plants and flowers. While they might look nice, little do you know that they are pokeweed.

An invasive plant, this type of weed can be extremely vicious, as well as really difficult to eliminate if not treated soon enough, let alone properly. If so, then it can cause a lot of damage to the property, thereby wiping out your plants and all of your hard work to begin with.

Hence, *how can you get rid of pokeweed?* No need to fear- we are here to help! Read on to learn more in this article on how to do so, in our step-by-step tutorial.

We will give you tips and tricks on how to combat these pesky creatures and soon enough, you will have an immaculate, weed-free garden in no time. ***Without further ado, let's get started!***

When it comes to treating or otherwise getting rid of any type of weed or invasive plant out there, careful measures must be taken in order to make sure that they not only are eliminated from your garden, but also that there are not any leftover seeds or roots which can take root in the soil, thereby growing back with vengeance.

Granted, it can be a difficult balance act, but we assure you that, by being especially alert and vigilant, you should be able to successfully get rid of all the pokeweed in your garden. Here are some items you will need for this step-by-step tutorial:

#1. Spade Or Shovel - For case-by-case pokeweed, i.e. it has not yet spread too much, a simple spade or shovel should do the trick in terms of uprooting the invasive plant from its position, before discarding it. Make sure that the spade or shovel is sharp, as well as strong, enough to make deep, wide holes to cover every part of the area around the pokeweed that can be affected.

#2. Soil Screen - Considered as a sort of filter, soil screen are those which can hold onto soil, while also letting other aspects such as nutrients and water to flow through smoothly. This item is to be used as a liner when placing the uprooted pokeweed on it, so that it does not contaminate any other areas of the garden.

#3. Wheelbarrow Or Garden Cart - Especially if your garden has a considerable amount of pokeweed, then it is useful to have either a wheelbarrow or garden cart to hold them in, so that you can wheel them off to the waste bin without risking any seeds or roots from dropping off, which can otherwise lead to contamination once more.

#4. Rake - Once you have finished uprooting all the pokeweed possible from the garden, the rake will be handy for tilling and otherwise loosening up the soil, so that the garden can get back to growing once again. This is also to ensure that no other seeds or roots have been left behind, so that you can detect them easier when raking the soil.

#5. Waste Bin - An obvious object, this is used to dispose of the pokeweed. However, be careful to put the pokeweed in a trash bag or some other container, so that it does not contaminate the composting center, should you be recycling green.

#6. Herbicide - Finally, if it really comes down to it, you might need to use herbicide or a weed killer in order to treat the extreme cases of pokeweed infiltration. You can either DIY it, or purchase it at your local home and garden store, to make sure that you can destroy those pesky plants once and for all.

### How To Get Rid Of Pokeweeds

Now that you have all your necessary tools and ingredients, it is time to eliminate those pokeweeds!

Here is what you need to do:

1. Pull Them Out - This is specifically applicable for fresh roots; all you have to do is simply use your hand to grasp the tops of the pokeweed and give it a firm tug straight up to pull them out. You should be able to successfully pull out its taproot. Depending on the type of soil you are using for your garden, however, it might be easier or more difficult to pull out the pokeweed, since some soils are tougher than others.
2. Dig Them Out - Sometimes, the pokeweed is lodged in the soil so deeply that you will need to use either a spade or shovel to dig it out. To do so, you will need to use your forearm and hand strengths to dig a deep hole around the affected area, about twelve inches in diameter, considering that pokeweed can really spread a lot. Next, loosen up the invasive plant from the soil; as a result, you should have a massive root ball.
3. Set Up The Soil Screen And Wheelbarrow - To protect the wheelbarrow (or garden cart) from contamination, it is necessary to set up a soil screen. Taking the root ball, whack it against the soil screen to get rid of the dirt- another alternative is to brush it off manually. Place the pokeweed on the garden cart once you are done doing so.
4. Rake Through The Soil - To make sure that there are no more traces of pokeweed roots or seeds in the soil, double check by using your rake to loosen the soil. Loosen up to twelve inches in depth, considering that pokeweed can really bury itself deep- after all, you would not want to be taking chances for another invasion!
5. Dry Out The Pokeweed Roots - Once you are sure that there are no more traces of pokeweed in your garden, you will now need to dry out the roots which you have pulled out. Transfer them far away from your garden's soil, laying them out in the sun for them to dry out and otherwise die. This step is one of the most important ones, for if you decide to discard them in the waste bin while they are still fresh, you risk contaminating the garden composting center, which is certainly not a pleasant situation to be in.
6. Use Herbicide (if necessary) - Under extreme circumstances will you need to use herbicide, in the case that the pokeweed has taken over a good part of your garden. You can choose to buy your herbicide at the store, or you can make a glyphosate-water mixture to kill off the roots when you apply it.

### Conclusion

Altogether, getting rid of pokeweed can be a hassle, especially if it has already invaded a good part of your garden. However, by remaining calm and taking quick, effective measures to eliminate it, you can assure yourself of a clean, healthy garden once more.

**SOURCE:** <https://www.sharycherry.com/how-to-get-rid-of-pokeweed/>