Hazardous Plants – Landscaping Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

The general public may not view plants through a lens that categorizes some plants as hazardous. But that mindset does not align nor conform with the objective science relative to the discussion of hazardous plants that affect the workplace.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Some plants that landscape workers encounter are poisonous, can cause allergic reactions or asthma in some people, or can be hazardous in other ways. These plants can cause life-threatening reactions.

Common hazards include the following:

- Burns from the sap of plants such as giant hogweed, spurge laurel, or euphorbia
- Rash from cedar cuts or poison ivy
- Asthma or allergic reaction to western red cedar

Incident examples

- While cutting down giant hogweed, a worker got some of the sap on his hands. Two days later, his hands were blistered and red. After the blisters cleared, he had dark blotches on his hands for seven months.
- A worker stepped on a prickly shrub. As she moved her foot, the shrub sprang back and hit her in the side of the face. Two prickles became embedded in her left eye, and a 40-minute surgery was required to remove them.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Initial Hazardous Plant Safety Checklist

- Ensure that you can recognize hazardous plants.

- Be aware of the plants you’re working around.
- Inform co-workers and supervisors if you encounter hazardous plants unexpectedly.
- Wear protective clothing and PPE.
- If you have sensitivities to some plants, keep asthma and allergy medications available. Notify the first aid attendant (if there is one) or a co-worker about your sensitivities.

Responsibilities of Employers

- Train workers to recognize hazardous plants and about the preventive measures they should take.
- Remind workers about the PPE they are required to wear.
- Provide adequate supervision after training.

Workers

- Follow safe work procedures for working around hazardous plants.
- Wear appropriate PPE.

FINAL WORD

Protections and procedures to protect landscape workers from the hazardous plants they encounter must be highlighted in all landscaping training protocols for workers.