



Inspiration for role play games or discussions about plants and environmentalism

The DC Universe super-villain Poison Ivy made her debut in the Batman comic in 1966 and is a Gotham City botanist and biochemist. More recently, she has become an anti-hero, who uses her skills to do the right thing, but in the wrong way. She's an extreme environmentalist and her 'powers' include the use of plant-based toxins and pheromones to carry out her evil / justified schemes.

*NB Poison Ivy is named after the American or Eastern Poison ivy, (*Toxicodendron radicans*) and is not the same species as that found in the UK and Europe (*Hedera* spp). The plant poison ivy is very irritant to skin – European ivies are generally more benign.*

Poetry and songs

O roses for the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime;
But pluck an ivy branch for me
Grown old before my time.

Christina Rossetti, 1862

Ivy is often used in poetry and has many mythical properties. Explore ivy's meanings and develop your own poems, song lyrics or raps.



Ivy songs

Ivy berries are toxic

BOOKS:

The 'Wild...' series of books by Jo Schofield and Fiona Danks
101 Things to Make and Do Outdoors by Frances Lincoln

These books are full of ideas for outdoor and creative play with natural materials, including story sticks, story bags, storyboards.

Weaving with Ivy

Ivy is a very versatile material for weaving and braiding, plus it is usually plentiful and is easy to collect and use. Harvest long lengths and strip the leaves with a gloved hand. Use material as fresh as you can to make the weaving easier – the stems will be flexible and less likely to snap. Begin with simple braiding and move on to weaving (experienced weavers can dry their ivy for rehydrating later). Ivy braids are excellent for den building – strong, flexible *and* biodegradable!

<< examples of simple weaving frames and baskets



Ivy weaving

When you've mastered using ivy, try other long leaves or stemmed materials that might be to hand.



Ivy crowns and wreaths

There are many myths associated with ivy, but it's frequently depicted in art as a head-dress. Ivy symbolises eternal life (because it's evergreen) and fidelity (because it never lets go of what it's attached to), so it is common in bridal bouquets as well as in funeral flowers.

Ancient civilisations revered ivy, and crowns are connected to Osiris in Egypt where it represents immortality) Bacchus in Rome (called Dionysus in Greece) where it symbolises wine, agriculture, festivities and fruitfulness.

Ivy crowns are easy to weave – choose very long lengths and loosely plait them, twisting a plant tie around the ends to keep them together.

