

How to add some excitement to outdoor entertaining



(StatePoint) It's time to take the party outdoors. Here are some fun ideas for entertaining on the balmy days and nights ahead:

• **Cool Spread:** Host a potluck in your backyard, setting up a long picnic table for guests to display their dishes. You can make things more

interesting by adding a theme or challenge. Whether it's to incorporate a specific seasonal ingredient into every dish or to only bring dips, the possibilities are endless. Use online tools to help you organize, such as perfectpotluck.com, which gives guests an opportunity to sign up for a

specific item ahead of time so there are no duplicates.

• **Outdoor Movie Night:** It's easy to turn the backyard into an outdoor cinema. Grab some lawn chairs and blankets and host a movie night outdoors under the stars. You can be sure you get a clear, crisp picture with a projec-

tor designed to automatically adjust its brightness relative to ambient light. For example, the XJ-F210WN, part of Casio's Advanced Series line of projectors, combines a laser and LED light source and uses an Intelligent Light Control feature to ensure viewers get great visuals. Powered on and off in as fast as five seconds, this mercury-free, energy efficient choice is right for hosts who don't like to make their guests wait.

• **Decorate:** Your decorations should evoke the spirit of the season. Think garlands, fresh flower centerpieces, paper lanterns and vibrant colors.

• **Make Music:** No party is complete without music. Whether you're hosting a jam session or karaoke night, take advantage of the season by taking the musical fun outdoors. A versatile portable keyboard, such as the CT-X700, can help you get the party started. It comes

with the AiX Sound Source, which faithfully reproduces the sound of acoustic instruments such as guitars, wind instruments and more, as well as 100 built-in songs, 600 tones and 195 rhythms. It also includes a class-compliant USB-MIDI port that connects to most devices with no driv-

ers or installation needed, making it a good choice for an outdoor set-up.

This season, be the host with the most by taking the party outdoors.

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How to identify poison ivy



Poison ivy is an unwelcome guest on many properties. Unfortunately, many people don't recognize the presence of poison ivy on their property until it's too late and they've already fallen victim to the uncomfortable, itchy red rash that is the plant's hallmark.

According to Poison-Ivy.org, a website providing information about poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac, the rash from poison ivy may first appear as just a slight itchy spot. But that spot will gradually get worse and can even cover your entire body with giant red sores if left untreated or if it goes undetected for too long. That only highlights the importance of learning to recognize poison ivy on a property and taking the appropriate measures to prevent anyone from coming into contact with it.

Is all poison ivy the same?

Many people may be surprised to learn that all poison ivy plants are not one and the same. Poison-Ivy.org notes that there are different types of poison ivy in different places, so curious homeowners should visit the site to determine how to identify the type of poison ivy specific to where they live. Eastern Poison Ivy grows on the ground, climbs and sometimes appears as a shrub. And despite its name, Eastern Poison Ivy grows

from the east coast to the midwest, affecting people in middle American states like Kansas and Nebraska. Eastern Poison Ivy also can be found in some parts of Texas and Arizona.

What are some telltale signs of the poison ivy plant?

Eastern Poison Ivy is the most widespread poison ivy plant, and these are some of its characteristics. (Note: People who live outside of regions where Eastern Poison Ivy grows can learn about the characteristics of plants in their area by visiting www.Poison-Ivy.org).

• Poison ivy plants always have leaves of three. No poison ivy plants have more than three leaves.

• Poison ivy always grow left, then right. That means that the stem/branch of leaves closest to the root of the plant will always lean left. Subsequent stems/branches of leaves can lean right. Stems/branches of poison ivy leaves are never side by side.

• Poison ivy plants never have thorns.

• The edges of poison ivy leaves are never saw-toothed or scalloped.

• Poison ivy leaves will appear differently depending on the season. In spring, Eastern Poison Ivy leaves will appear red. As spring turns into summer, the leaves will gradually appear

more green. Come fall, the green leaves will look as if they were brushed with red, with some leaves featuring patches or spots of red.

The poison ivy rash can be very uncomfortable. Learning to identify poison ivy plants can help people avoid the rash. GT194818



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