

# Poison oak from prop gets under actors' skin

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The Kansas City Star

Poisons have long had a place in plays.

Think of the poison poured in the king's ear in "Hamlet."

Think of the dotty old ladies of "Arsenic and Old Lace" killing off their house guests.

But a poison of a different sort — poison oak and its rankling rash — unintentionally became part of a production of the musical "A Year With Frog and Toad," which opened Thursday night at Shawnee Mission West High School, when cast members came in contact with a contaminated log used as a prop.

"For good measure, we removed it," said Shawnee Mission School District spokeswoman Leigh Anne Neal.

Neal said the school learned Friday that five student actors had come down with rash symptoms that appear to be poison oak but, she emphasized, "in reality we don't know."

Adding to the mystery, Neal said, is that the same log was used in a production in November and no one reported any problems.

But the log was tossed anyway. Parents were alerted. The five actors will take to the boards this weekend.

The school's publicity for the show describes the musical as the "adventures of two amphibious friends, a worrywart toad and a perky frog, with their assorted colorful hopping, crawling and flying companions, over the course of a year."

Probably need to add itching and scratching to that list.

Curtain up. Cue the calamine lotion.

The play continues at 7 p.m. today at the school, 8800 W. 85th St.