

Giant Hogweed

Heracleum mantegazzianum Parsley Family

Identification Tips

- Giant plant topped with 2 foot wide, umbrella- shaped flower clusters densely packed with tiny white flowers
- Reaches a height of 8 to 15 feet when in flower
- Hollow, ridged stems 2 to 4 inches in diameter with dark reddish-purple raised blotches and stiff white hairs (look like spines but are hairs)
- Large compound leaves are deeply incised, 3 to 5 feet wide
- Undersides of leaves have hairs on ribs but the surface of the leaf underside is hairless
- Seeds are in 3/8 inch, elliptic dry fruits with wings and swollen brown resin canals

Biology

Generally this plant is a perennial, flowering in the 3rd year or later and usually dying after flowering. Winged seeds spread by water, soil movement or by animals; can remain viable in the soil for over 10 years. Plants start to emerge in early spring. Flowers mid-May to July, seeds start forming in July.

Impacts

Poisonous. Sap can cause blistering of the skin and permanent scarring. Crowds out desirable native, forage and crop plants with its aggressive growth. May increase erosion on rivers and hillsides by replacing soil-protecting evergreen and woody plants.

Distribution

Originally from the Caucasus Mountains and introduced to North America as an ornamental. Most commonly found in urban areas, along roadsides, unmanaged yards and vacant lots. Prefers rich, damp soil and can grow in varied light conditions. With prolific seed production and tolerance of shade, it can quickly invade river and stream banks, wetlands and wooded ravines.

What You Can Do

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program is actively trying to eradicate giant hogweed from all areas in the county. Do your part by checking for giant hogweed on your property. By stopping seed production and eliminating existing plants, the infestation will decline or be eliminated over time. If you cannot control your giant hogweed, contact us for assistance. Please report any sightings.

**Class A Noxious Weed:
Eradication Required**



Look for large, umbrella-shaped white flowers mid-May to July.



Stems are reddish-purple with raised bumps and white hairs.



Leaves are enormous and deeply incised.

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control Program: **206-477-WEED** kingcounty.gov/weeds

Control Methods

If you find giant hogweed on your property, choose one or a combination of control methods listed below. Use caution. **This plant poses a serious health threat.** Wear proper clothing, shoes, and eye protection when attempting any control measures. **Avoid skin contact. Watery sap in leaves and stems can cause burns, blisters and scarring.**

Manual:

Mature plants can be removed manually. Dig up at least 4-6 inches of the central root. Younger plants are more resilient. In mature infestations, seedlings can number in the hundreds and may break off when being pulled from compacted soils, leaving the root to continue to grow. Be sure to bag flowers and seedheads and put in the trash.

Mechanical:

Mowing is not effective for long-term control. Do not weed-whack or mow without full protective clothing and footwear—juice from plant can cause burns.

Chemical:

Follow all applicable laws and regulations regarding herbicide use on your site, and follow all label directions. Glyphosate is effective, but is a non-selective herbicide that will also kill grasses in the area being sprayed. Bare areas can be re-infested so replant with vegetation appropriate to the site. Triclopyr is also effective. It is a selective herbicide that only acts on broadleaf plants, not harming most grasses. Apply herbicide to the entire leaf and stem surface of actively growing plants; do not cut the stem after applying the herbicide since this will stop the plant from absorbing the chemical. An area of heavy seedling infestation can be efficiently controlled by an herbicide application in spring, possibly followed by an application later in the summer for late sprouts. For more information, contact the Noxious Weed Control Program.



Be careful: sap in stems can cause severe blistering and scarring.

Could be confused with:

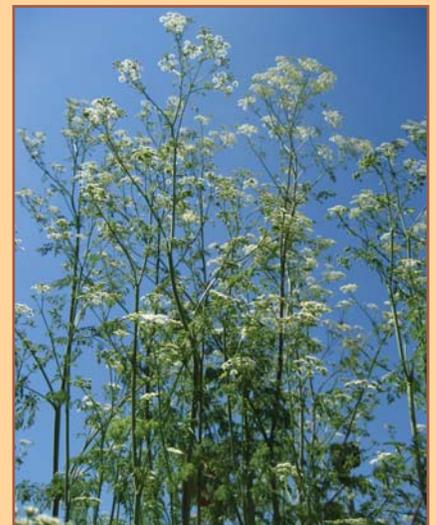
Giant hogweed is sometimes confused with the native plant cow parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*), as well as the introduced species wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) and poison-hemlock (*Conium maculatum*).



Cow parsnip closely resembles giant hogweed but is usually 4-7 feet, with smaller flower clusters and soft, wavy, shiny hairs, including on the surface of leaf undersides. Also, its seeds are more heart-shaped. Like hogweed, it can cause burns, so avoid contact with sap.



Wild carrot's flowers look like those of giant hogweed, but this plant reaches only 3 feet tall.



Poison-hemlock can be distinguished from giant hogweed by its hairless stems and many smaller flower clusters per plant.