

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
- Hollow, ridged stems 2 to 4 inches in diameter with dark reddish-purple raised blotches and white hairs
- Reaches a height of 8 to 15 feet when in flower
- Large compound leaves are deeply incised, 3 to 5 feet wide
- Hairs on the underside of the leaf and stems are stiff, dense and stubby
- 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

Major public health hazard. Sap can cause blistering of the skin and permanent scarring; sensitivity to light may also occur. Crowds out desirable native, forage and crop plants with its aggressive growth. Not useful as food or shelter to native wildlife. Can increase erosion on rivers and hillsides by replacing soil-protecting evergreen and woody plants.

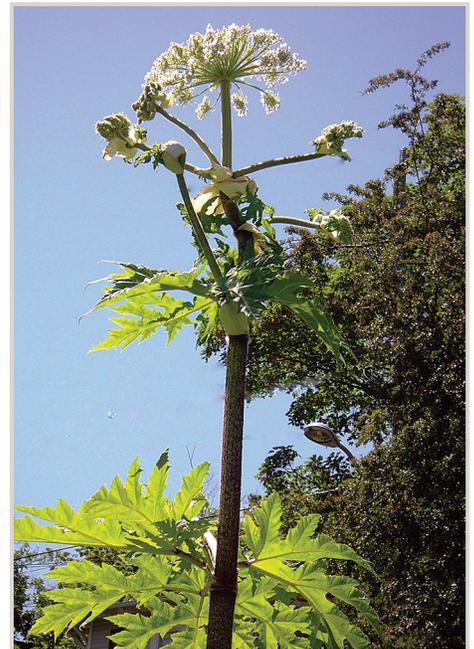
Distribution

Originally from the Caucasus Mountains. Most commonly found in urban areas, along roadsides, ditches, 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.

**Class A Noxious Weed:
Eradication Required**



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



Giant hogweed has enormous, deeply incised leaves.

Questions?

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

Control Methods

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

Manual:

Mature plants can be removed manually if at least the first 4-6 inches of the central root is dug up. 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 will only be effective for short periods of time and will have to be repeated every two weeks. Eventually, the roots will be depleted, but this may take years. Do not weed-whack or mow without full protective clothing and footwear—juice from plant can cause burns.

Chemical:

Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Glyphosate (such as Roundup) is effective, but is a non-selective herbicide that will also kill grasses in the area being sprayed. Bare areas can be re-infested with hogweed or other weeds so replanting with vegetation appropriate to the site is suggested. Triclopyr (such as Brush Killer) is also effective. It is a selective herbicide that only acts on broadleaf plants, not harming most grasses in the area of the application. 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.



Manual removal starts with cutting stalks.



Cow parsnip grows shorter than hogweed with slender, hairy stems and smaller, less jagged leaves.

Could be confused with:

Giant hogweed is sometimes confused with the native plant cow parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*).

It grows in the same areas as giant hogweed, but cow parsnip rarely exceeds 6 feet and has smaller flower clusters. Also, the hairs on the underside of the leaf are soft, wavy and shiny. Unlike giant hogweed, control is not required for cow parsnip, but both plants can cause burns, so avoid contact with sap.