

Giant Hogweed Extension Notes



About Giant Hogweed...

Giant hogweed was introduced from Europe, presumably as an ornamental. It has since escaped along roadsides, stream banks and waste areas in scattered localities in southern Ontario.



Fig. 1 Giant Hogweed plant

Health Concerns

Giant hogweed can be a serious health hazard for humans. Its watery, clear sap contains photosensitizing compounds which, when in contact with human skin and exposed to sunlight (UV rays), can cause severe burning. The reaction, known as *photodermatitis*, depends on an individual's sensitivity.

After 24hrs, reddening and swelling of the skin can be noticed, which is followed by an inflammatory reaction after 3 days. Depending on individual sensitivity, effects can last for months and skin can remain sensitive to UV light for years. Research has also shown that some of the compounds found in the sap of Giant Hogweed may be carcinogenic.

If you have been exposed to this plant, it is often suggested that you wash affected area immediately, avoid direct exposure to sunlight and seek medical advice.



Fig. 2 Above: Severe burning to skin from contact with Giant Hogweed

Fig. 3 Right: Skin irritation from contact with Giant Hogweed



Giant Hogweed Identification



Fig.4– Flowering portion of Giant Hogweed

Inflorescence (flowering portion of plant)

- ◆ Compound umbel up to 120cm across
- ◆ Consisting of many (approximately 30 to 50) branches, each branch ending in a simple umbel with approximately 30 to 40 flowers
- ◆ The whole compound umbel has a flat bottom and gently rounded top; petals white

Leaves

- ◆ Leaves very large, up to 1m across
- ◆ Compound, with 3 large deeply cut leaflets, each leaflet with deep irregular lobes and coarse, sharp teeth on all margins
- ◆ Leaves on the flowering stem similar in shape but smaller
- ◆ The upper leaves often not divided but just deeply 3-lobed.



Fig. 5– Rosette leaves of a Giant Hogweed plant

Stems

- ◆ Flowering stems up to 5m high and up to 10cm in diameter
- ◆ hollow except at the nodes
- ◆ both stems and petioles have conspicuous reddish-purple flecks throughout



Fig. 6– Stem of a small Giant Hogweed plant

If you think you've seen this plant, please contact:

Norfolk County

Community Services Department– Forestry Division

Tel: 519-426-5999 x 2224



Giant Hogweed Extension Notes



Similar Plants

Cow Parsnip

Heracleum maximum



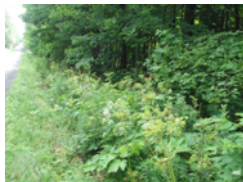
Flowers: -White, in large compound umbels
-Umbels 10-20+cm, flat-topped to slightly rounded



Leaves: -Compound leaves, leaflets deeply lobed
-2-3 leaflets up to 40 cm wide
-Leaf stalks are green



Stems: -Thick, succulent and hollow
-Soft, bristly hairs
-Lacks purplish spots



Plant: -Biennial or sometimes perennial
-Flowers June-September
-Grows to be 1-3 m tall (3-10 ft.)
-Found in moist meadows, edges of moist woods, sometimes in floodplains
NOT CONSIDERED TO BE POISONOUS

Angelica

Angelica atropurpurea



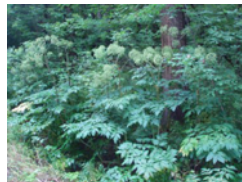
Flowers: -White, in large compound umbels
-Umbels spherical, up to 30cm in diameter



Leaves: -2 to 3 times compound
-Leaflets 2-5cm wide
-Leaf stalks are green



Stems: -Thick, succulent and hollow
-Smooth, or pebbled; hairless
-Purple colouring, more solid than spotty



Plant: -Perennial
-Grows up to 2.5 m tall (8.5 ft.)
-Common in moist meadows, along rivers and ditches
NOT CONSIDERED TO BE POISONOUS

Giant Hogweed

Heracleum mantegazzianum



Flowers: -White, in large compound umbels
-Umbels up to 120cm across, usually rounded top



Leaves: -Compound leaves, leaflets deeply cut
-Leaves can exceed 1.5m in width
-Leaf stalks are coarsely hairy with purple blotches



Stems: -Thick, succulent and hollow
-Coarsely haired
-Prevalent purple spotting; may become more solid near base of stem



Plant: -Biennial or perennial
-Grows up to 5m tall (16ft)
-Flowers June-August
-Prefers rich fertile soils, can tolerate various light conditions

CONSIDERED VERY DANGEROUS