

Prevention and Control

The most important first step a landowner can take to control Giant Hogweed is to contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or the state department of agriculture. Check the back panel of this brochure for the appropriate contact information.

Some state departments of agriculture have active survey and management programs for Giant Hogweed. Since Hogweed seeds may remain dormant in the soil for at least 5 years, eradication requires a long term commitment. Once Hogweed becomes established in an area, eradicating it requires persistence.

Mowing, cutting and weed whacking are not recommended as a means of control because the plant's large perennial root system soon sends up new growth. Also, these tactics are risky because they increase opportunities for homeowners to come in contact with the plant's sap.

Giant Hogweed is spread naturally by seeds, which can be wind-blown and scattered several feet from the parent plant or may be carried by water to invade new areas. However, people are usually responsible for spreading Giant Hogweed over long distances. Seeds or young plants from a friend's garden, planted in new locations, help spread this weed quickly over distances much greater than the plant would spread naturally. The dried fruit clusters are sometimes used in decorative arrangements, and when discarded outdoors, can start a new patch of Giant Hogweed.

If you wish to learn more about Giant Hogweed and have internet access, simply do a search for Giant Hogweed, and you will find numerous sources of information, including photographs of this plant and other plants commonly mistaken for it.

IF YOU SUSPECT A PLANT
IS GIANT HOGWEED,
CONTACT EITHER YOUR STATE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

OR
THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



U. S. Dept. of Agriculture
Animal & Plant Health
Inspection Service
Plant Protection & Quarantine
www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/weeds

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Giant Hogweed

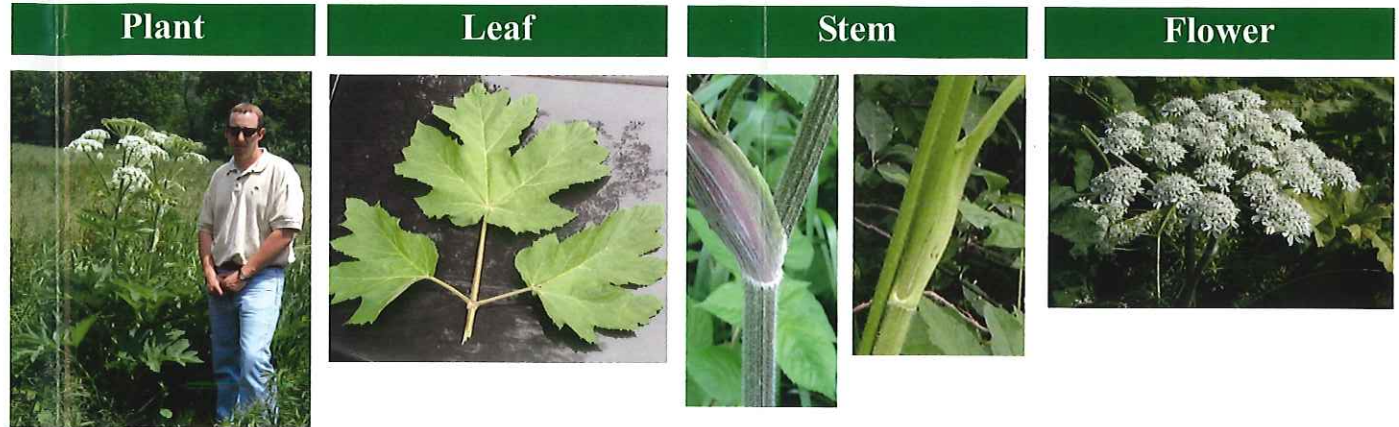
Heracleum mantegazzianum

An attractive but
dangerous noxious weed-
Have you seen this plant?



Similar Plants Commonly Mistaken for Giant Hogweed

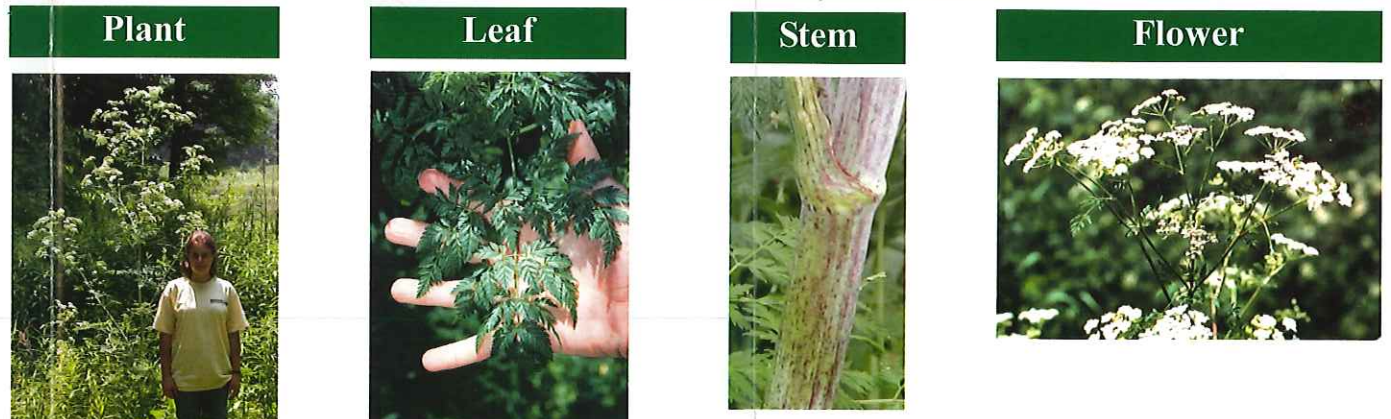
Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), a native plant, is most likely to be confused with Giant Hogweed. Cow Parsnip is smaller, reaching a height of 5-8' in Pennsylvania. Unlike Giant Hogweed, the stem maybe entirely green or have a slight purplish cast, is deeply ridged and only up to 1-2" in diameter. Hairs on Cow Parsnip are fine, soft and fuzzy, rather than coarse like those on Giant Hogweed. Although present on both leaf surfaces, the soft hairs occur primarily on the lower surface and give the leaves a velvety appearance. Mature leaves measure up to 2 to 2 ½' in diameter. Cow Parsnip generally flowers from early June through early July, typically several weeks before Giant Hogweed, and produces much smaller, flat topped flower clusters.



Angelica (*Angelica atropurpurea*) is easily distinguished from Giant Hogweed by its uniformly waxy green to purple, smooth hollow stems and compound, globular, softball-sized clusters of white or greenish-white flowers less than 1' in diameter. Angelica is shorter than Giant Hogweed, seldom attaining a height of 8'. The mature compound leaves can reach widths of 2' and have dozens of small leaflets. This plant typically flowers from mid May through mid June.



Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) is a multi-branched, non-native biennial ranging from 4 to 9' tall. The waxy stem has purple blotches, and the entire plant is smooth. Leaves are bright green, fern-like and may appear glossy. Small white flowers are arranged in numerous, small, flat-topped clusters on all the branches. Poison Hemlock has a disagreeable "mousy" odor, and the entire plant is poisonous if ingested. It generally flowers in late May through late June.



Giant Hogweed Plant

Giant Hogweed is a biennial or perennial herb growing from a forked or branched taproot. Plants sprout in early spring from the roots or from seeds.

How to Recognize Giant Hogweed

The best time to identify Giant Hogweed is when it's blooming

Flowers: numerous small white flowers in June or July, clustered into a flat-topped umbel up to 2½ ft. across.

Stems are hollow, ridged, 2-4 in. in diameter, 8-14 ft. tall, with purple blotches and coarse white hairs. The hairs are especially prominent that circle the stem at the base of the leaf stalks.

Leaves are lobed, deeply incised and up to 5 ft. across.

Fruit (containing the seed) is dry, flattened, oval, about 3/8 in. long and tan with brown lines.

Plant



Beginning to flower

Leaf



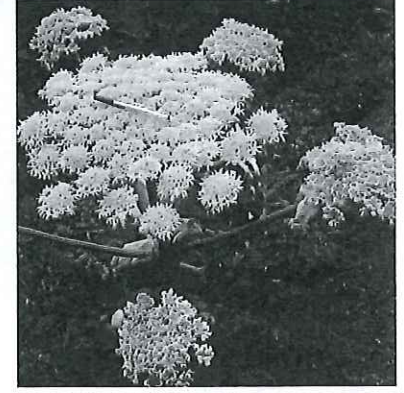
huge leaves

Stem



coarse hairs circling the stem

Flowers



large clusters of small flowers

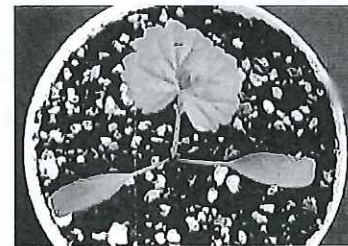
Growth Stages



Dead Stems

After producing seeds in late summer, the plants die, leaving stems standing into winter. At this point seeds have been dispersed to germinate the following spring or in future years.

(Photo credit: Cornell Cooperative Extension, Misc. Bull. 123)



Seedling

Seeds germinate from early spring throughout the growing season.



Rosette of leaves

...Leaf clusters sprout from overwintering roots each year for 2-4 years until the plant flowers.



Cow Parsnip

Giant Hogweed

Seeds

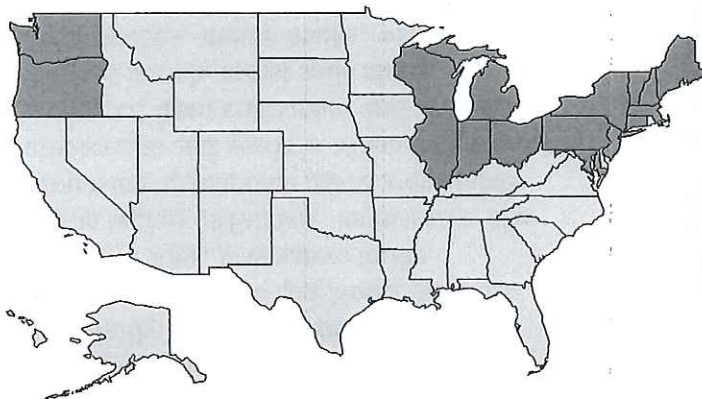
Produces seeds in late summer
(Photo credit: Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group)



Flowering Stems

Plants bolt and flower in early to mid-summer after rosette plants accumulate enough energy reserves.

Giant Hogweed, *Heracleum mantegazzianum*



Infestation Status
 ■ 2 or more detectors
 □ Not Found

About Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed is a member of the carrot or parsley family (Apiaceae) that was introduced into Europe and North America in the early 1900s. It is native to the Caucasus region of Eurasia. Its massive size and imposing appearance made it desirable for arboretums and gardens. Giant Hogweed soon escaped from cultivation and became established in rich, moist soils along roadside ditches, stream banks, waste ground, along tree lines and open wooded areas. In the U.S. it is known to occur in Connecticut, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The plant's name comes from Hercules, of ancient mythological fame, and Giant Hogweed is aptly described as robust in appearance.

Hogweed is Hazardous

This tall majestic plant is a public health hazard because of its potential to cause severe skin irritation in susceptible people. Plant sap produces painful, burning blisters within 24 to 48 hours after contact. Plant juices also can produce painless red blotches that later develop into purplish or brownish scars that may persist for several years. For an adverse reaction to occur, the skin, contaminated with plant juices, must be moist (perspiration) and then exposed to sunlight. Some other plants are capable of causing this reaction, known as phytophotodermatitis (Phyto=plant, Photo=light), including several that are also in the Giant Hogweed family.

Examples of skin reactions to Giant Hogweed sap



In addition to being a public health hazard, Giant Hogweed is invasive and capable of forming dense stands where it outcompetes other plants. It is especially prolific along stream banks and moist roadsides.

Giant Hogweed is a Federal Noxious Weed, making it unlawful to propagate, sell or transport this plant in the United States.



Giant Hogweed in a riparian area.



Giant Hogweed in late summer: Seeds are forming.



A Herculean stem!