

Giant Hogweed



(*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Photo: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Photo: Terry English, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

How to Identify Giant Hogweed

- Can grow up to 5.0 m (16 ft) tall; forms large tap root
- Huge white, umbrella-shaped flower heads; up to 1 m (39 in) across. Each can consist of over 50,000 flowers. The green fruit (seeds) produced by each flower dry out and turn brown in late summer. Flowers once then dies.
- Stems are quite thick, purple
- Large prominently spiked leaves
- ***Poses significant threat to human health (see over for details)***

Description

Family

- Carrot/parsley family (There are similar species)

Range & Habitat

- Not common in Leeds Grenville
- Along roadsides, trails & rural areas throughout Ontario
- Grows best in moist areas near bodies of water

Height

- 3 to 5.0 m (9 to 16 ft) tall depending on conditions

Flowers

- Flower clusters up to 1 m (39 in) across white heads (mid June-Aug)
- Only mature plants form flower heads with 50-150 rays (separate stems) between June and July
- Green seeds in flower turn brown in late summer

Leaves

- Very large up to 1 m (39 in) wide, deeply lobed on young plants then spiked and divided into 3 equal parts on older plants

Stem

- Can be 10 to 15 cm (6 in) diameter with coarse hairs and purple blotches or completely purple

Lifecycle

- Biennial/Perennial (2-year life span)
- Reproduces through seeds in 2nd year; average 10-20,000 seeds/plant
- Winged seeds spread by wind & water

Origin

- Invasive



Photo: USDA APHIS PPQ - Oxford, North Carolina, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



Photo: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Photo: Owen Williams, ontario.ca/invasivespecies

Impact

- Grows rapidly and invades disturbed areas such as roadsides, pastures, crop land and fields
- Biodiversity impacts; outcompetes native vegetation, particularly crowding out or shading lower growing plants
- Impacts pollinators, grazing animals *and humans!*
- Dense stands result in increased erosion & significant diversity loss

When Working Around Giant Hogweed

Protective clothing is critically important, including:

1. Waterproof gloves
2. Long sleeve shirts and pants
3. Eye protection
4. If available wear disposable hazmat style coveralls over normal clothing
5. Tape coveralls at the wrist to minimize potential skin exposure to the sap



Severe burns can occur if the sap contacts the skin and is then exposed to sunlight. Symptoms can occur within 48 hours and scarring and pigmentation can last for weeks, months or sometimes years.

Keep the exposed area out of the sun for at least 48 hours. Apply sunscreen and stay inside.

Once the blisters form, there's no antidote and should be treated the same way as a burn.

If a severe reaction does occur, you should seek treatment at a medical facility.

In Case of Exposure:

- Wash rubber gloves with soap and water before AND after removing other clothing
- Remove protective eye wear last
- Place non-disposable clothing in the laundry and wash yourself immediately with soap and water

Management of Giant Hogweed

Controlling Giant Hogweed before it becomes locally established will reduce its impacts on human health, biodiversity, the economy and society. Control of Giant Hogweed should take place in early spring, as plants are typically less than 30 cm in height.

Note: Motorized tools (whipper snippers) should never be used for control of plants with phototoxic properties as the sap can be splashed on to the operator.

Control Methods:

Pulling or Digging	Flower Removal	Tilling	Mowing	Burning or Compost	Herbicide
<p><i>Effective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But only with small infestations and on young seedlings • Digging works best for older growth; tap root can exceed 1 m depth • Wear gloves 	<p><i>Not recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging; size of plant prevents access/increase risk to workers • Cut umbels must be carefully placed in black plastic bags 	<p><i>Problematic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrain might not be suitable • Most effective for agricultural land 	<p><i>Not recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only good to prevent seed production - every 2 weeks • Use extreme caution due to sap splash 	<p>Do NOT burn or compost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seal in bags tightly and leave in direct sunlight for 1 week • Contact municipality for disposal instructions 	<p><i>Recommended</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply after leaves are fully expanded in spring & subsequently to ensure full coverage • Cover with mulch 10-14 days after