



FACT SHEET

GIANT HOGWEED



Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Giant hogweed is a perennial member of the Parsley or Carrot Family native to Asia. It closely resembles our native plant cow parsnip, except the taller giant hogweed grows up to 6 metres or more. It was first introduced to North America as a garden curiosity. Its tenacious and invasive characteristics have made it a garden pest that can readily escape cultivation. In BC it is known from southern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and Vancouver.

Biology

Aside from its immense size, giant hogweed is also distinguished by its stout, dark reddish stem that can grow 5 cm to 10 cm in diameter. Leaf stalks are spotted and produce a compound leaf that can expand to 1.5 metres across. Each leaflet is deeply grooved or divided. Both stems and stalks are hollow and produce coarse hairs around a blister like pustule. Each year tuberous root-stalks form

long-lived buds. In summer small, white flowers form together to make up an inflorescence or umbrella-shaped head that can attain a diameter of almost 1 metre.

Reproduction

Giant hogweed reproduces through seed and perennial buds. A plant takes several years from the time it germinates until it develops a flowering stem. After flowering it sets seed and dies. Additional crowns may form on individual plants that continue to flower and develop seed. Viability of seed can exceed more than seven years. Reproduction is also accomplished when plants develop perennial buds that form on the root stalks or the crown.

Habitat

Giant hogweed will grow in a variety of habitats but is most frequently found adjacent to streams, creeks, roads, in vacant lots or in rights of ways. It is frequently found in areas that are considered moist to wet.

Concerns

The greatest concern from giant hogweed is human health. Giant hogweed stem hairs and leaves contain a clear, toxic sap that can cause severe burns, blisters, and scarring of the skin, especially when exposed to the sun. Blisters often result in purplish to blackened scars.

Giant hogweed's tenacious and invasive nature allows it to readily occupy and crowd out native vegetation. In riparian areas it forms a dense canopy, out-competing native species and causing stream bank erosion.

Similarities: Giant Hogweed and Cow-Parsnip

1. Both are large plants with a central flowering stem above a group of basal leaves. Deep carrot-like taproot.
2. Both flower after multiple years of growth. Inflorescence is a large white umbel, often with several smaller side inflorescences.
3. ***They have similar chemistry and both contain compounds which cause skin reaction.***
4. Found in similar habitats: moist, open areas or open forests; riparian zones. Cow-parsnip much less common in urban areas; more common in moist meadows and forest edges.

Getting Rid of Giant Hogweed

Giant hogweed only reproduces by seed. Prevent seed development and you will keep the plants isolated to their original location. During the summer, it is not recommended you try to remove the plants. They are much too large and sappy at this time of year. Rather, in summer, simply cut off any developing flowers. This will prevent the plant from producing any additional seeds.

In spring, just as the new leaves emerge, the plants are small enough to effectively handle. At this stage (May to early June) you can use a glyphosate-based herbicide (e.g. RoundUp) or if you prefer to physically remove them, then use a sharp spade to cut the shoots from the root about 3-4 inches below ground level. Giant hogweed will not regenerate from the roots left behind. If the shoot is cut 3-4 inches below ground level, the plant should die. It is important to monitor the site for germination of seedlings for several years following removal.

Disposal:

Place plant material (not flowers or seeds) in a large heavy-duty plastic or mesh bag and take it to the nearest landfill. Alternatively, dry and incinerate plant material away from any people-frequented areas. If flower heads have formed, carefully cut them off, place them in sealed plastic garbage bags, and landfill. **When in doubt about how to dispose of invasive plant material, contact the B.C. Invasive Species Council at 1.888.WEEDSBC (933.3722)**

Sources:

BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/gianthogweed.htm>

[http://frenchcreekhogweed.ca/resources/GVIPC%20Heracleum%20Training%20Workshop%20\(2008\).pdf](http://frenchcreekhogweed.ca/resources/GVIPC%20Heracleum%20Training%20Workshop%20(2008).pdf)

http://www.bcinvasives.ca/images/stories/documents/tips/Giant_Hogweed_NISWG_Factsheet.pdf