

Giant Hogweed

One of Ontario's Most

UN-WANTED

Invasive Plant Species

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)
Alias: Giant Cow Parsley

PROFILE

Giant Hogweed is an invasive plant, native to the Caucasus region between Southwestern Asia and Europe. It is in the Carrot/Parsley family (*Apiaceae*) and is closely related to the more commonly known Cow Parsnip, which is the only member of the hogweed genus native to North America. Giant Hogweed was first introduced and planted as a horticultural species in the early 1900's, and has since become widespread in the northern US and southern Canada. Ontario's first confirmed record of this plant was in 1949. There have been increasing reports of Giant Hogweed naturalizing in Ontario, and it has been designated a noxious weed in several counties.

Giant Hogweed is a dangerous invader. The sap contains toxins called furocoumarins, which can increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight and may result in severe burns and blisters and temporary or permanent blindness if it comes in contact with the eye.

MUG SHOT

Giant Hogweed is a biennial/perennial plant; producing rosettes of large leaves (up to 1m or 40in) during the first year of growth. In the second year, it can grow a large flowering stalk, which may reach heights of up to 5m (16ft), or remain as a large rosette. If Hogweed doesn't flower in the second year, the plant can survive up to 5 years before producing the flowering stalk. The stalk has large, umbrella shaped clusters, called umbels, (up to 0.75m or 29in across) of small white flowers, which bloom from June-August and then set seed. A single Giant Hogweed plant can produce up to 100,000 seeds. The leaves of Giant Hogweed are deeply incised, pointed and serrated, and alternate along the stem. The stem is hairy and hollow, with purple splotches.

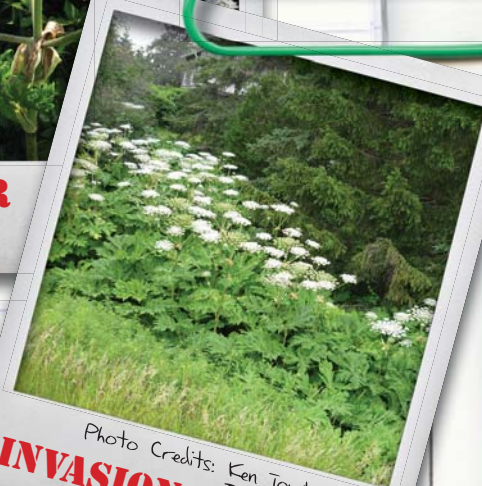
Giant Hogweed is commonly mistaken with the native plants Angelica (*Angelica spp.*), Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*), and the introduced Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). The difference between Angelica and Giant Hogweed is Angelica has more rounded flower umbels (almost like globes). Cow Parsnip has similar attributes to Giant Hogweed with a few key differences; the hairs on Cow Parsnip stems are soft and downy, and coarse and bristly on Giant Hogweed. Cow Parsnip typically has less serrated and sharply toothed leaves than Giant Hogweed, and only grows about 1.5 m (60in) tall. Giant Hogweed has dark purple splotches on the stem and the Cow Parsnip stem is green to slightly purple. Wild Parsnip is often commonly confused, but its flowers are yellow. The sap of both Cow Parsnip and Wild Parsnip contain the same toxic properties as Giant Hogweed, and contact with any of these the plants should be avoided.



LEAF



FLOWER



INVASION
Photo Credits: Ken Towle
Jeff Muzzi
Laura Assinck

UNWANTED CASE: GIANT HOGWEED

INVADING SPECIES HOTLINE 1-800-563-7711

WEBSITE WWW.INVADINGSPECIES.COM • WWW.ONTARIOINVASIVEPLANTS.CA

No.

KNOWN WHEREABOUTS

Giant Hogweed grows best in rich, moist soil and is commonly found along streams and ditches. It also grows along roads, trails, forest edges and in fields. In Ontario, there have been confirmed reports of Giant Hogweed as far north as Elliott Lake with a scattered distribution across southern Ontario. The seeds are spread via wind and water, as well as human activity, and can remain viable in the soil for up to seven years. Giant Hogweed is also established in British Columbia, Quebec, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

CRIMES COMMITTED

Giant Hogweed is a threat to human health. The sap causes a condition called phytophotodermatitis, which makes skin extremely sensitive to sunlight. If a person comes into contact with Giant Hogweed sap, followed by exposure to sunlight, it can cause severe burns and blisters. These burns and blisters give way to black or purple scars which can last for years. The sap can also cause temporary or permanent blindness following eye contact.

Giant Hogweed is also an ecological threat; it out-competes native plants for space, sun, and nutrients. It forms a dense canopy that may provide unsuitable habitat for native species. Also, the roots don't hold the soil as native plants do, resulting in erosion along riverbanks.

YOU CAN HELP!

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (O.F.A.H) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (O.M.N.R) have set up a toll-free number, the **Invading Species Hotline 1-800-563-7711** and website www.invadingspecies.com to obtain information and report sightings of Giant Hogweed and other invading species. For information on what is being done in Ontario to control invasive plants, visit the Ontario Invasive Plant Council website www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca. We need your help!

- ◆ **Report a sighting.** If you find Giant Hogweed in a new area, take a digital photo, then call the **Invading Species Hotline** or contact your local Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources office or Conservation Authority to report your finding and confirm your identification.
- ◆ **Get involved.** Participate in one of our monitoring programs to detect and prevent the spread of invading species, or join the Ontario Invasive Plant Council to receive updates and information on invasive plant initiatives in Ontario.

TIPS ON PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE LANDSCAPE

- ◆ Learn to properly identify and control invasive plants on your property. See the list of guides provided by the Ontario Invasive Plant Council www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/index.php/publications
- ◆ Avoid using invasive perennials in gardens and landscaping. Always check your plant references before choosing garden plants.
- ◆ Purchase non-invasive plants from reputable suppliers. Native plants will provide a variety of benefits to the plants and wildlife that also depend on them.
- ◆ Do not dispose of compost or garden waste in natural areas as this can spread invasive species.
- ◆ When hiking, remain on designated trails and keep pets on a leash to avoid transferring invasive plants and seeds to new areas. Clean your shoes and pets before leaving for your next destination.
- ◆ Share this fact sheet and spread the word to friends, family and neighbours.
- ◆ When in doubt about a plant, whether it is invasive or how it should be controlled, contact the **“Invading Species Hotline”** @ **1-800-563-7711** or www.invadingspecies.com or www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca



A Message from the Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC)

The Ontario Invasive Plant Council facilitates a coordinated and effective response to the threat of invasive plants by providing leadership, expertise and a forum to educate, motivate and empower organizations and citizens. The OIPC is composed of conservation authorities, academic institutions, aboriginal organizations, stewardship networks, private consultants, industry and environmental NGOs as well as all levels of government. For more information on the council please visit www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca