

# Giant Hogweed

## Invasive Species Alert Sheet

### Capital Region Invasive Species Program



Local governments and partners are asking for help from all residents to address giant hogweed outbreaks on private property and public lands.

Local professionals can assist with the special treatment required for this species.

Native to Asia, **giant hogweed** (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) invasions are located primarily in southwestern BC including Vancouver Island.

**Giant hogweed is a priority invasive of concern with serious human health risks.**

### Why is giant hogweed a problem?

- **Public health hazard: risk of severe burns, scarring and temporary or permanent blindness in humans**
- Watery sap in the stalk, stem and leaves is highly toxic, causing dermatitis after contact with sunlight (effects within hours or days and scarring can last from months to a lifetime)
- See WorkSafe BC alert for first aid treatment at [worksafebc.com](http://worksafebc.com)
- Outcompetes native plants and causes soil erosion on steep slopes and stream banks

### What does it look like?

- **Large plant up to six metres tall** with deeply lobed leaves and umbrella-shaped white flower heads up to one metre across
- *Giant Hogweed is often confused with native Cow Parsnip. The two are compared below.*

#### Giant hogweed



#### Cow parsnip



**Giant hogweed has large, very deeply lobed leaves** with jagged edges (up to 2.5 metres long), whereas Cow parsnip leaves are smaller (only 40cm long) and its leaves are wider, less lobed and less jagged.

#### Giant hogweed



#### Cow parsnip



Both Giant hogweed and Cow parsnip bloom from May to July, but **giant hogweed has huge flower heads up to one metre wide**; whereas cow parsnip blooms only get as big as 0.2 meters.

#### Giant hogweed



#### Cow parsnip



**Giant hogweed stalks are purple-spotted** or streaked and hollow with stiff hairs; cow parsnip stalks are usually green (but may have some purple) with soft hairs.

## Habitat and biology

- Perennial plant from carrot or parsley (*Apiaceae*) family
- Mature plants flower in May, producing up to 100,000 seeds that are viable in soil to 15 years
- Reproduces by seeds, possibly vegetative reproduction (from buds on rootstalks)
- Found especially along ditches, roadsides, riparian areas, open forests, marine shorelines and disturbed sites
- Large taproot will rapidly re-sprout if mowed

## What should you do if you spot a giant hogweed plant?

Please report any sightings of this invasive species to the contacts listed below.

- **Spread the word, not the weed:** don't purchase, grow or trade giant hogweed
- **Inform:** please report outbreaks to the contacts listed below for support and monitoring
- **Remove:** if you have an outbreak on your property, please follow the instructions below for careful removal and follow up
- **Dispose:** of all plant parts in the proper manner outline below
- **Soil and gravel:** use soil and gravel that are not contaminated and only remove soil from infested sites with safe disposal/treatment plan to avoid further spread
- **Prevent spread:** brush off clothing, tires, equipment before leaving infested area
- **Monitor:** for several years, return to the site in spring and summer to continue treatment
- **Replant:** after effectively eliminating this species over time, replant with non-invasive plants (such as appropriate native species)

### • **Caution: wear protective clothing when in contact with this plant:**

- Full face protection and heavy, water-resistant gloves (dispose of immediately afterwards)
- Waterproof cover-alls with long sleeves or long sleeved shirt and pants that are not cotton or linen (sap can soak through), thicker clothing so plant hairs don't penetrate
- Wash clothing and tools after contact

### *For small infestations (less than 25 plants):*

- **Manual removal:** remove young plants by gently hand pulling to remove all roots
- A small hand tool can be used to ease out the roots
- For large, mature plants cut the stem near the base, then dig out the roots (focus on central root and remove at least 8–12 cm below soil surface)
- For all manual removal, care should be taken to minimize soil disturbance which can encourage seeds to germinate
- Ideally, remove in spring and repeat as required in early summer
- If removing late during flowering season cut, bag and dispose of flower-heads first
- Mulch over the area disturbed by the removal may be beneficial

*Report large infestations (more than 25 plants) to the contacts listed in the below, bottom left corner of this page.*

## Proper disposal

- Please place all plant parts in garbage bags labelled 'invasive species' and take to Hartland Landfill.
- **Do not compost.** Flowers can still form viable seed after removal.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

P: 250.360.3302  
E: [invasive@crd.bc.ca](mailto:invasive@crd.bc.ca)  
[www.reportaweedbc.ca](http://www.reportaweedbc.ca)  
[www.crd.bc.ca/invasive](http://www.crd.bc.ca/invasive)

*We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development.*

**CRD**

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Revised April 2021