

GIANT HOGWEED

WHAT IS IT?

Giant Hogweed is an invasive perennial known for its enormous size. This species usually grows from 2.5 to 4 metres (8 to 14 feet) high with leaves up to 1 metre (3 feet) in breadth. It has thick, 5 to 10 centimetres (2 to 4 inches) hollow stem. Its stem and the undersides of its leaves are covered in coarse hairs.

Its large, umbrella-shaped flowers are white in colour and can be more than 30 centimetres (1 foot) in diameter. The seeds of Giant Hogweed are flattened and oval in shape. This plant produces a clear, toxic watery sap that causes a skin reaction known as photodermatitis.



WHERE IS FOUND?

Roadsides, stream banks, waste areas and other scattered locations.

WHY IS IT NOXIOUS?

Its watery, clear sap contains photosensitizing compounds, which, when in contact with the skin and in combination with UV radiation, can cause dermatitis in sensitive individuals. The symptoms may range from skin inflammation to serious blisters and scars.

HOW DO YOU TREAT EXPOSURE?

First prevent exposure by wearing gloves, protective clothing and protective eyewear when working with the plant(s). In the event of any direct exposure/contact to this plant; If you get sap on your skin wash the area well with soap and water. Keep the affected area out of the sun. If photo dermatitis (inflammation of the skin caused by exposure to sunlight) occurs, see a doctor. If you get sap in your eye, flush your eye with water immediately and see a doctor immediately.

CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

Use EXTREME CARE when attempting to control this plant. It is suggested that anyone working to control giant hogweed wear eye protection, waterproof gloves, and protective clothing(long sleeves, long pants, closed-toe shoes). It is ideal to wear a disposable "spray suit" coverall over top of your normal clothing (spray suits are commercial grade waterproof coveralls). Remove protective clothing carefully to avoid transferring any sap from your clothing onto your skin. Wash your rubber gloves with soap and water, and then take off your spray suit or outer clothing. Wash your rubber gloves again and then take them off. Finally, take off your protective eye wear. Put non-disposable clothing in the laundry and wash yourself immediately with soap and water.

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MECHANICAL CONTROL:

Spring Removal (i.e. early May):

Use a spade to remove as much of the root as possible. Digging up older plants can be difficult since roots can grow deeper than one metre. The plant might re-grow from the root and you may need to dig repeatedly to remove it completely. Or, you can cover the dug area with black plastic to smother out new growth. If it's possible to use machinery, mow new growth every two weeks.

Summer Removal (i.e. early July):

Plants without flowers: If the infestation is small dig the stems and roots out and dry them thoroughly before disposing of them.

Plants with flowers: To prevent seeds from growing and spreading, remove flower heads before they ripen (when they are white). Note: If the flower heads have changed from white to green, seeds are being produced and it will be very hard to remove the seed heads and/or cut the plant without spreading the seeds. Return to the area regularly and remove any new growth.

Control Using Herbicides:

Herbicides can be used to control plants (like Giant hogweed) that are poisonous to the touch. Glyphosate is effective at controlling the top-growth of Giant hogweed. Foliar herbicide applications are most effective in spring on actively growing plants, followed with a subsequent summer application for missed plants or plants that have regrown. Since glyphosate is non-selective and removes only the green vegetation that it comes into contact with, new seedlings will often germinate and emerge after glyphosate has been applied. If areas treated with glyphosate are covered in mulch 10 to 14 days after application, it will reduce seedling germination and growth. Herbicide treatments may need to be repeated in following years. If a plant is flowering, herbicides are not effective and control methods should focus on carefully removing the flower heads. Follow label directions and relevant provincial and federal legislation when using herbicides.

DISPOSAL:

Do Not Burn. Do Not Compost. Carefully remove flower heads from stems and place them in black plastic bags. Make sure not to drop any seeds while you are doing this. Seal the bags tightly and leave them in direct sunlight for about a week. Allow stems and roots to dry out thoroughly before disposing of them. Curve Lake Public Works will allow disposal of double bagged hogweed at the Curve Lake Waste Transfer site.

If you think you have Giant hogweed on your property or if you see it in your community please call the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711 or report your sighting online. You will be asked to send in photos for identification. Do not collect parts of the plant for identification.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON GIANT HOGWEED?

Additional information on Hogweed you may be obtained by calling the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711 or the Peterborough County City Health Unit at 705-743-1000.

Sources of Information:

[Ontario Invasive Species Awareness Program - http://www.invadingspecies.com/invaders/plants-terrestrial/giant-hogweed/](http://www.invadingspecies.com/invaders/plants-terrestrial/giant-hogweed/)
Peterborough County City Health Unit – Health Hazard Plants - <http://www.pcchu.ca/my-home-environment/my-environment/health-hazards/plants-pests/>

Photos:

City of Hamilton Website (photo courtesy of Credit Valley Conservation - <http://www.hamilton.ca/CityDepartments/PublicWorks/Parks/Giant+Hogweed.htm>)

MIPC-Hogweed - <http://invasiveplantsmi.org/hogweed/>

Ontario Weeds: Giant Hogweed - http://www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/ontweeds/giant_hogweed.htm