

Wild Parsnip

(*Pastinaca sativa*)



Key ID Features

Arrangement: alternate

Leaves: coarsely toothed, compound with 5-11 diamond-shaped leaflets

Flowers: yellow umbel

Fruit: light brown seeds

Stem: grooved and hollow except at nodes

Root: thick taproot, smells like parsnip

Growth Habit: herbaceous biennial/perennial spends first year as a rosette and eventually bolts and flowers; can grow 4-6 ft. tall



The Impact

Wild Parsnip (also called “Poison Parsnip”) was likely brought to the United States by early European settlers as a root crop. It is the same species as the cultivated Garden Parsnip. Wild Parsnip has escaped cultivation and is commonly observed along roadsides in mid-summer when it’s yellow flowers are in bloom. It forms dense stands in disturbed areas and produces large quantities of seeds that can remain viable in the soil for 5 year.

WARNING: Wild Parsnip sap causes a serious chemical burn on the skin by increasing the skin’s sensitivity to sunlight. This happens when sap from a broken stalk, leaf, or flower comes into contact with skin, and that area is exposed to sunlight. Wear gloves, long sleeves, pants, and eye protection when handling this plant.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Apiaceae

Origin: Eurasia and NW Africa

Habitat: disturbed areas, meadows and fields, commonly found along roadsides

Present in Vermont?: yes

Method of Spread: primarily by seeds via waterways, wind, mowers, and wildlife

Status: watchlist* species
<http://bit.ly/VTWatchlist>

**The watchlist has no regulatory force but is used to educate the public about potentially problematic plants*



Common Look-alikes



Distinguishing features

Size: smaller; grows to be 2 ½ feet tall

Distinguishing features

Flower: white umbel

Native Plant Alternatives



Wendy Vandyk Evans, Bugwood.org

Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*): attracts bees, butterflies, beetles, grows in a variety of sites, useful in erosion control



Mary Ellen (Mel) Harte, Bugwood.org

Common Goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*): attracts birds and butterflies, grows in a variety of soils

Control Information

To learn more about identification & control options, check out the Gallery of Land Invasives on **VTinvasives.org** and these additional resources:

<http://www.invadingspecies.com/wild-parsnip/>

http://nyis.info/invasive_species/wild-parsnip/

References: EDDMaps Ontario - Species - Wild Parsnip, Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program - Wild Parsnip, Ohio State University Weed Guide - Wild Parsnip, New York Invasive Species Information - Wild Parsnip, Ontario Invasive Species Factsheets (PDFs) - Wild Parsnip

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