

Giant Hogweed

(*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)



@CornellBlog



@ RuudMol

Key ID Features

Leaves: The leaves are deeply lobed, sharply pointed, and can be up to 5 feet wide.

Flowers: Flowering occurs in late spring to early summer. The white flowers are on a large umbrella-shaped head that can be up to 2.5 feet wide.

Stem: Hollow stems that are 2-4 inches in diameter with dark reddish-purple spots and bristles.

Habitat: Prefers moist, disturbed soils such as riverbanks, ditches, and railroad right-of-ways.

Life cycle: Being a perennial plant, giant hogweed dies back after flowering, leaving tall dead stalks. It reproduces through seeds, which can stay viable for up to ten years.



@WVU extension



@Kelly Mulhern - CRD

The Impact

Because of its size and rapid growth, giant hogweed is an aggressive competitor capable of displacing native plants. It dies back during the winter months, leaving bare ground open to erosion on riverbanks and steep slopes. The sap of giant hogweed makes human skin sensitive to ultraviolet light, resulting in severe burns and blisters. Contact with the eyes can cause permanent blindness.

Quick Facts

Plant Family: Apiaceae

Origin: Native to Europe and Asia.

Present in Vermont?: Yes, most common on side of roadways and other disturbed areas.

Common Look-alikes

Giant hogweed can be mistaken for many similar looking plants in Vermont, both native and not. Because it is a part of a carrot family, there are many look-alikes with similar structure. These similarities and differences can be seen below in the table provided by NYDEC.

Hogweed Compared to Look-alikes	Stem		Flower		Height		
	Hairy	Splotchy	Round	Flat	< 5 ft	5-9 ft	Up to 14+ ft
Giant Hogweed	X	X	X				X
Cow parsnip	X			X		X	
Angelica			X			X	
Queen Anne's lace	X			X	X		
Wild parsnip				X	X		

@New York Department of Environmental Conservation

Native alternatives



Cow Parsnip
(*Heracleum maximum*)

Provides food for wildlife as well as traditional medicine uses.



Great Angelica
(*Angelica atropurpurea*)

Attracts wildlife and promotes biodiversity, traditional medicine uses.

DANGER:

The sap from this plant is dangerous. If it gets on your skin and you are exposed to the sun, it can cause severe burns. Always wear thick gloves and long pants and shirts if necessary to handle.

Control Information

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

[New York DEC Giant Hogweed](#)

[Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station info sheet](#)

References: [WVU Extension](#), [Nova Scotia DNR](#), [Victoria News](#), [New York DEC Giant Hogweed](#), [Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station info sheet](#)