

Mason County Noxious Weed Control

Carrot Family

Giant Hogweed

*Heracleum
mantegazzianum*

Identification Tips

- Herbaceous perennial that grows 8 to 15 ft. tall when flowering.
- Large compound leaves deeply incised and separated into three parts; 3 to 5 ft. wide. Leaf undersides are bristly.
- Forms many umbrella-shaped, densely clustered white flower heads.
- Hollow, ridged stems 2 to 4 in. in diameter with dark reddish-purple blotches; often have sharp bristles.
- Small and winged seeds are elliptically shaped and have dark stripes (2 on one side and 4 on the reverse) that act as oil ducts.



Regulated Class A Noxious Weed: Control Required

Biology

- Generally a perennial plant that dies after flowering in year 3 of its growth.
- Reproduces via seed and from new crowns from its tuberous rootstock. Seeds can survive for 7 or more years in soil, and are primarily dispersed via water.
- Flowers in mid-May to July, and starts forming seeds in late July.

Impacts

- **Major public health hazard. Contact to skin can cause severe photosensitivity, blistering, and permanent scarring on people and some animals.**
- Can develop a dense canopy that outcompetes native species, which can lead to stream bank erosion and increased flood risk.

Distribution

- Native to the Caucasus mountains in Southwest Russia and Georgia, it was introduced as an unusual garden ornamental.
- Found in urban areas, roadsides, and vacant lots. It often grows in wet places such as riparian corridors.
- Mason County has numerous known giant hogweed sites. Mason County Noxious Weed Control prioritizes all sites for control.

New giant hogweed growth emerges in the spring.

Purple splotches along the hollow stems can be indicative of this species.

QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:

(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or patriciag@co.mason.wa.us

<https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/natural-resources/noxious-weed-program/>

What You Can Do

Control of giant hogweed is a legal requirement in Mason County. Help stop the spread of this noxious weed by checking your property and public areas regularly for giant hogweed. **Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board if you see giant hogweed in Mason County.**

Control Methods

Always wear gloves, long sleeves and pants, and eye protection when controlling giant hogweed.

Survey your yard and surrounding areas for giant hogweed. Choose control methods that are best suited to your site, taking into account site ecology and size of infestation. Eradication of giant hogweed will require a combination of control methods over numerous growing seasons.

Prevention

It is illegal to transport or buy giant hogweed. Check for giant hogweed on your property and in public areas. Clean your shoes, equipment, and vehicles if visiting a site known to have giant hogweed. Plant disturbed areas near known giant hogweed infestations with desirable vegetation to reduce the potential for spread.

Manual Control

Dig and cut out at least 4-6 in. of the main rootstock of mature giant hogweed plants with a sharpened spade in the early spring, and repeat into the summer as regrowth appears. Younger plants can be more resilient to digging, so more care is needed to get as much of the root as possible.

Deadhead giant hogweed flowers several times over the course of the flowering season as the flowers may regrow and successfully set seed after a single cutting. Always bag and trash flowerheads and never compost them.

Mechanical

Mowing will only be effective for short periods of time and will have to be repeated two or three times during the growing season. Cutting in late spring when plants are tall is more effective than cutting in early spring. Eventually, the roots will be depleted, but this may take years.



Don't confuse giant hogweed with cow parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*).

Giant hogweed is often confused with other noxious weeds (wild carrot, poison hemlock) and native plants (cow parsnip, sweet coltsfoot). Below are the distinguishing characteristics between one lookalike: the native plant cow parsnip.

| | Giant hogweed | Cow parsnip |
|--------|--|---|
| Height | 10-15 ft | Max height 8 ft |
| Stem | Thick hollow stems are purplish with bristly hairs | Thick ridged stems with fine white fuzzy hairs |
| Leaf | Compound leaves deeply divided into lobed toothed leaflets | Divided into 3 segments; leaflets coarsely toothed |
| |  |  |
| Flower | Up to 2 ft in diameter | 6-10 in flat clusters |

Cultural

Cut and cover is an effective method when done correctly, and is only recommended for use in small areas. Cut plants down to ground level and cover with black plastic. Monitor to make sure seedlings don't poke through the black plastic. After a few years the black plastic can be removed and the area replanted with native or non-invasive plants.

Chemical

Choose a formulation that is appropriate for your site. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at rate prescribed. Do not apply herbicide over or near water bodies.

A foliar application at bud stage of triclopyr, a broadleaf herbicide that won't kill grasses, is an effective control method of giant hogweed. Do not cut stems after applying the herbicide since this will stop plants from absorbing the chemical.

Glyphosate, a non-selective herbicide that will kill grasses, can be applied via foliar application or injection at bud stage. Control methods can also include cutting to the ground and spraying regrowth with glyphosate in spring and summer.

Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.