

# Controlling Poison Hemlock

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## A highly dangerous plant

Poison hemlock is a big concern, even though it is classified as a “Class B” weed in Washington State. Action against Class B weeds is recommended, but not required. However, it is now recommended for control by the Skagit County Noxious Weed Control Board. Poison hemlock is not related to the evergreen hemlock tree, but was imported as a garden flower in the 1800’s from Europe. It is the “hemlock” that was used as poison for Socrates’ death, and appears throughout the county, going unrecognized and allowed to flourish.

Poison hemlock is acutely toxic to people and animals and is therefore highly dangerous. All parts of the plant are poisonous and the stalks remain so for up to three years. It seems more toxins are produced in sunny areas. It is recommended that gloves be worn when handling it, and all parts of the plant removed and placed in the trash. Do not compost it or leave it where it can be accessed. Eating the plant is most dangerous, but contact and respiratory toxicity is possible.

Please learn to recognize this plant and do your part to remove it from our county. It readily spreads if allowed to go to seed. If you are unable to remove the whole plant at this time, wearing gloves, remove the seed heads and place them in the trash. If it is on the right of way, most times the Department of Transportation appreciates help controlling noxious weeds, but you might want to give them a call first. See the sidebar and do a web search for the brochure and pictures.



**Left:** Poison hemlock can be found near houses, apartments and other structures. **Right:** Poison hemlock is a common sight around Skagit County and the out-lying areas. *Photos by Virgene Link-New / WSU Skagit County Extension Master Gardeners.*



Poison hemlock may infest gardens and yards. *Photo by Virgene Link-New / WSU Skagit County Extension Master Gardeners.*

**RESOURCES:**

- [www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/noxiousweeds/weedlist.htm](http://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/noxiousweeds/weedlist.htm)
- [your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-land-weeds/Brochures/Poison-Hemlock\\_factsheet.pdf](http://your.kingcounty.gov/dnrp/library/water-land-weeds/Brochures/Poison-Hemlock_factsheet.pdf)
- <https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/poison-hemlock.aspx>