

# A Homeowner's Guide To Managing Giant Hogweed



## How to Recognize Giant Hogweed

*The best time to identify  
Giant Hogweed is when it  
is blooming.*

- **Flowers** appear in June or July. Numerous small white flowers cluster into flat topped umbels up to 2 1/2 feet across.
- **Stems** are hollow and ridged with purple blotches and coarse white hairs. The hairs that encircle the stem at the base of the leaf stalk are especially prominent. Stem size ranges from 2 to 4 inches in diameter and 8 to 14 feet tall.
- **Fruits** (containing the seed) are dry, flattened, ovals, about 3/8 inch long and tan with brown lines.

## Caution

Prevent burns and blisters from Giant Hogweed sap by protecting skin and eyes. Wear gloves, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and eye protection. If skin comes in contact with plant sap, wash the area immediately with soap and water.

## Identification

The brochure *Giant Hogweed: an attractive but dangerous noxious weed* is available from DACF to help in identification. Pictures can also be viewed on our website:

[www.maine.gov/dacf/php/horticulture/gianthogweed.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/horticulture/gianthogweed.shtml)

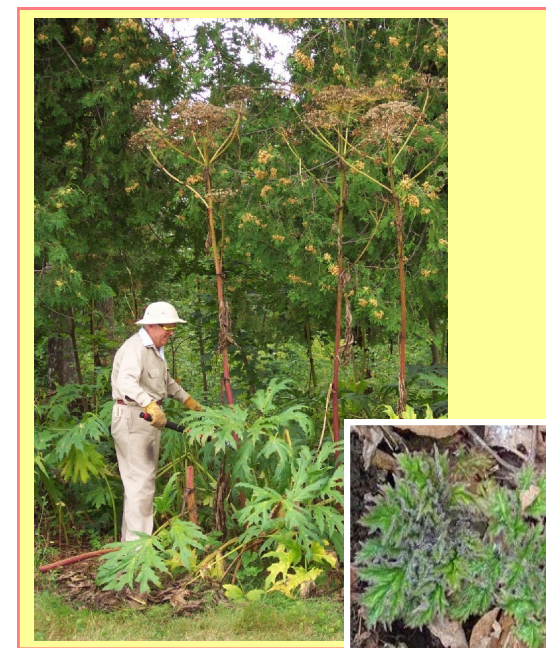
*Controlling Giant Hogweed can be challenging but, with long-term commitment, hogweed can be eradicated.*

## Timing

Control is easiest if plants are less than five feet tall. Treat plants before they flower and remove any flower heads before seeds are produced. Monitor frequently to prevent new plants and re-growth of existing plants.

## Persistence

Eradication is not a "once and done operation." Control takes many years in areas where hogweed is well established. Giant Hogweed is a perennial weed with a large taproot that stores nutrients and produces new growth. Typically plants flower then die after three to five years, but hogweed seeds can remain dormant in the soil for years before germinating. Plants are not eradicated until regeneration of new plants from seed ceases. It is critical that you return to the infested site often to monitor and manage any new plants. A delay or stop in management will allow plants to quickly re-establish setting you back years in the eradication process.



Maine Department of Agriculture,  
Conservation and Forestry  
Division of Animal and Plant Health

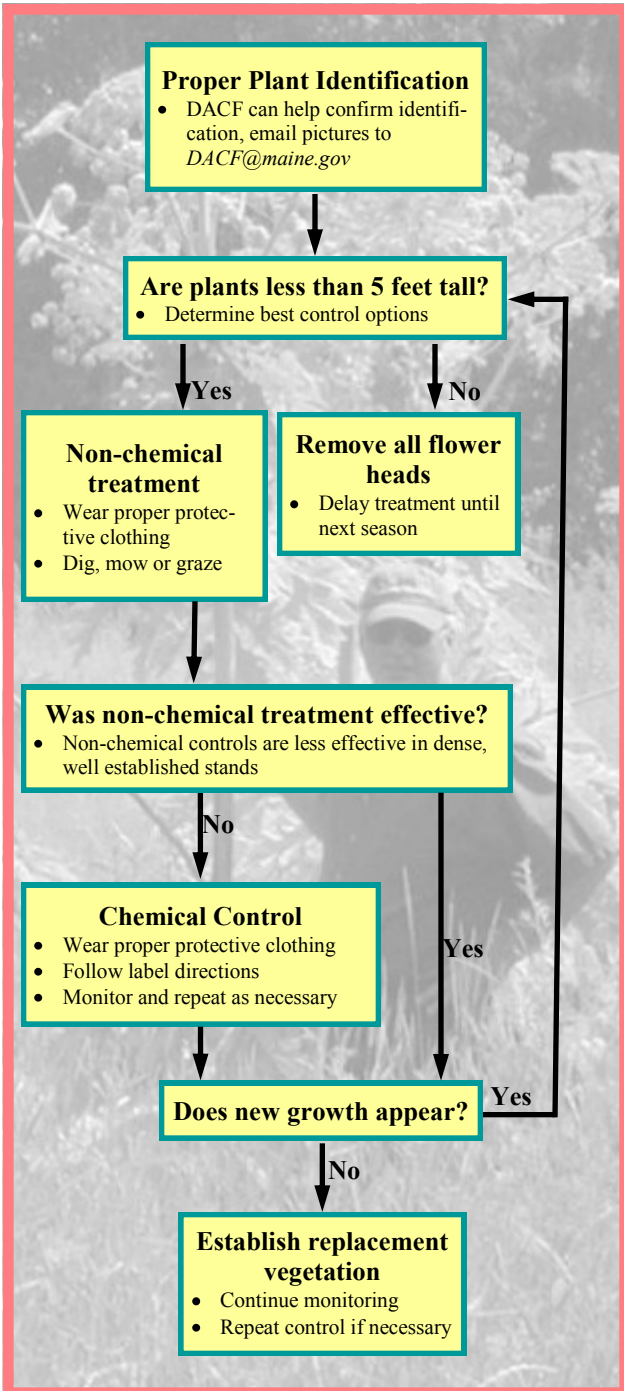
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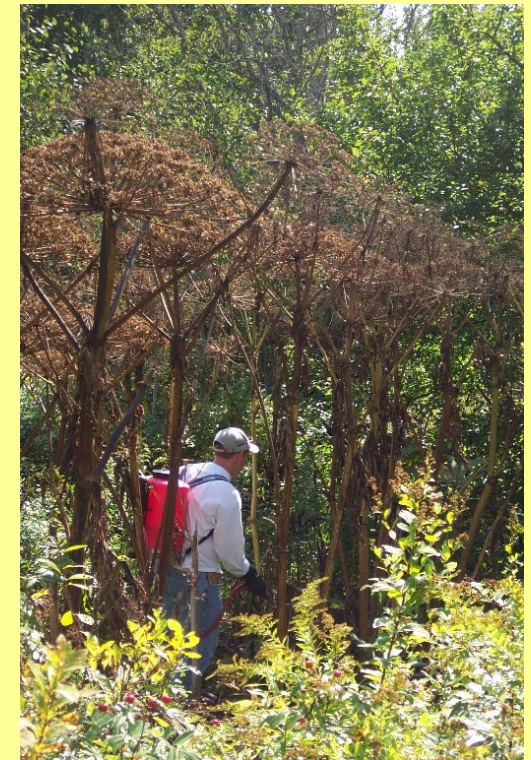
## Steps to Control Giant Hogweed on Your Property



### Non-chemical control

Non-chemical controls can be time consuming and are not practical for large dense stands of Giant Hogweed. These controls are most effective when preventing seedling growth or when used with a chemical control.

- ◆ **Digging** is the most effective non-chemical control. Cut plants below the ground level and remove as much of the taproot as possible to discourage re-growth. For greatest control repeat every 1 to 2 weeks in the spring until plants are 5 feet tall. Monitoring and persistence are needed to ensure that all plants are found and removed. Be patient, this method takes time, but is effective in small plots.
- ◆ **Mowing** or cutting plants above the ground level is not as effective as digging because it can encourage vigorous new growth from the root system. However, with repeated cuttings the roots will begin to starve and weaken. Vigilance is needed to prevent new shoots from becoming mature flowering plants. Be aware that skin and eye protection are critical when mowing or cutting. Mowers and string trimmers release sap from the foliage and stems that can end up on your skin.
- ◆ **Grazing** by cattle, sheep, and other livestock that are unaffected by hogweed sap will help in a control effort. Trampling and feeding by these animals will weaken plants, but most often the damage only suppresses growth and does not destroy plants.



### Chemical control

If possible, hire a professional pesticide applicator to apply an appropriate herbicide. If you decide to use an herbicide yourself, be sure to read and follow label directions. Glyphosate (Roundup, Kleenup, Killzall etc.) is the most effective chemical available to the home applicator. Glyphosate is absorbed through the leaves and stems and then transported throughout the entire plant killing the above and below ground portions. Glyphosate is non-selective, it will kill any plant it comes in contact with; take care to protect surrounding plants from harm. Glyphosate does not prevent seed germination, therefore, repeated applications will be necessary. When treatments are completed establish replacement vegetation as soon as possible.

