



GIANT HOGWEED

Heracleum mantegazzianum Sommier & Levier

Native Origin: Europe- introduced as an ornamental or spice

Description: Giant hogweed is a biennial or perennial herb in the carrot family (Apiaceae), growing 15 to 20 feet in height with stout dark reddish-purple stems and spotted leaf stalks. Hollow stalks and stem produce sturdy bristles. The compound leaves with three leaflets may expand to five feet in breadth. The inflorescence is a broad flat-topped umbel composed of many small white florets. Each inflorescence may attain a diameter of 2-1/2 feet. The florets produce large elliptic dry fruits marked with brown swollen resin canals up to 1 mm in diameter. It flowers from mid-June to mid-July and then produces large flattened elliptic dry seeds with approximately 1500 seeds per flower head.



Habitat: The species is common along railroads, roadsides, rights-of-ways, vacant lots, streams, rivers, uncultivated or waste lands and agricultural areas.

Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in OR, PA, and WA.

Ecological Impacts: Giant Hogweed is an aggressive competitor. Because of its size and rapid growth, it out-competes native plant species, reducing the amount of suitable habitat available for wildlife. Giant Hogweed dies back during the winter months, leaving bare ground that can lead to an increase in soil erosion on riverbanks and steep slopes.

Public Health Hazard: Giant Hogweed contains a substance within its sap that makes the skin sensitive to ultra violet light. This can result in severe burns to the affected areas, producing swelling and severe, painful blistering. Large, watery blisters usually appear 15 to 20 hours after contact with the sap and sunlight. Contact between the skin and the sap of this species occurs either through brushing against the bristles on the stem (as with a stinging nettle) or breaking the stem/leaves. In the event of contact with the sap of this plant, the skin should be covered to reduce the exposure to sunlight and washed IMMEDIATELY and thoroughly with soap and water.

Control and Management: Use protective clothing, gloves and face visor or similar to undertake any cutting or removal of this species.

- **Manual-** Clear above ground leaf and stem material by hand; remove ground material of roots and seeds
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate early in the season when leaves are less than two feet tall and before the plant flowers and sets seed. Follow label and state requirements.
- **Biocontrol:** Cattle and pigs are cited as possible biocontrol agents. Both eat giant hogweed without apparent harm. Trampling also damages the plant.

References: www.forestimages.org, <http://plants.usda.gov>, www.nps.gov/plants/alien, www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/plants/weeds/aqua012.html, *Giant Hogweed* PA Dept. of Agriculture, USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service, www.environment-agency.gov.uk, <http://gardening.wsu.edu/column/07-05-98.htm>, www.ceris.purdue.edu/napis/pests/ghw/facts.txt