



Invasive Plant Alert¹

Giant Hogweed

Heracleum mantegazzianum
Sommier & Levier

Giant hogweed is a large, striking perennial weed and a public health hazard. **Don't touch plants with bare hands.**



Figure 1. *H. mantegazzianum*.
Barbara Tokarska-Guzik, University of Silesia, Bugwood.org

Where to Look

Native to Eurasia, it was brought to North America as a garden plant in the 1900s. It soon escaped cultivation and can now be found from Maine to the District of Columbia.

Giant hogweed can grow in a variety of conditions, such as residential areas, roadsides, and meadows, and usually prefers moist soil in partial shade.

Identifying the Plant

Giant hogweed can grow up to 15 to 20 feet tall. It has a hollow

stem 2 to 4 inches in diameter, with purple blotches and white hairs. Leaves are alternate, coarsely lobed with pointed teeth, and with whitish, dense hairs below. Leaves may be up to five feet wide and 10 feet long.



Figure 2. Foliage, Donna R. Ellis, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Flowers are clustered in large, flat-topped compound umbels. Each cluster contains up to 150 small white flowers. Giant hogweed blooms from June to August. Fruits are dry, oval and flattened, usually with up to four brown resin canals. It is a prolific seed-producer.

Giant hogweed sap can cause painful burning blisters, inflammation, and dark scars which may persist for years. Contact with the eyes can lead to temporary or permanent blindness.

How to get rid of it?

Giant hogweed is a Federal Noxious Weed. It is unlawful to propagate, sell, or transport this plant in the United States.

Physical control measures such as mowing and stem or root cutting cause the large root system to produce new sprouts

and should be repeated several times over subsequent growing seasons.

Chemical control using systemic herbicides such as triclopyr or glyphosate has proven to be effective, especially when applied in the spring. A subsequent treatment is recommended before new shoots set seed.

Care must be taken when handling the plant to prevent skin contact with the toxic sap.



Figure 1. Seeds showing resin canals, USDA APHIS PPQ Archive, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

Resources

Kraus, N. 2011. Giant hogweed control methods. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/g_hcontrol.pdf.

O'Neill, Jr., C. R. 2009. Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)-Poisonous invader of the Northeast. NY Sea Grant Invasive Species Factsheet. http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/ghfactnys_eagrant.pdf

¹ This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region