Hogweed Prevention and Control

If you suspect you have Giant Hogweed on your property, contact the Maine Department of Agriculture staff who will help you verify identity and schedule a site visit if needed. The Department does not have a control program, but we will be glad to help with management suggestions.

Here are some points to remember when attempting to control giant hogweed:

- ***Seeds can persist for 5-10 years in the soil and are dispersed by wind and water.***
- ***The plant has a tuberous perennial root system.***
- ***Control plants when less than five feet tall as they are easier to manage.***
- ***Be adequately covered when cutting these plants. Wear gloves, long sleeves and long pants.***
- ***Don't share seedlings with your neighbors!***

These are the most effective control methods for landowners:

- ***Remove the flower heads before they go to seed.***
- ***Hire a professional pesticide applicator or apply appropriate herbicides following label directions when plants are actively growing.***
- ***Dig up single plants making certain to remove all the roots.***

Most importantly:

- **CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITE AND REPEAT CONTROL EFFORTS.**
- **BE PERSISTENT, THIS IS A LONG TERM COMMITMENT!**

Thanks to the
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
for allowing us to modify their original brochure.

Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources
Division of Plant Industry
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Augusta, ME 04333
207-287-3891

U. S. Dept. of Agriculture
Animal & Plant Health
Inspection Service
Plant Protection & Quarantine
267-B Godfrey Boulevard
Bangor, ME 04401
207-945-0479

Giant Hogweed

Heracleum mantegazzianum

An attractive but dangerous, noxious weed. Have you seen this plant?

About Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed is a member of the carrot or parsley family (*Apiaceae*) that was introduced into Europe and North America in the early 1900s. It is native to the Caucasus region of Eurasia. Its massive size and imposing appearance made it desirable for arboretums and gardens. Giant Hogweed soon escaped from cultivation and became

A Herculean stem!

established in rich, moist soils along roadside ditches, stream banks, waste ground, along tree lines and open wooded areas. In the U.S. it is known to occur in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington. The plant's name comes from Hercules, of ancient mythological fame, and Giant Hogweed is aptly described as robust in appearance.

Hogweed is Hazardous

This tall majestic plant is a public health hazard because of its potential to cause severe skin irritation in susceptible people. Plant sap produces painful, burning blisters within 24 to 48 hours after contact. Plant juices also can produce painless red blotches that later develop into purplish or brownish scars that may persist for several years. For an adverse reaction to occur, the skin, contaminated with plant juices, must be moist (perspiration) and then exposed to sunlight. Some other plants are capable of causing this reaction, known as *phytophotodermatitis* (Phyto=plant, Photo=light), including several that are also in the Giant Hogweed family. Giant Hogweed is a Federal Noxious Weed, making it unlawful to propagate, sell or transport this plant to the US. Since 2001, the U.S. and Maine Departments of Agriculture have been surveying for this weed.

Blister from exposure to Hogweed sap.

An attractive but dangerous, noxious weed. Have you seen this plant?

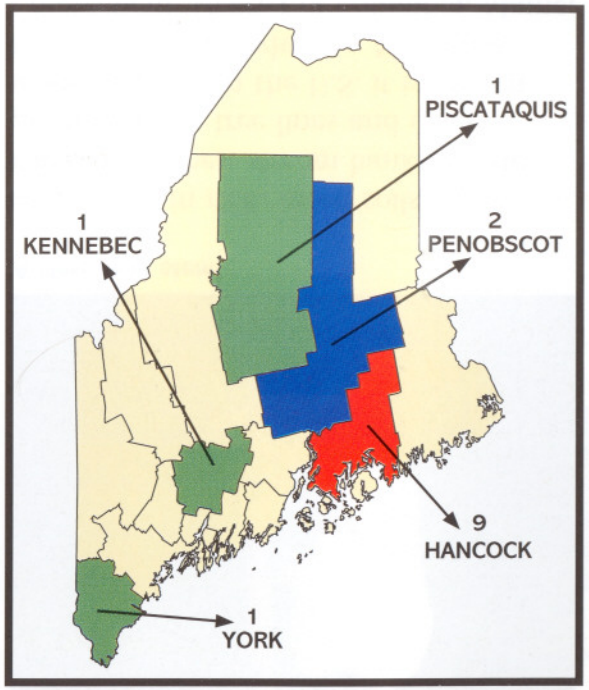
We need your help in locating new sites of Giant Hogweed in Maine. If you see this weed, please report its occurrence by calling the Maine Department of Agriculture at 207-287-3891.

Giant Hogweed in late summer: Seeds are forming.

Giant Hogweed with flower stalks removed.

Giant Hogweed Plant

Giant Hogweed is a biennial or perennial herb growing from a forked or branched taproot. Plants sprout in early spring from the roots or from seeds.



Map showing number of reported hogweed sites in Maine by county.

Plant

beginning to flower

Leaf

huge leaves

Stem

coarse hairs circling the stem

Flowers

large clusters of small flowers

How to Recognize Giant Hogweed

The best time to identify Giant Hogweed is when it's blooming

- **Flowers** are numerous, small and white; appearing in June or July; clustered into a flat-topped umbel up to 2½ ft. across.
- **Stems** are hollow, ridged, 2-4 in. in diameter, 8-14 ft. tall, with purple blotches and coarse white hairs. The hairs are especially prominent that circle the stem at the base of the leaf stalks.
- **Leaves** are lobed, deeply incised and up to 5 feet across.
- **Fruit** (containing the seed) is dry, flattened, oval, about 3/8 in. long and tan with brown lines.

Growth Stages

Dead Stems
After producing seeds in late summer, the plants die, leaving stems standing into winter. At this point seeds have been dispersed to germinate the following spring or in future years.
(Photo credit: Cornell Cooperative Extension, Misc. Bull. 123)

Seedling
Seeds germinate from early spring throughout the growing season.

Rosette of Leaves
Leaf clusters sprout from overwintering roots each year for 2-4 years until the plant flowers.

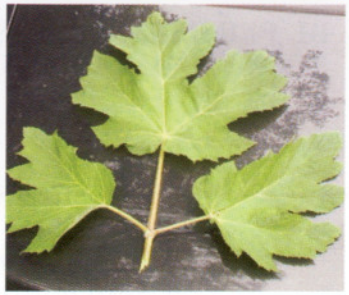
Flowering Stems
Plants bolt and flower in early to mid-summer after rosette plants accumulate enough energy reserves.

Similar Plants Commonly Mistaken for Giant Hogweed

Cow Parsnip *(Heracleum maximum)*, a native plant, is most likely to be confused with Giant Hogweed. Cow Parsnip is smaller, reaching a height of 5-8 feet. Unlike Giant Hogweed, the stem maybe entirely green or have a slight purplish cast, is deeply ridged and only up to 1-2 inches in diameter. Hairs on Cow Parsnip are fine, soft and fuzzy, rather than coarse like those on Giant Hogweed. Although present on both leaf surfaces, the soft hairs occur primarily on the lower surface and give the leaves a velvety appearance. Mature leaves measure up to 2 to 2 ½ feet in diameter. Cow Parsnip generally flowers several weeks before Giant Hogweed, and produces much smaller, flat topped flower clusters.

Plant

Leaf



Stem

Flower

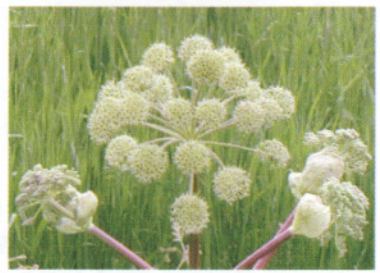
Angelica *(Angelica atropurpurea)* is easily distinguished from Giant Hogweed by its uniformly waxy green to purple, smooth hollow stems and compound, globular, softball-sized clusters of white or greenish-white flowers less than 1 foot in diameter. Angelica is shorter than Giant Hogweed, seldom attaining a height of 8 feet. The mature compound leaves can reach widths of 2 feet and have dozens of small leaflets.

Plant

Leaf

Stem

Flower



Poison Hemlock *(Conium maculatum)* is a multi-branched, non-native biennial ranging from 4-9 feet tall. The waxy stem has purple blotches, and the entire plant is smooth. Leaves are bright green, fern-like and may appear glossy. Small white flowers are arranged in numerous, small, flat-topped clusters on all the branches. Poison Hemlock has a disagreeable "mousy" odor, and the entire plant is poisonous if ingested.

Plant

Leaf

Stem

Flower