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 grouped into flat topped clusters 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 the Maine Department of Agriculture to help in identification. Pictures can also be viewed on our website at [www.maine.gov/agriculture/pi/gianthogweed.htm](http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pi/gianthogweed.htm). Contact the Department at (207) 287-3891 to report hogweed stands or for help with identification and control.

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.

**Timing**

**Persistence**
Eradication is not a “once and done operation.” Control takes many years in areas where hogweed has become 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.

Controlling Giant Hogweed can be challenging but, with long-term commitment, hogweed can be eradicated.
Steps to Control Giant Hogweed on Your Property

Proper plant identification
- Contact the Maine Department of Agriculture
- Report stand
- Confirm identification
- Get information on control

Are plants less than 5 feet tall?
- Determine best control options
  - Yes
  - No

Non-chemical treatment
- Wear proper protective clothing
- Dig, mow or graze

Remove all flower heads
- Delay treatment until next season

Was non-chemical treatment effective?
- Non-chemical controls are less effective in dense, well established stands
  - No

Chemical Control
- Wear proper protective clothing
- Follow label directions
- Monitor and repeat as necessary

Does new growth appear?
- Continue monitoring
- Repeat control if necessary

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.