

Weeds- Giant Hogweed

A member of the parsley family, its most impressive characteristic is its massive size. Giant hogweed reaches a height of 10 to 15 feet when in flower and has hollow stems, 2 to 4 inches in diameter, with dark reddish-purple raised spots and stiff bristle-like hairs. Coarse white hairs are also at the base of the leaf stalk. The sharply incised compound leaves grow up to 5 feet in width. Giant hogweed blooms from mid-May through July, with numerous white flowers clustered in an umbrella-shaped head that is up to 2.5 feet in diameter across its flat top.

The plant produces flattened, 3/8-inch long dry fruits that have a broadly rounded base, and broad marginal winged ridges. Giant hogweed is similar in appearance to [cow parsnip](#), only it is much larger, the purplish blotches are more raised and bumpy, and the hairs on the under surface of the leaf are shorter (about .25 mm long).



When giant hogweed sap contacts human skin in conjunction with sunlight, it can cause a serious skin inflammation. In brief, the sap prevents your skin from protecting itself from sunlight which leads to a very bad sunburn. Heat and moisture (sweat or dew) can worsen the skin reaction. The phototoxic reaction can begin as soon as 15 minutes after contact, with sensitivity peak between 30 minutes and two hours after contact. Do not let it contact any of your skin!

Manual & Mechanical Control: Methods include root cutting, flower head/seed head removal, cutting and mowing, and cut and cover. Except for root cutting, manual control will not cause immediate death of the plant. All other methods will need two to three treatments per year for several years to deplete the root reserves and kill the plants. All methods will need to occur for multiple years until no new plants grow from the seed bank. Monitor the site for at least three more years to make sure no new seedlings appear.

Herbicide Control: Follow all directions and precautions on the Roundup container. Apply in early summer and follow up with repeat applications as needed. This is a nonselective herbicide so it must not touch desired plants.