

Giant Hogweed

Identification:

This impressive plant can reach 2 to 5m high with leaf length of up to 2,5m. The giant hogweed is an *Apiaceae* surmounted by large umbels of white or rarely pink flowers which can, at maturity, release more than 20 000 seeds in its surrounding. Its central stem is robust, covered with several white and rough hairs, green and sprinkled with light red to burgundy spots. It needs sun and prefers the wet environments: it is thus often found in the banks of waterways or ditches.

Similar species:

There are a few species that can be mistaken for giant hogweed. Most of the time, the confusion comes from the cow parsnip. Even though they are similar, there are a few differences: The plant and flowers are smaller (3m tall at most), the stem hairs are numerous but soft, and the stem has no or very few spots. Purplestem angelica can also be confused with giant hogweed, but it is even smaller (2m tall at most) and the stems are fully purple and hairless.



Nuisance

The giant hogweed can be pretty, but it is very toxic. When its sap comes in contact with the skin and UV light, it causes severe skin rashes that resemble second-degree burns. Even after the affected zone heals, side effect can remain for month, causing brown spot on the skin and hypersensitivity to sunlight. Caution should be exercised when you suspect dealing with this plant. For the environment, this plant is a different issue because of its large seed bank makes it the main plant in the zone in the spawn of 5 years or less.

Why is an invasive species a problem?

In addition to the toxic effect this one possesses, all invasive species reproduce quickly, have no local predators, pose a threat to local plants living in similar conditions, and their elimination is almost impossible. Therefore, we must do everything in our power to prevent their spread. Report them on Sentinelle, the provincial website.

What to do?

If you considered buying one, choose regional options such as purplestem angelica, or the Canadian elderberry for similar effect without the nuisances. If you see one on your property or in a public place, contact the municipality by email at stagiaire@cantonstanstead.ca, or phone at (819) 876-2948, ext. 227. If you really want to remove it, use long clothing to cover every part of your body. Prefer disposable equipment and wear gloves, boots and a full-face mask. Uprooting the plant can be done on a small one, but if you are dealing with a mature plant, it is better to cut the umbels to prevent seed dispersal. At the start of the next spring, apply a tarp to prevent regrowth and check around for any sprout. This procedure will likely be required for 3 years. When you have cut pieces, put them in a sturdy plastic bag and place it in your black or green garbage bin. Do not put it in the brown compost bin as the seeds survive the trip and disperse in the compost facility. Remember to ask for permit if the plant is in the riparian strip.



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