

Giant Hogweed

(*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Giant Hogweed, a plant native to the Caucasus Region and Central Asia, was introduced to North America for horticultural purposes and has been found in Québec since 1990. An exotic invasive species, it can quickly grow to heights of 1.5 to 2 metres. Its sap, which oozes from every part of the plant, contains furanocoumarins, toxins that render the skin photosensitive (i.e., sensitive to light). Clear and watery, this sap does not cause pain to the touch, but can produce dermatitis up to 48 hours after skin contact and exposure to the sun. The resulting burn-like lesions are very painful. Inflammation and temporary blindness can occur. Moreover, skin sores can leave brown or white spots that can last for months, even years after healing.



Giant hogweed is topped by white umbel inflorescences (cluster of flowers). i.e. flower stems of equal length that all start at the same point. Resembling an umbrella, it is part of the umbelliferous family. The umbel's diameter measures 20 to 50 cm. Approximately 2.5 cm in diameter, the main stem is green dotted by many purple spots. Furthermore, the stem is hollow and covered in white hairs. The giant hogweed can be found on shorelines, in ditches, along railroad tracks, and by the roadside.

Giant hogweed should not be confused with cow parsnip (also known as Indian celery or Pushki), a plant indigenous to Québec whose umbel is considerably smaller, i.e. 15 to 20 cm in diameter). Its leaves are also much smaller and far less chiselled. See the table comparing the two species on page 3 of this document. You should avoid touching giant hogweed. Should this occur, however, wash the affected areas with soapy water and cover them to prevent exposure to strong light or sun.



To remove this plant, you can rip it out, taking care to protect yourself with rubber gloves, a raincoat and goggles. Afterwards, carefully wash the equipment you used to remove the plants as well as the protective clothing. Dig up to 20 cm down, in order to remove the plant's roots. Do not use as compost, dispose of where it could grow back, or cut down with an edger since the sap could splash onto the skin. You can signal the presence of giant hogweed by contacting the *Réseau de surveillance des plantes exotiques envahissantes* (invasive exotic plant monitoring network) at www.rspee.glu.org/autres/index.php or the Town of Rosemère's eco-consultant at 450 621-3500, ext. 3305.

For additional information:

-Website of the Ministry of Sustainable Development, the Environment and Parks:
www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/biodiversite/nuisibles/berce-caucase/index.htm

-Website of the Ministry of Health and Social Services:
www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/sujets/santepub/environnement/index.php?berce-du-caucase

Comparative Table

	Giant Hogweed (<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>)	Cow parsnip (<i>Heracleum maximum</i>)
Size	From 200 to 400 cm, but under 500 cm (From 6 to 13 ft., but under 16 ft.)	From 100 to 200 cm (From 3 to 6 ft.)
Stalk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sturdy (5 to 10 cm in diameter) Hollow and striated Covered in stiff hairs and many purple spots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sturdy (from 5 cm to as much as 10 cm in diameter) Hollow and striated Covered in soft hairs and a few purple spots 
Leaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deeply incised Divided into large, irregular leaflets Rosette Large (100 to 150 cm in length) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lightly incised Divided into 3 to 5 leaflets Rosette 
Flowers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main umbel consisting of 50 to 150 radii Umbel diameters ranging from 20 to 50 cm Small flowers (1 to 2 cm) Greenish white 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main umbel consisting of 15 to 50 radii Umbel diameters ranging from 15 to 20 cm Greenish white 