

U.S. National Early Detection and Rapid Response System for Invasive Plants

EDRR Fact Sheet

Randy G. Westbrooks, U.S. Geological Survey. Whiteville, North Carolina. USA.

Common Name: Giant Hogweed

Scientific Name: *Heracleum mantegazzianum* Sommier & Levier

Family: Apiaceae

Description: A biennial or perennial herb in the carrot family growing to 15' tall, with a taproot or fibrous roots. **Stems** hollow, 2-4" in diameter, with dark reddish-purple blotches and bristles. **Leaves** compound, deeply lobed, with three leaflets, up to 5' wide. **Inflorescence** a flat-topped umbel, up to 2.5' across with numerous small white flowers, late spring to early summer. **Fruits** elliptical, producing up to 1,500 seeds per flower head.

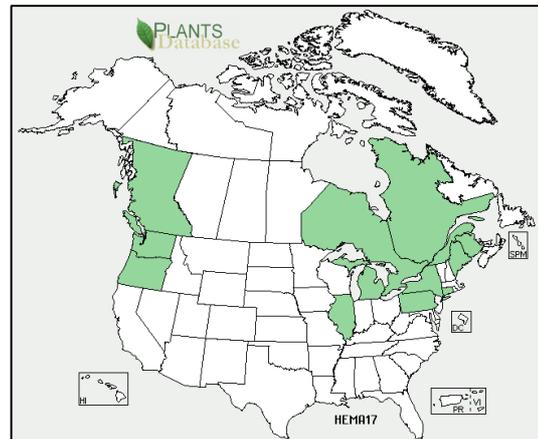


Habitat: Giant hogweed has established free living populations in many of the places where it was first introduced in the United States. The plant does particularly well in disturbed areas with moist soil such as vacant lots, uncultivated or waste areas, riverbanks, along roadways, and in agricultural lands.

Native Range: Eastern Europe.

Pathways of Introduction and Spread: Giant hogweed was intentionally introduced to the United States as an ornamental plant. The earliest U.S. record is from Highland Park (near Rochester) in 1917. The dried fruits, which are used as a spice in Iranian cuisine (golpar) are often intercepted at U.S. ports of entry. Once the plant becomes established in an area, birds consume the fruits and spread the seeds.

U.S. and Canada Distribution:



Ecological and Economic Impacts:

From an ecological perspective, Giant hogweed is an aggressive competitor. Because of its large size and rapid growth, it can quickly dominate invaded ravines and stream banks. This substantially reduces the amount of suitable habitat available for native plants and wildlife. During the winter months, Giant hogweed dies back, leaving bare ground that can lead to an increase in soil erosion.

From an economic standpoint, Giant hogweed is a very serious threat to human health. Exposure to the sap causes a skin reaction known as photodermatitis that results in large painful blisters with eruptions (*similar to poison ivy – but much worse*). If exposed to sunlight, the blisters leave permanent purple scars. The large hollow stems are a special hazard to unsuspecting children who like to use them as pea-shooters or telescopes. Contact with the eyes can lead to temporary or permanent blindness.

Cultural Control: Due to the extensive underground root system, mowing of Giant hogweed is not effective.

Chemical Control: Both pre- and post-emergent herbicides, plus competitive vegetation are used to manage Giant hogweed. Effective pre-emergent herbicides include pendamethalin ([Pre-M](#) and others) and clopyralid ([Transline](#) and others). Post-emergent herbicides include glyphosate ([Roundup](#), [Rodeo](#), and others) and triclopyr ([Garlon](#) and others).

Regulatory Status: Giant hogweed is listed as a [U.S. Federal Noxious Weed](#). It is regulated as a state noxious weed in [Alabama](#), [California](#), [Connecticut](#), [Florida](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Minnesota](#), [New Hampshire](#), [North Carolina](#), [Oregon](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [South Carolina](#), [Vermont](#), and [Washington](#).

Online Resources:

Giant Hogweed – Domestic Pest Evaluation - USDA APHIS PPQ.

URL: <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/other/hogweed.html>

Giant Hogweed Fact Sheet - USDA Forest Service – Weed of the Week Series.

URL: http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/giant-hogweed.pdf

Giant Hogweed Images - U-GA Bugwood Image Gallery.

URL: <http://www.invasive.org/species/subject.cfm?sub=4536>

Giant Hogweed Poster – USDA APHIS PPQ.

URL: http://www.invasive.org/eastern/other/poster_phogweed.pdf

Giant Hogweed Profile - USDA Plants Database.

URL: <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=HEMA17>