



SAFETY MESSAGE



Provided by the UAA Environmental Stewardship Committee



Giant Hogweed: Toxic Sap, Serious Skin Risk

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Introduction

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is a non-native invasive plant known for its large size, umbrella-shaped clusters of white flowers, deeply cut leaves, and thick hollow stems with purple blotches and coarse hairs. Plants can grow very tall, sometimes reaching more than 10 feet under favorable conditions. Giant hogweed often grows in moist disturbed areas such as streambanks, ditches, roadsides, field edges, forest edges, and rights-of-way. Because it resembles other carrot-family plants, including cow parsnip, poison hemlock, and Queen Anne's lace, accurate identification is important before working near or handling the plant.

Safety Risks and Recommended PPE

Safety Risk: Giant hogweed sap can cause severe phytophotodermatitis when contaminated skin is exposed to sunlight. Reactions may include painful burns, swelling, blistering, scarring, and long-term sun sensitivity. Sap in the eyes can cause serious injury.

Worker Exposure: Even light contact may transfer sap. Risk increases when plants are cut, dug, mowed, broken, or handled because sap can splash several feet.

Work Precautions: Do not handle giant hogweed unless trained and properly equipped. Do not use a string trimmer or brush cutter. Keep soap, water, and eyewash available. If exposed, wash immediately, cover the area, and avoid sunlight for at least 48 hours. Rinse eye exposures with water and seek medical care.

Spread/Contamination Prevention: Clean sap, seeds, soil, and plant material from boots, clothing, tools, and equipment. Prevent movement of seed heads and follow applicable reporting and disposal requirements.

Recommended PPE: Wear impermeable gloves, water-resistant coveralls or outerwear over long sleeves and pants, waterproof boots, eye protection, and a face shield. Remove contaminated PPE carefully and wash equipment and clothing after work.



Safety Glasses



Long Pants



Long Sleeves



Gloves



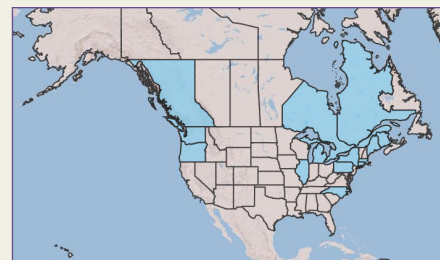
Boots



Face Shield or Respirator

Range and Distribution Map

Giant hogweed was introduced to North America as an ornamental plant. In North America, it has been reported in parts of the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Great Lakes region, Pacific Northwest, and portions of Canada, but it is not evenly distributed across the continent. It is most often found in moist, disturbed habitats, including streambanks, drainage areas, roadsides, vacant lots, forest edges, and riparian corridors. It can spread easily by seed and poses a direct public safety risk.



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References/Works Cited

New York State DEC [Giant Hogweed](#)

USDA National Invasive Species Information Center [Giant Hogweed](#)

Ohio State University Extension [Giant Hogweed](#)

King County Noxious Weeds [Giant Hogweed](#)

USDA Forest Service FEIS [Heracleum mantegazzianum](#)

Scan the QR code for additional guidance on identification and control.

