

Common Name: Giant Hogweed

Scientific Name: *Heracleum mantegazzianum* Sommier & Levier

Family: Carrot family (Apiaceae)

Related Species: Cowparsnip (*Heracleum maximum* Bartr.) is native to and very common in Southeast Alaska.

Description: **Enormous** herbaceous plants to **15 feet tall**. Stems hollow. Leaves compound with three leaflets. Lower leaves to seven feet long. Flowers white, in an umbrella-like inflorescence up to two feet in diameter.

Life History: Perennial herb that dies back to the ground in winter. Reproduces from seed and buds formed from root systems. Seeds are spread by water movement in streams and drainage ditches.

Where Found: Native to the Caucasus Mountains of Asia. Not known in Alaska but common in Washington State and Vancouver Island.

Habitat: May colonize a wide variety of habitats but is most common along roadsides, other rights-of-way, vacant lots, streams and rivers.

Impacts: Exposure to sap causes skin to be sensitized to ultraviolet light, leading to **severe swelling, blisters, eruptions and burns** that are similar to but much more severe than those caused by exposure to native cowparsnip. Giant hogweed forms dense colonies, shading out and effectively excluding other vegetation.

Fun Facts: Giant hogweed is listed in *The Guinness Book of World Records* as the worlds largest weed. The dried fruits of giant hogweed are used as a spice in Iranian cooking known in Farsi as *golpar*. The song *Attack of the Giant*

Hogweed was on the album *Nursery Cryme* by the rock band Genesis.

Control Options: Always wear protective clothing when handling this plant, including: rubber gloves, disposable coveralls, chemical splash goggles. Cutting or mowing will not immediately kill the plant, but may be effective if repeated at regular intervals (3-4 times per season) on the resprouting plants to eventually exhaust nutrient reserves stored in the root system. Digging is effective if care is taken to remove as much of the root system as possible.

Herbicide Options: Selective herbicides such as 2,4-D and dicamba will kill back foliage but will not kill the roots. A systemic herbicide such as glyphosate is effective. Apply glyphosate in spring or early summer when plants are less than three feet tall if they can be distinguished from native cowparsnip. A follow-up spray in mid summer is recommended.

