



Comox Valley

Invasive Species Alert

Giant Hogweed

The spread of non-native invasive plants has serious ecological, economic and social/health impacts. The four local governments (Town of Comox, City of Courtenay, Village of Cumberland and the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) and the Coastal Invasive Species Committee appreciate the cooperation of all residents to address Giant Hogweed infestations. Local professionals can assist with the special treatment required for this toxic species.

Giant Hogweed



Stalks: Stalks are purple spotted or streaked, hollow and 5 to 10 cm in diameter. Stiff hairs.

Cow Parsnip



Stalks: Stalks are usually green but lower stems may also have some purple. Soft hairs.

Why is giant hogweed a problem?

- **PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARD:** risk of severe skin burns, scarring and temporary or permanent blindness.
- The sap in the stalk, stem and leaves is toxic, causing dermatitis after contact with sunlight (effects within hours or days). Scarring can last from months to lifetime. See Worksafe BC Hogweed Alert for first aid www.worksafebc.com.
- Hogweed outcompetes native flora and causes soil erosion on steep slopes and stream banks.

What does it look like?

- Large plant up to 6 m tall with deeply lobed leaves and umbrella-shaped white flower heads up to 1 m across.
- Giant Hogweed is often confused with native Cow Parsnip (much smaller, less than 3 m tall)

Giant Hogweed



Leaves: Large, very deeply lobed with jagged edges; up to 2.5 m long.

Cow Parsnip



Leaves: Wider leaflet, less lobed and jagged than Giant Hogweed; up to 40 cm long.

Giant Hogweed



Flowers: Blooms in June to July; large, umbrella-shaped white flower head up to 1 m.

Cow Parsnip



Flowers: Blooms in May to July; flower heads are much smaller to only 0.2 m diameter.

Note: Cow-parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*)

Spread the *Word*
Not the *Weed*

Reporting & assistance in the CVRD: Call 1-844-298-2532
Email info@coastalisc.com
Provincial Report-a-Weed: www.reportaweedbc.ca



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Giant Hogweed

Habitat and biology

- Perennial plant from the Apiaceae (carrot or parsley) family.
- Mature plants flower in May, producing up to 100,000 seeds (viable in soil up to 15 years).
- Reproduction by seeds and possibly some vegetative reproduction (from buds on rootstalks).
- Large taproot will rapidly re-sprout if mowed.
- Found especially along ditches, roadsides, riparian areas, open forests, marine shorelines and disturbed sites.

Distribution:

- Native to Asia. Invasions in BC are primarily southwestern BC, including Vancouver Island.

What should I do?

Please report any sightings of this species to the contacts below.

- **Spread the word, not the weed:** don't buy or plant Giant Hogweed.
- **Contact:** There is a special treatment program for this plant.
- **Remove:** if you have properly identified Giant Hogweed on your property, use the best control methods (below) to eliminate it.
- **Monitor:** annually return to the site in the spring and summer for several years to continue treatment.
- **Replant:** after effectively eliminating this species over time, replant with non-invasive plants (such as appropriate native species).

Caution wear protective clothing when in contact with this plant:

- Heavy, water-resistant gloves (dispose of immediately afterwards).
- Waterproof coveralls with long sleeves or long sleeved shirt and pants that are not cotton or linen (sap can soak through); thicker clothing so the hairs do not penetrate.
- Full face protection.
- Wash clothing and tools after contact.

Small populations (< 25 plants)

- **Manual removal:** remove young plants by hand, pulling gently to remove all the roots. A small hand tool should be used to ease the roots out.
- Large, mature plants can be removed by cutting the stem near the base, then using a shovel to dig out the roots, focusing especially on the central root and removing at least 8 to 12 cm below the surface.
- For all manual removal care should be taken to minimize soil disturbance.
- Ideally remove in the spring and repeat, as required in early summer.
- If removing late, during flowering season cut and bag flower-heads first for secure disposal.
- Mulching over the area disturbed by the removal may be beneficial.

Large populations

- Contact Coastal ISC to assist you in making a plan to treat large populations based on the site conditions and best management practices.

Proper Disposal

- Disposal varies, contact Coastal ISC for information on proper disposal methods in your area.
- **DO NOT COMPOST!** Flowers can still form viable seeds after removal.

With thanks to the District of Saanich Photo Credits: District of Saanich, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture and Fraser Valley Regional District

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