



# Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is a very large perennial plant that towers over a grown person, reaching up to 5 m (16 ft) in height. Giant Hogweed is a public safety hazard due to its caustic sap.

This garden ornamental from southwest Asia is naturalizing in North America and is becoming more common in southern and central Ontario. Giant Hogweed can spread quickly and grows along roadsides, ditches and streams, invading old fields and even native habitats such as open woodlands.

## Health Hazard

Giant Hogweed can be a serious health hazard for humans. Its clear, watery sap contains toxins that can cause severe dermatitis (inflammation of the skin). You can get severe burns if you get the sap on your skin and the skin is then exposed to sunlight, as UV radiation activates compounds in the sap.

Symptoms occur within 48 hours and consist of painful, burning blisters that can cause severe irritation, dermatitis, and develop into purplish or blackened scars. Depending on individual sensitivity, effects can last for months and skin can remain sensitive to UV light for years. Eye contact with the sap has been reported to cause temporary or permanent blindness.

Similar effects can result from exposure to the native Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*) and from the widely introduced Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*).

## In Case of Direct Exposure or Contact

If you are exposed to Giant Hogweed sap:

- Wash the affected areas immediately with soap and water.
- Keep the affected areas out of UV/sunlight.
- Seek medical advice as soon as possible, particularly if inflammation occurs.
- If your eye has been directly exposed to the sap, immediately flush your eye with water and seek medical evaluation and treatment on an urgent basis.

## If you find Giant Hogweed

If you find what you suspect is Giant Hogweed, do not go near or touch the plant under any circumstances!

If the plant is in the Upper Thames River watershed, please contact the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) at 519-451-2800 or [infoline@thamesriver.on.ca](mailto:infoline@thamesriver.on.ca). The UTRCA is tracking the location of Giant Hogweed in the watershed and will assist you with plant identification and treatment options.

Page 2 of this fact sheet show key features of Giant Hogweed and its look-alikes.

## Control

Do not burn or compost Giant Hogweed. Due to this plant's hazardous nature, it is highly recommended that private landowners hire a professional exterminator to remove the plant to ensure safe procedures are followed. There is no government funded program to remove Giant Hogweed from private property.

Do not purchase or trade Giant Hogweed or grow it in your garden. When you transport soil, sand or gravel, make sure it is free of Giant Hogweed (plant pieces and seeds).

## For More Information

UPPER THAMES RIVER

CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

[www.thamesriver.on.ca](http://www.thamesriver.on.ca)

[infoline@thamesriver.on.ca](mailto:infoline@thamesriver.on.ca)

[@UTRCMarketing](#)

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

519-451-2800

1424 Clarke Road, London, ON N5V 5B9

## Hogweed & its Look-alikes

Giant Hogweed looks very similar to our native plant species Cow Parsnip and Purple Angelica. The key feature of Giant Hogweed is its huge size – as a mature plant it towers above these other species. Other important features are the flower shape and size, stem texture and leaf size.



### Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

<p><b>Height</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flowering stems up to 5 m (16 ft) tall</li> <li>- Leaf rosette (non-flowering plant) up to 2 m tall</li> </ul>	<p><b>Flower</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large, flat or slightly domed flower head, up to 1.2 m (4 ft) across</li> <li>- Each flower head with 50-150 short stalks (umbels), each stalk ending in a cluster of 30-40 small white flowers</li> <li>- Blooms late June-August</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2-10 cm (1-4 in) diameter</li> <li>- Hollow, green to reddish-purple with reddish-purple bumps or bristles, stiff hairs are filled with sap</li> </ul>	<p><b>Leaf</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very large, 1-1.5 m (3-5 ft) across</li> <li>- Looks like extremely exaggerated maple leaf</li> <li>- Compound, deeply cut leaflets, each leaflet with deep, irregular lobes and coarse, sharp teeth</li> </ul>
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### Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*) Sap causes similar human health effects as Giant Hogweed sap.

<p><b>Height</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1.5-2.5 m (5-8 ft) tall</li> </ul>	<p><b>Flower</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flat flower head, less than 30 cm (1 ft) across</li> <li>- Flower head with fewer than 50 short stalks (umbels), each stalk ending in a cluster of small whitish flowers</li> <li>- Blooms June-September</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2-5 cm (1-2 in) diameter</li> <li>- Deeply ridged, green to slightly purple, often with scattered dark purplish blotches, fine hairs, fuzzy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Leaf</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large, 60-75 cm (2-2.5 ft) across</li> <li>- Compound, not cut as deeply, fuzzy hairs especially on underside</li> </ul>
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### Purple Angelica (*Angelica atropurpurea* L.)

<p><b>Height</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1-2.5 m (4-8 ft) tall</li> </ul>	<p><b>Flower</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Round, softball-sized flower head, rarely up to 30 cm (1 ft) across</li> <li>- Small, greenish-white or white flowers</li> <li>- Blooms June-August</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2-5 cm (1-2 in) diameter</li> <li>- Smooth, waxy green to purple, no bristles</li> </ul>	<p><b>Leaf</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large, up to 50 cm (2 ft) across</li> <li>- Many small leaflets</li> </ul>
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