



Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed, or *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, is an invasive perennial plant that poses a serious threat to local ecosystems and human health. It can reach an impressive height of three metres when flowering, competing with native plants and displacing wildlife. Coming in contact with this plant can lead to severe burns to skin or eyes.

A Giant Hogweed has hollow, green to dark reddish-purple stems, 5–10 cm in diameter, with spotted leaf stalks. Much of the plant is covered in stiff, white hairs and is filled with sap. Large blossoms consist of numerous white flowers, clustered in an umbrella-shaped head that is more than 60 cm across. Giant Hogweed plants flower from late spring to mid-summer and produce between 1,500–100,000 seeds.

CAUTION:

Blister-like pimples on a Giant Hogweed's stalks and stems exude a clear, watery sap that makes skin sensitive to sunlight. Affected areas are subject to severe burns that usually result in blistering and painful dermatitis. Blisters often cause purplish or black scars that can last up to six years. Even a small amount of sap in one's eyes can lead to temporary or even permanent blindness.

If you come in contact with Giant Hogweed:

- wash affected areas immediately
- keep the affected area out of the sun
- seek medical advice for burns.

When removing Giant Hogweed:

- wear protective clothing, including gloves, long sleeves, pants, and eye protection
- immediately remove any flower heads to prevent seed growth and dispersal
- sever plant roots 8 – 12 cm below the soil surface
- dispose of all plant parts in double garbage bags
- do not compost as plant parts or seeds can produce new plants
- return to the plant site periodically to remove any new plant growth.

A Giant Hogweed plant takes several years from the time it germinates until it develops a flowering stem. After flowering, it sets seed and dies. Additional crowns may form on individual plants that continue to flower. Seeds can germinate for more than seven years.

PHOTO (RIGHT): CHRIS ENSING, CITY OF BURNABY

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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