

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Staff DATE: August 16, 2010

FROM: Gerry Mitchell, Director for Health and Safety

SUBJECT: Giant Hogweed

You may have recently heard news reports on the hazards of coming in contact with Giant Hogweed plants. I have attached a fact sheet from the Grand River Conservation Authority which summarizes the concern with coming in contact with the <u>sap</u> from the Giant Hogweed plant. The sap will cause sensitivity to sunlight and could lead to burns and blistering.

As noted in the article, the simplest thing to do is to avoid the plant altogether. Therefore, it is critical to be able to recognize the plant. The attached article shows photos of the plant but you may need to go to one of the websites noted at the end of the attached article for clearer photos.

For all staff who may be working in fields etc. please ensure you stay clear of these plants. You should also warn family/friends of this issue (particularly children) since these plants frequently occur in recreational areas.

GIANT HOGWEED (Heracleum mantegazzianum) FACT SHEET

Habitat:

Giant Hogweed is a herbaceous non-native plant originating in Asia. It prefers moist, disturbed soil and partially shaded areas. Hogweed can be found near wastelands, riverbanks, ravines and along railroads of northeastern US and southern Ontario.

Identification:

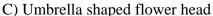
Giant Hogweed is most easily identified by its massive size. The plant can reach heights of 10 to 15 ft. The large hollow stem is 2 to 4 inches in diameter with ridges, dark reddish purple spots and white bristles. The compound leaves have 3 deeply incised leaflets and can grow up to 5 ft wide. Hogweed is also easily recognized by the numerous white flat-topped flowers clustered in an umbrella shaped head that can grow up to 2.5 ft wide. It flowers in June and July.



A) Hogweed Stem

B) Deeply incised leaves







D) Entire Giant Hogweed plant

Symptoms:

The clear, watery sap of Giant Hogweed contains toxins known as furocoumarins that can cause skin to become temporarily but severely sensitive to sunlight (photo-dermatitis). These toxins can be injected into the skin through contact with the white bristly hairs found along the stem. Skin contact, followed by

exposure to sunlight produces painful burning blisters and swelling that can develop into purplish or blackened scars within 24-48 hours of contact, and in some acute cases, lead to death. Contact with eyes can cause temporary or sometimes permanent blindness. Damaged skin will heal very slowly, as these scars can persist for several years.

Treatment:

If you come into contact with Giant Hogweed, keep out of direct sunlight and immediately wash the affected areas with soap and water. Avoid sunlight for approximately 1 week afterwards to prevent blistering and scarring. If a skin reaction occurs, treating it with topical steroids early on can reduce the severity of blistering and ease discomfort. If you have been extensively exposed to the sap of this plant, seek medical advice immediately.

Prevention:

The best way to prevent a reaction to Giant Hogweed is to be able to identify the plant and avoid contact (see table below for a summary of plants similar to Hogweed). Do not cultivate, plant, purchase or transplant this species as it is very difficult to control and may result in your skin coming into contact with the sap. If you must go near it, protective clothing must be worn to prevent contact, as the hairs can penetrate regular fabrics. Wear long, canvas-style pants and long sleeves, or a disposable rain suit, thick rubber gloves, and safety glasses to prevent sap penetration.

Summary of key identification features of plant similar to Giant Hogweed

Summary	Summary of Key Identification features of plant similar to Giant Hogweed					
	Giant Hogweed	Cow Parsnip	Angelica	Queen Anne's	Water	
		_	_	Lace	Hemlock	
	Heracleum	Heracleum	Angelica	Daucus carota	Cicuta maculata	
	mantegazzianum	maximum	atropurpurea			
Height	10-15 ft	6 ft	8 ft	3-4 ft	4-6 ft	
Flower	White, flat, very	White, flat, 6-10	White, round,	White, flat,	White, half	
	large, up to 2 ft	in. clusters	less than 1ft in	small flower	round, 2-8 in.	
	in diameter		diameter	heads	·	
Leaf	Lobed, broad,	Lobed and	Double	Feathery and	Double	
	up to 5 ft across	toothed, in 3	compound leaf	finely divided	compound leaf	
		segments, up to				
		1 ft across				
Stem	Thick with	Thick with fine	Smooth, dark	Thin, erect with	Smooth, purple	
	coarse hairs,	hairs, grooved,	purple	short coarse		
	blistery purple	mostly green		hairs		
	spots	, ,				
Flowering	June - July	June - August	June -	June -	July -	
Season	_	_	September	September	September	

For more information, check out these websites:

http://massnrc.org/pests/pestFAQsheets/hogweed.html

http://www.cce.cornell.edu/allegany-cattaraugus/hort/PestAlert.htm

http://invasives.uconn.edu/ipane/ipanespecies/hogweed.htm

http://www.invasive.org/browse/subject.cfm?sub=4536