

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Origin: Native to Central Eurasia

Problems:

Causes severe skin irritation for most people. The sap contains a phototoxin that causes skin to be sensitive to sunlight. Sap can produce painful, burning blisters within 24 to 48 hours after contact as well as red blotches that can develop into scars that persist for several years. Giant Hogweed has been declared a Federal Noxious Weed, meaning it is illegal to propagate, sell or transport this plant in the United States.

Profile:

Very large, erect biennial or perennial. Small white flowers appear in late summer, forming a large, flat-topped umbel up to 2.5 feet across. Hollow, rigid stems grow 2-4 inches in diameter and 8-14 feet tall and have purple blotches and coarse hairs. Leaves can be 5 feet across, are lobed and deeply incised.

Habitat/Distribution:

Present in much of the Eastern U.S. (Michigan to Virginia) as well as the Northwest in Oregon and Montana. Currently in western New York, spreading to the east. Found in rich, moist soils in open fields, wooded areas, tree lines, roadsides, ditches and along streams and rivers.

Controls/Management:

Extreme care must be taken when removing or managing populations of Giant Hogweed. Herbicide application is the best method of control. Cutting, digging or even touching this plant is strongly discouraged.

