



The Door County Invasive Species Team

Empowering Door County citizens and municipalities with the information, tools, and skills to tackle invasive species.

A Quick Guide to Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)

What is Wild Parsnip?

Wild parsnip is an herbaceous biennial in the carrot family. First year plants consist only of basal leaves, leaves that grow low to the ground. Second year plants develop flowers in mid-June through late July growing to a height of 4-5' tall. The yellow clusters resemble dill flowers. As the plant matures the seed heads develop. Each plant produces about 1,000 seeds per plant.

Wild parsnip sap contains furanocoumari chemicals, which react with sunlight resulting in phytophotodermatitis, severe rashes, burns and blistering as a result of the sap coming in contact with skin and being introduced to sunlight. This quick spreading invasive reduces the quality of agricultural forage crops and can negatively impact livestock if ingested. Wild parsnip spreads readily in disturbed areas along road sides and fields. Seeds of wild parsnip can remain viable 4-5 years after development.



Wild Parsnip WI DNR Classification



Wild parsnip is listed under Wisconsin's Invasive Species Rule Chapter NR 40 as a restricted species. Restricted species are those that are already present throughout the state of Wisconsin and are not likely to be eradicated. Restricted species are likely to cause significant environmental and economic harm or harm to human health. The NR 40 Rule makes it illegal to transport, transfer, or introduce invasive species listed as restricted.

Wild Parsnip Look-alikes

Wild parsnip has a few look-alikes especially when the plant is not in flower. A few common look-alikes are garden valerian, golden alexander, cow parsnip, and burnet-saxifrage. All of these plants have pinnately compound leaves, similar to a fern frond, with the exception of cow parsnip. The two native look-alikes, cow parsnip and golden alexander leaves are very different from wild parsnip. Wild parsnip's leaflets, the smaller leaves making up the larger leaf, are deep and forked, whereas golden alexander leaflets are smooth, more finely serrated and have a distinct stem where they attach to the central rib. Cow parsnip leaves are giant compared to wild parsnip leaves, cow parsnip leaves are 16" across where as wild parsnip leaves are 6" long. Cow parsnip leaves are divided into 3 deeply lobed leaflets. The other invasive look-alikes include garden valerian and burnet-saxifrage, however, the leaflets on burnet-saxifrage are smaller, more rounded, and more deeply serrated than wild parsnip. The leaflets of garden valerian are pointier and more narrow than wild parsnip.



How to Control Wild Parsnip

There are many mechanical and chemical control options available. Please note that control options may take several years to have an effect due to size of the seed bank. It is important when controlling wild parsnip to always wear long sleeves, long pants, gloves, eye protection, and close toed shoes to avoid sap coming in contact with skin. It is important to control populations prior to plants going to seed and important to properly dispose of any and all plant material. Manual and mechanical control options have proven to be effective for less dense and/or small populations. Mechanical methods include: shovel cutting, mowing, digging/pulling, & burning. Of these methods shovel cutting & digging/pulling is shown to have the greatest treatment success for mechanical/manual control methods.

Chemical control is recommended for larger more established populations. Chemical control options include foliar applications of a systemic herbicide. Many herbicides, herbicide combinations and application methods have been tried on wild parsnip and work to a greater or lesser degree. Like any other weed control method, herbicides will fail if used incorrectly. Using herbicide correctly means: using an herbicide that specialized for site conditions & designated for target species, using correct concentration (rate) of herbicides active ingredient, using an adjuvant if recommended (adjuvants are spray additives which may help the herbicide work more effectively), using the right application method made under the appropriate conditions, and applying herbicide during the correct timing to coincide with plant susceptibility. Make sure to read and follow all directions and follow any restrictions or precautions listed on the product label. Additionally, depending on population location applicators may be required to have a specialized certification, use site specific approved herbicides, and acquire permits prior to treatment (example: treatments in aquatic habitats). For more information about treatment efficacy please check out the UW Extension Invasive Plants Factsheet: <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0145/8808/4272/files/A3924-15.pdf>.



Control Efforts in Door County and How to Help

The Door County Invasive Species Team (DCIST) is a group of natural resource professionals and interested public members that are concerned about the preservation of Door County's natural environment. DCIST seeks to halt the invasion of exotic, non-native plants by empowering citizens with the education, tools and skills necessary to control invasive species. DCIST is committed to educating, preventing, minimizing, and eradicating invasive plants and reducing their impact on Door County's natural resources, economic viability, and human welfare. The partnership promotes an open exchange of information, public and private sector coordination, and citizen involvement.



Wild Parsnip is one of four priority invasive species that the County targets year to year. Additionally, most municipalities within Door County have adopted noxious weed ordinances, many of these ordinances target wild parsnip. These municipalities can participate in the County Invasive Species Cost Share Program. If you would like to participate in the Municipal Cost Share Program reach out to your municipal clerk to inquire. DCIST also secures control grants to treat populations within specific project areas, landowner permission slips are mailed out for all populations inventoried within DCIST project areas. To see populations that have been inventoried please visit the Door County Web Map at: <http://map.co.door.wi.us/map/>.

Please report any invasive species population to DCIST via their website at www.Doorinvasives.org or using the Great Lakes Early Detection Network (GLEDN) app <https://apps.bugwood.org/apps/gledn/>, or by reaching out to the DCIST coordinator via email at DCIST1@gmail.com or leave a message on the DCIST message line at (920) 746-5955. These reports help keep inventories up to date and allow landowners to benefit by participating in the Municipal Cost Share Program and/or receive educational resources and potential control resources through grant funding.

 WISCONSIN COASTAL
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