

GIANT HOGWEED: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Public Works Department July 27, 2010

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP



What is it?

Overview

Giant Hogweed is a dangerous, invasive species of plant belonging to the parsley family. Hailing from southwest Asia, it has spread in recent years and is now common in many areas of Canada. Growing perennially, it is often found along stream banks, beside roads and paths, and at waste sites. Although there are a handful of similar species, Giant Hogweed is made characteristic by its large height and stem thickness. Giant hogweed can measure up to 5 meters in height, with the stem being as thick as 10 centimeters. The stem

itself will possess many red/purple spots and sometimes will be solidly coloured at the bottom. The leaves are comparably large in size, and can grow up to 1 meter across. The leaves resemble a maple leaf, but with many more points and teeth protruding from the 3 main leaflets. Each branch of flowers at the top of the plant can span up to 120 centimeters. The flowers are not the best identifier of the plant itself, however, because Giant Hogweed only flowers once in its lifetime. The best revealing features of the Giant Hogweed are the thick stems and the height of the plant itself.



The leaves are an easily recognizable feature of Giant Hogweed.

Health Concerns

Giant Hogweed poses several potential hazards to any persons coming into contact with it. The sap inside the stalk of the plant is photosensitive, reacting in sunlight to cause up to third degree burns if sap remains on skin. The reacted skin can in some cases remain black or purple in colour for a number of years after contact. Additionally, exposure to the eyes can cause irritation, temporary, or permanent blindness.

What do I do with it?

Before handling Giant Hogweed, ensure that you equip yourself with the following: waterproof (heavy duty) gloves; water-resistant clothes with long sleeves; and goggles. Do whatever you can to minimize exposed skin to prevent exposure.

Mature Plants

Remove cautiously, cutting at

least 8 cm of the root. Cut into pieces, and place in heavy duty plastic bags.

Immature Plants

Use mower to cut to the ground every 2 to 3 weeks. This process could take a number of years to successfully eliminate all seedlings. Ideally, manual removal is encouraged.



Take every precaution not to spread the seeds, especially near water and windy areas.

Disposal

Do not compost. Place plant in large heavy duty bag and landfill. Alternatively, incineration could take place away from other persons. When loading plants into vehicles, be sure to contain any seeds to prevent further spread.

If Exposure Occurs...

If exposure occurs, avoid further exposure and immediately do the following:

1. Cover affected area from sunlight.
2. Rinse affected area with water.
3. Seek medical attention.

Questions?

If a large patch is found on private property, please call the Invasive Species Hotline (1-800-563-7711) or a local pesticide control company. If unsure of anything and require further information, or if the plant is found on municipal lands, please contact the Seguin Township Public Works Department (1-705-732-4300).

Some useful websites include:

www.weedinfo.ca (Use the index to locate Giant Hogweed)

www.ontarioweeds.com (Same as above)

www.invadingspecies.com (Under the "Invaders" tab, click "Plants", then select Giant Hogweed)