

# Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

**Description:** Giant Hogweed is a member of the parsley or carrot family (umbelliferae). It can grow to a height of 15 to 20 feet. Except for its size it closely resembles cow parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*), a native plant of Washington. Giant Hogweed has hollow, reddish-purple stems, 2 to 4 inches in diameter. Hogweed can be annual, biennial, or a monocarpic perennial, sending up flowers anywhere from 1 to 15 years following germination. The sharply toothed, compound leaves may reach five feet in width. Giant Hogweed has large tuberous root stalks which form buds each year. The seeds are winged and can spread through wind and water. They can float for three days before becoming waterlogged and sinking. Seeds are viable for approximately 7 years.

**Impacts:** Giant Hogweed is a federally listed noxious weed. It is also listed as a "Class A noxious weed" on the state noxious weed control list and is mandated for control in Washington State. Hogweed forms dense canopies, out-competing native riparian species and resulting in increased soil erosion along streams.



The plant exudes a clear, watery sap which sensitizes the skin to ultraviolet radiation. This can result in severe burns to the affected areas when exposed to sunlight, causing blistering and painful dermatitis.

Seventy-one percent (71%) of all Giant Hogweed sites are found in urban areas, creating a human health hazard. In 1996, a Thurston County citizen reported being sensitive to Giant Hogweed and experienced scarring as a result of cutting it down and digging it up. Observations confirm that Giant Hogweed is most common on roadsides, alley-ways, old landscapes, backyards, and vacant lots.

**Control Options:** Thurston County's Integrated Pest Management emphasizes cultural, biological, and manual control methods to keep pests and vegetation problems low enough to prevent damage. The strategy of Thurston County's IPM policy is to minimize the use of pesticides.

## ► Manual

**Always wear protective clothing and avoid getting sap on your skin! Performing any manual control is risky. The sap that causes burns is contained in all portions of the plant. If you do get sap on your skin, go inside immediately and wash with soap and water. If you must return to the outdoors, be sure that skin is covered in a heavy layer of clothing, and remember that clouds will not protect you from sunlight.** Small initial infestations (20 plants or more if the size is manageable) can be pulled and the roots carefully removed. Seedlings found in subsequent years are very easily pulled or dug out. Carefully collect any pieces of root or crown to prevent re-sprouting or spread into new areas. Disposal of the plant is currently paid for by the noxious weed agency at the Thurston County Transfer Stations.

## ► Cultural

Following control or removal, landscape barrier cloth or mulch is encouraged as well as the planting of desirable species in any disturbed areas.

## ► Biological

There are no known biological techniques available to control Giant Hogweed.



## ► Chemical

Spot spraying with an herbicide containing the active ingredient **glyphosate** (example: Roundup Pro<sup>®</sup>, Eliminator Weed and Grass Killer<sup>®</sup>, etc.) can be used to treat Giant Hogweed effectively. Some glyphosate products have a supplemental label for treating hogweed by an alternate method known as “stem injection”. This method is especially useful where there are sensitive plants nearby. One product known to have this supplemental labeling is Roundup Pro<sup>®</sup>.

Due to recent health reviews, Thurston County recognized some scientific studies have concluded the use of glyphosate products have carcinogenic potential. The risk of spot spraying with these products is considered to be low provided the applicator uses personal protection equipment which includes chemically resistant gloves in addition to long sleeve shirt, long pants, socks and shoes and all other label precautions are followed.

**Imazapyr** (example: Polaris<sup>®</sup> or Alligare<sup>™</sup> Imazapyr 2SL) is also effective in controlling infestations of Giant Hogweed. Imazapyr is a non-selective herbicide and may damage or kill any other plants that it contacts, including grass. It may also leave persistent bare ground in the treatment area. This can be minimized by using only as directed, spraying at the recommended strength and no more than necessary to wet the surface of the leaves and stems. Products containing the active ingredient imazapyr are considered “moderate in hazard” by Thurston County’s pesticide review process for the potential for chemical mobility and persistence.

### Foliar applications:

- For spot applications of either glyphosate or imazapyr, prepare herbicide by following label instructions at rates listed below. Spray each plant thoroughly on the stems and leaves, enough to be wet but not dripping. Spot application means the herbicide is applied only to the Giant Hogweed plants, and not on the surrounding plants or soil.
- Glyphosate is non-selective, and will injure any plants that it comes in contact with, including grass.
- Imazapyr is also non-selective, and will injure any plants that it comes in contact with. Do not use on lawns, walks, driveways or similar areas where roots of desirable vegetation may extend and be exposed to potential injury.
- Keep people and pets off treated areas until spray solution has dried.

### Hollow stem injection using glyphosate:

- Follow precautions in manual control section: always wear protective clothing and avoid getting sap on your skin.
- Using Roundup Pro<sup>®</sup>, follow label instructions for mixing with water to a 5% dilution rate before injecting.
- Mark each plant when injecting it, to avoid retreating the same plant.

**The following instructions are for concentrated products which will be mixed down to a specified dilution rate. Similar products may be significantly different in strength. Be sure to read your label carefully, and make adjustments to rates accordingly.**

**Timing:** Treat Giant Hogweed during the bolt and bud stage or when the plant is actively growing.

**Pollinator Protection:** To minimize negative impacts to bees and other pollinators, treatment prior to blooming is recommended. Use of the injection method would also have minimal effect on pollinators. If treatment must occur during the blooming period, try to spray early or late in the day or on cloudy, cool days when pollinators are least active. Direct spray to leaves and stems, it is not necessary to spray the flowers. Removal of Hogweed flowers before treating is not recommended due to the risk of exposure to sap.

Product/Method	Rates	Mix
<b>Glyphosate / Spot Foliar</b> Roundup Pro <sup>®</sup> Eliminator Weed & Grass Killer <sup>®</sup>	1%	Add 1.3 oz (2.6 Tablespoons) concentrated product per gallon of water.
<b>Glyphosate / Injection</b> Roundup Pro <sup>®</sup>	5%	Using a hand-held injection device, inject one leaf cane per plant 12 inches above root crown with 6 mL of a 5% solution of this product..
<b>Imazapyr / Spot Foliar</b> Polaris <sup>®</sup> Alligare <sup>™</sup> Imazapyr 2SL	2%	Add 2.6 oz (5.2 Tablespoons) concentrated product per gallon of water.

**READ AND FOLLOW ALL LABEL DIRECTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS.** Obey all label precautions including site specific and safety measures. Always use personal protective equipment that includes coveralls, chemical resistant gloves, shoes plus socks, and protective eyewear. Use of brand names does not connote endorsement and is for reference only; other formulations of the same herbicides may be available under other names. Information provided is current as of the date of the fact sheet. Pesticide product registration is renewed annually. Product names and formulations may vary from year to year.

### REFERENCES:

Written Findings of the Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board; 2010 Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook, [http://uspest.org/pnw/weeds?33W\\_PROB.pdf](http://uspest.org/pnw/weeds?33W_PROB.pdf)

Invasive Plants of the United States: Identification, Biology and Control, <http://www.invasive.org/weedcd/species/4536.htm>

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