

# Giant hogweed

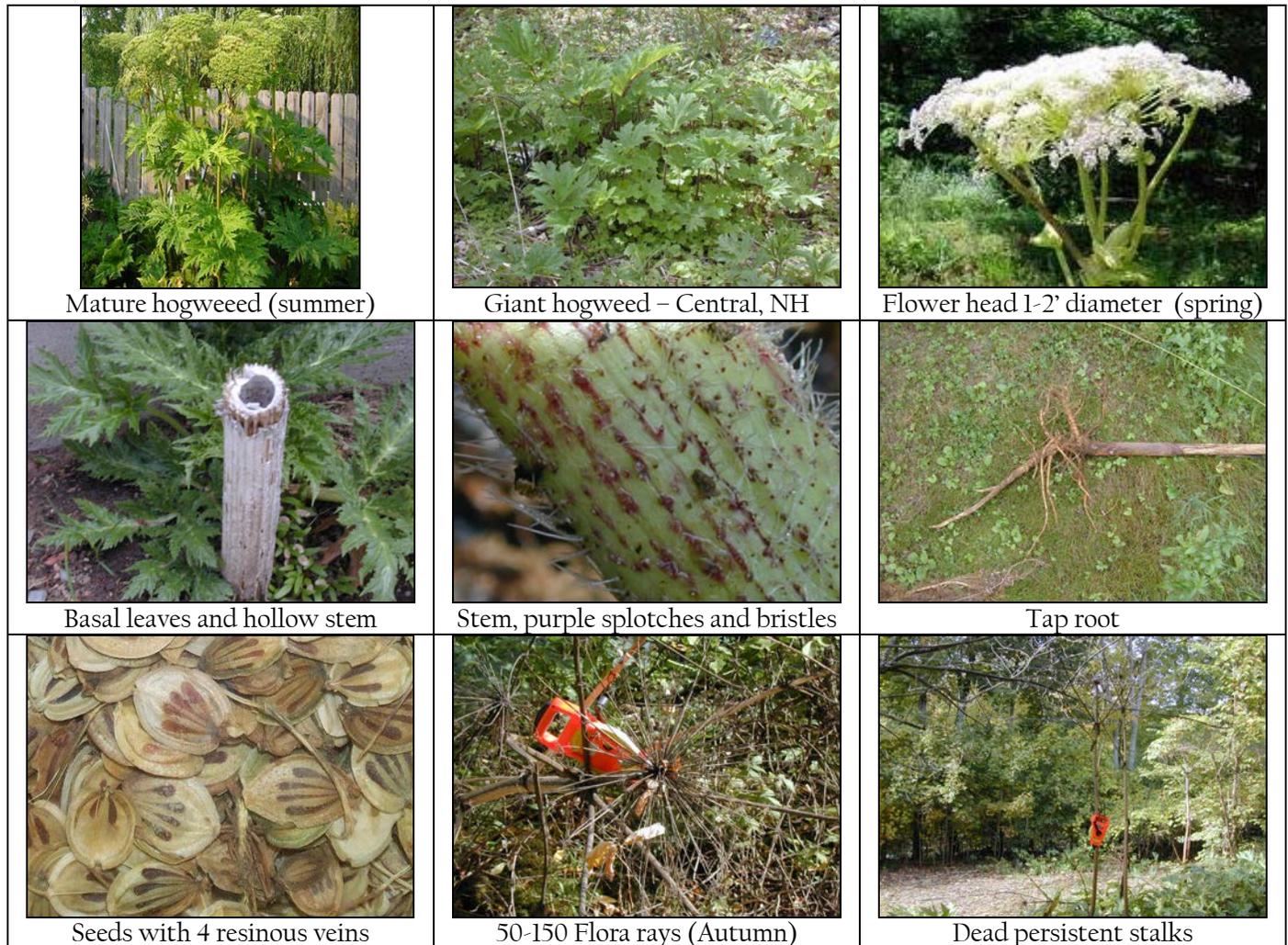
## *Heracleum mantegazzianum*

### Fact Sheet

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Common Name: Giant hogweed  
New Hampshire Invasive Species Status: Prohibited (Agr 3800)

Latin Name: *Heracleum mantegazzianum*  
Native to: China



**Description:** Biennial growing to 15' tall. **Stems:** Greenish with purple splotches, 2-4" dia. with coarse hairs, hollow. **Leaves:** Large, compound, deeply incised, 3-5' wide, hairy on underside. **Flowers:** White inflorescence, 1-2' in dia., May-June. **Seeds:** Flat,  $\frac{3}{8}$ " long, ovate with 4 brown resin canals. **Zone:** 3-8. **Habitat:** Found in wet areas, roadsides, gardens, open spaces, full sun to partial shade. **Spread:** Seeds dispersed by water, wildlife and humans. **Comments:** The clear, watery sap is phototoxic to human skin, causing severe blistering and burns. Spreads readily and displaces native species. **Controls:** Remove plants by digging up tap root. Herbicide can also be used as a foliar treatment.

#### General Considerations

Giant hogweed is a short lived herbaceous biennial that dies after flowering (monocarpic). It develops a thick hollow stem that can grow up to 15-20' (4.3-5.8m) tall with purple splotches and stiff bristles. It is 2-4" (4.8-9.6 cm) in diameter. The leaves are extremely large growing to almost 10' (3m) in length. They are alternate or ternate-pinnate with pinnately lobed lateral segments. Flowers (inflorescence) are large white umbels occur from June-July growing to a diameter of up to 2.5' (0.72m). The seeds are elliptic with four narrow brown resinous veins.

Also listed as a **Federal Noxious Weed** under the Plant Protection Act, which makes it illegal in the U.S. to import, export, or transport between States without a permit ([USDA, APHIS - Noxious Weeds Program](#))

The rooting system is a thick, multi-branched taproot that extends up to 2' (61cm) deep. Close to the surface there are lateral roots that can extend several feet in all directions.

Seed production starts at when the plant is in its third year of growth and can produce upwards of 50,000 seeds per plant. Seed germination rate is usually high at around 90% and the majority of which tend to be carried by the wind a short distance from the parent. Other means of dispersal include water and animals. Germination usually occurs the first year after seed drop and those that remain dormant collect in the soil forming a seed bank that can remain viable for 3-7 years.

Although Giant hogweed has been documented in New Hampshire, it is not widespread nor is it common. There is, however, a similar plant known as Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*), which is somewhat common and therefore often mistaken for giant hogweed. Cow parsnip is in the same family and has a similar appearance. It is a tall herbaceous biennial that grows to an average height of 7' (2.1m). It too has a very large umbel type white flower reaching about 8" (20.3cm) in diameter. The leaves are also very large and divided into lobes. Cow parsnip can also cause dermal reactions to individuals who come into contact with the sap. The difference being is that this only has about 35 floral rays.



Cow parsnip with 35 floral rays

### Control Options

**CAUTION:** The clear water sap is phototoxic and when skin is exposed to it and the sun, severe skin irritation and/or burns can occur. The scarring may be temporary if exposure is limited or permanent if contact is extensive. The sap can also cause temporary or even permanent blindness. Protective clothing and safety glasses should be worn when handling this plant. If skin does come into contact with the sap then protect the area from sun exposure and wash immediately with cold water.

See the following control guides: [Control of Invasive Species by Numbers](#)

| <i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i><br><i>Giant hogweed</i> |  |
|---|--|
| Plant Type  | Herbaceous - Biennial  |
| Habitat Type  | Roadways, riparian areas, disturbed sites, and abandoned fields                  |
| USDA Hardiness Zone                                     | 3-8  |
| Rooting Structure                                       | Thick, branched taproot and tightly clustered, fibrous roots                     |
| Environmental Impacts                                   | Can outcompete native riparian species leading to potential stream bank erosion. |
| Wildlife Impacts  |  |
| Leaf arrangement  | Alternate  |
| NWI Ranking   | UPL  |
| Soil Type   | Sand, loam or clay-based soils   |
| Soil pH Range   | 4 to 8.5   |
| Light Requirements                                      | Prefers full sun, but grows in light shade.                                      |
| Growing Season  |  |
| Growth Rate   |  |
| Mature Height   | 6-15 feet (2-5 m) tall   |
| Life Span   | 3-years  |
| Reproductive Age  | 3 years  |
| Flowering Period  | June to July   |
| Flower Type   | Monoecious   |
| Pollination   | Open-pollinated - insects  |
| Seed Set  | Late August  |
| Seed Per Plant  | 10,000 to 50,000 seeds/plant   |
| Scarification Required                                  | No   |
| Cold Stratification                                     | Yes  |
| Seed Longevity  | 3-7 years  |
| Seed Germination Rate                                   | 91%  |

### Sources

Mehrhoff, L., 2001. Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, Catalog of Species, *Alliaria petiolata*: [http://www.eddmaps.org/ipane/ipanespecies/herbs/Heracleum\\_mantegazzianum.htm](http://www.eddmaps.org/ipane/ipanespecies/herbs/Heracleum_mantegazzianum.htm)

USDA Forest Service invasive species website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/forb/herman/all.html>

Invasives.org: <http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=4536>

USDA: <http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/plants/hogweed.shtml>