



# FACT SHEET

## Giant Hogweed

### DESCRIPTION

Giant hogweed flowering stems may grow to 5 metres high and up to 10 cm in diameter. Stems are marked with dark purplish blotches and raised nodules. Leaf stalks are spotted, hollow, and covered with sturdy bristles (most prominent at the base of the stalk). Stems are also covered with hairs, but not as prominently as the leaf stalks. Leaves are compound with 3 large deeply cut leaflets, lobed, and deeply incised; can reach up to 1 metre across. Numerous, large white flowers form a flat-topped, umbrella-shaped head.



### HUMAN HEALTH IMPACTS

Giant hogweed can cause severe dermatitis in susceptible individuals. For giant hogweed to affect a person, sap from a broken stem or crushed leaf, root, flower or seed must come into contact with moist skin with the skin then being exposed to sunlight. Irritation is not immediate, but will usually appear within one to three days after exposure. The reaction of the skin depends on individual sensitivity. After 24 hours, reddening and swelling of the skin can be noticed, which is followed by an inflammatory reaction after 3 days. Depending on individual sensitivity, effects can last for months and skin can remain sensitive to UV light for years.

If contact is suspected, immediately wash skin thoroughly with soap and water. Once irritation begins, seek medical advice. If even minute amounts should get in one's eyes, seek medical assistance immediately.

**Prevention:** Wear long sleeves and long pants when contact with the plant is a possibility.

## CONTROL

Giant hogweed is very difficult to eradicate. **It is a long term project, possibly taking 5 to 10 years, if dealing with an established growth.** If an established growth is found, it is recommended that a contractor be hired to remove the growth.

Eradication can be controlled by the following (wear protective clothing and eye protection):

- Pulling or otherwise removing the plants from the soil;
- Cutting the roots or stalks of the plants before the seeds have developed sufficiently to ripen after the cutting;
- Grazing by livestock;
- Plowing or cultivating the soil in which the plants are growing; or
- **Call Weed Inspector, Ken Goldsmith, at 519-270-0748, for more information on control methods using herbicides.**

## REPORTING

If you know of a Giant Hogweed location, email Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) c/o [mike.cowbrough@ontario.ca](mailto:mike.cowbrough@ontario.ca) with the address.