

Giant Hogweed Has Not Yet Arrived in Guilford

BY GUILFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

There is concern that Guilford has been invaded by giant hogweed, a very large (15 to 20 foot tall) nonnative plant that looks like a giant version of Queen Anne's lace, and that can cause serious burns and blisters when touched. We want to reassure Guilfordites that this plant has not yet been seen in Guilford. Its relative, cow parsnip, is easy to confuse with giant hogweed, because it also grows extremely tall (5 to 8 feet) and also displays large white flower clusters.

Only the sap of cow parsnip can cause burns/blisters and skin rashes; however, touching any part of giant hogweed

causes this reaction.

Cow parsnip is a native species and does grow in Guilford. If your skin comes in contact with the sap, get out of the sun at once, wash thoroughly with cold water and soap and apply sunscreen to the affected area for several days. The blisters are caused by a substance called furanocoumarin that is activated by exposure to sunlight.

Three obvious differences between giant hogweed and cow parsnip are:

1. Height: Giant hogweed grows 15 to 20 feet tall; cow parsnip grows 5 to 8 feet tall.
2. Stems: Hogweed stems are green with purple splotches, 2-4 inches in diameter, with a thick circle of stiff white hairs at the

base of the leaf stalk. Cow parsnip stems are green (or slightly purple) with vertical ridges of fine white hairs, 1-2 inches in diameter, with no hairy ring at the base of the leaf stalk.

3. Flowers: Hogweed flower clusters are umbrella shaped, with 50 or more "rays" per flower cluster. Cow parsnip flower clusters are flat-topped, with 15-30 "rays" per cluster.

The photo shows the huge size of the giant hogweed, but for more precise information and comparison photos in color, we recommend that you visit this website: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/72766.html>

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*Giant hogweed is aptly named!
Photo credit: <http://paradisexpress.blogspot.com/2013/01/giant-hogweed.html>*

1 mile south of Exit 1, Guilford VT



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