

# Be Aware - Giant Hogweed

## Do Not Touch This Plant!

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is a Federally listed noxious weed. **Giant Hogweed has been identified in: Alford, Blandford, Becket, Chester, Lee, West Stockbridge, Monterey, Huntington-just to name a few.** Its sap, in combination with moisture and sunlight, can cause severe skin and eye irritation, painful blistering, permanent scarring and blindness. Contact between the skin and the sap of this plant occurs either through brushing against the bristles on the stem or breaking the stem or leaves.



## What to do if you come in contact with giant hogweed:

This plant poses a serious health threat; see your physician if you think you have been burned by giant hogweed. If you think you see giant hogweed, **do NOT touch it.**

When giant hogweed sap, which contains photosensitizing furanocoumarins, contacts human skin in conjunction with sunlight, it can cause phytophotodermatitis - a serious skin inflammation. In brief, the sap prevents your skin from protecting itself from sunlight which leads to a very bad sunburn. Heat and moisture (sweat or dew) can worsen the skin reaction. The phototoxic reaction can begin as soon as 15 minutes after contact, with sensitivity peak between 30 minutes and two hours after contact.

## What are the symptoms of exposure to giant hogweed sap?

- Painful blisters that form within 48 hours and become dark and pigmented
- Scars that last up to six years, though typically only last a few months
- Long-term sensitivity to sunlight is common
- Blindness may occur if the sap gets into the eye



## How do you identify giant hogweed?

Giant hogweed is a biennial or perennial herb in the carrot family (Apiaceae) which can grow to 14 feet or more. Its hollow, ridged stems grow 2-4 inches in diameter and have dark reddish-purple blotches. Its large compound leaves can grow up to 5 feet wide. Its white flower heads can grow up to 2 1/2 feet in diameter.



## Where is giant hogweed found?

Giant hogweed is a native of the Caucasus Mountain region between the Black and Caspian Seas. It was introduced to Europe and the United Kingdom in the late nineteenth century and to the United States in the early twentieth century as an ornamental garden plant. It has become established in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Oregon, Washington, Michigan, Virginia, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Seeds may also be distributed by birds and waterways, and can remain viable for over 10 years.

## More about Giant Hogweed:

[Giant Hogweed Identification](#) - This page has photos of all parts of the giant hogweed plant as well as photos of common lookalike plants for identification purposes.

[Health Hazards & Safety Instructions for Giant Hogweed \(with graphic photos\)](#) - This page describes the health hazards of giant hogweed and details how people should protect themselves against the harmful sap.

[How To Control Giant Hogweed](#) - A variety of methods for controlling this non-native invasive

plant.

[NYSDEC Giant Hogweed Control Program](#) - Details the statewide giant hogweed control program protocol.

[Giant Hogweed Statewide Distribution Map](#) - Statewide distribution and density of giant hogweed sites by county.

[Giant Hogweed Eliminated Sites Map](#) - Sites that previously had giant hogweed. These sites were treated and no longer have giant hogweed.

[Giant Hogweed Biology](#) - This page describes the biology of giant hogweed plants to include their growth and development stages, seed dispersal and viability, as well as the habitat and competition for giant hogweed plants

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