

Giant hogweed

Heracleum mantegazzianum

What does it look like?

Important information - Giant hogweed sap can cause burns on human and animal skin.

Giant hogweed is a perennial herb that can grow up to 6m tall and has large serrated leaves up to 50cm long. It has stout dark reddish-purple stems, and spotted leaf stalks with sturdy bristles. The stems are 5-10cm in diameter, hollow, grooved and covered in fine bristles and red-purple spots. When the plant is two to three years old it produces large, umbrella-like clusters of greenish-white flowers. Giant hogweed usually grows on the banks of rivers, creeks or in rich, moist soils.

Why is it a problem?

Giant hogweed is poisonous to humans, causing skin irritation and swelling. It forms dense colonies that compete with and exclude native vegetation that grows along the banks of rivers or streams. One plant can produce up to 50,000 viable seeds which are spread by water. When it dies down in winter, it leaves infested banks bare of vegetation and susceptible to erosion or invasion by weeds.



Giant hogweed

Heracleum mantegazzianum



Control methods

Always wear gloves and eye protection, and cover arms and legs when working near this plant. Contaminated clothing and tools are potentially hazardous also. Wash any skin that comes in contact with the plant immediately.

Physical control:

- Hand pull whole plants during spring-summer before they set seed.

Herbicide control:

- During summer cut the stem below ground level during flowering but before seeds are formed. Spray the regrowth in February or March if necessary with glyphosate (150ml/15L).
- During spring spray glyphosate (150ml/15L). Spray again in February or March if necessary.

CAUTION: When using any herbicide or pesticide, PLEASE READ THE LABEL THOROUGHLY to ensure that all instructions and safety requirements are followed.

Plants with seed must be buried deeply, burnt, or disposed of at a refuse transfer station. Follow up at six-monthly intervals to complete eradication.

Related links

Ministry for Primary Industries <http://apps.mpi.govt.nz/applications/nzpests-view/Article/1008/Giant-hogweed>

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.aspx?ID=4064

Weedbusters <http://www.weedbusters.org.nz/weed-information/heracleum-mantegazzianum/59/>

NZ Flora <http://www.nzflora.info/factsheet/Taxon/Heracleum-mantegazzianum.html>

Unwanted Organisms Register https://www1.maf.govt.nz/uor-cgi/uor.pl/show?species_id=39621

Management programme

Unwanted organism

National Pest Plant Accord

Request info

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=PlantPests&Species=214>