

Note from Bud Clark:

June 23,2004

I have just received information on a plant which is becoming more widespread in our area as I have them on my property and I have seen them on the Indian Reserve as well. Please let the cottagers know about this Hogweed. Bud

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is an invasive noxious weed native to Asia. There was a bit of a media stir in the Toronto area last summer when some of these plants were located in the city, but from what Doug Thain has told me from his time as the Haliburton County weed control officer, they have not been documented this far north...until now. I discovered a giant hogweed growing alongside the Harcourt Park Road earlier this week. Doug went out to confirm the plant and to take some pictures (attached below), and we thought it prudent to share these with everyone in the district so that you will be able to identify it and avoid it if you encounter one while you're in the field.

Giant Hogweed is a member of the parsley and carrot family; it grows 5-15 feet high (the one I found was about 7 feet). The flower head looks like a large cauliflower. It is further distinguished by a stout dark reddish-purple stem and spotted leaf stalks. Stalks and stem produce sturdy pustulate bristles. The stem and stalks are hollow, stems vary 2 to 4 inches in diameter. The compound leaves of giant hogweed may expand to five feet in breadth. Each leaflet is deeply incised.

THIS PLANT IS NASTY! Touch one on a sunny day, and you're likely to have a nasty blister, similar to poison ivy. But it is the sap that causes the real damage; The plant exudes a clear watery sap which sensitizes the skin to ultraviolet radiation. This can result in severe burns to the affected areas resulting in severe blistering and painful dermatitis. These blisters can develop into purplish or blackened scars. It does this through chemicals called furanocoumarins, which react with DNA in skin cells, cross linking the strands and making them permanently susceptible to damage by sunlight. Contact with the eyes may cause blindness. The dried seeds are apparently used in Iranian food, but the rest of the plant is poisonous to ingest.

Bottom line is, don't touch it! If you see one, document the location and contact your local weed control agent to spray it.

There are several websites with **hogweed** information - here are a few links:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/plants/weeds/aqua012.html>>

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/LANDS/weeds/hogweed.htm>

