

# Managing Giant Hogweed

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This plant is a serious public health hazard as well as being highly invasive.



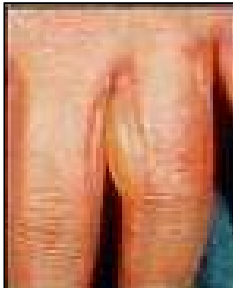
## What is it?

Introduced from the Ural mountains, as an ornamental plant 150 years ago, Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is now wide spread throughout the UK. It is a perennial that takes 4 years to flower after which it dies. Throughout its life it grows to over 5m tall and disperses as many as 50,000 seeds per year from each flower & they stay viable for up to 15 years allowing the species to spread rapidly. It thrives in any habitat but particularly where soil has been disturbed such as riverbanks, derelict land or railway embankments.

## For existing habitats:

- As it spreads it will endanger the survival of native species.
- The loss of other vegetation may lead to excessive erosion the giant hogweed dies back in winter.
- Grazers that eat these plants can get sores on their mouths & tongue, & their appetites become impaired.

## What is the problem?



Fingers blistered by the poison.

## For human activity:

- The plant contains large amounts of poisonous sap, which is released when the plant is handled.
- The sap makes skin extremely sensitive to light.
- It can cause anything from mild rash to painful watery blisters that are slow to heal and in severe cases may need hospital treatment.
- Occasionally, contact precipitates a recurrent dermatitis.
- Contact with eyes can cause temporary blindness & hospital treatment should be found.

## What does the law say?

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 - it is illegal to spread Giant Hogweed. Any excavated soil from areas where the plant has established must be disposed of at a licensed landfill site and not reused.
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990 - places a duty of care on all waste producers and Giant Hogweed is identified as a controlled waste. This means it has to be dealt with within your legislative requirement for waste management.

## How do you deal with it?

Due to the quantity of seeds this plant produces it is difficult to fully eradicate giant hogweed.

However, a plan can be produced to control & eventually stop its spread but the first step has to be identification (page 2).

It is then advisable to seek guidance from your Environmental Co-ordinator and the Environment Agency.

## Contacts:

- Environment Agency web site at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)
- Tel: 08459 333 111

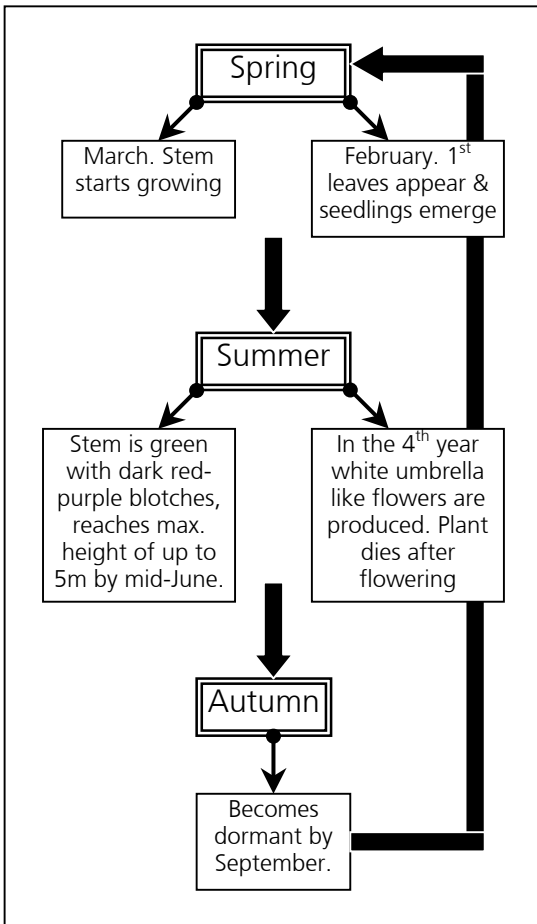
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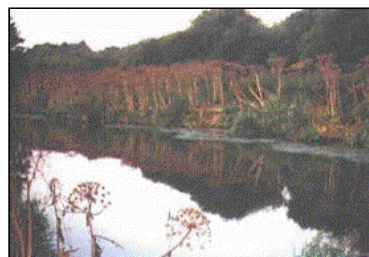


## Giant Hogweed Identification

### Life Cycle



Giant hogweed compared to common hogweed



### Checklist

	Features	Yes	No
<b>STEM</b>	Starts growing March/April		
	Full height, up to 5m, by June/July		
	Summer, green with dark red-purple spots/blotches		
	Coarse, spiky, white hairs		
	Hollow, children often use as "telescopes" or "blowpipes"		
<b>LEAVES</b>	Dark green in a rosette		
	Lobes deeply cut with ragged edges.		
	Width over 1m.		
<b>FLOWERS</b>	Flowers produced only in the 4 <sup>th</sup> year		
	Large umbrella like, white flower heads.		
<b>SEEDS</b>	Emerge February in large quantities, over 50,000 per flower.		
	Oval shaped, 10mm by 7mm in size		
<b>HABITAT</b>	Particularly where soil has been disturbed such as riverbanks, railway embankments and derelict land.		
<b>GENERAL</b>	Dormant by September.		

*If **YES** is greater than **NO** – Treat as Giant Hogweed or get a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion from your site co-ordinator.*

## Giant Hogweed – Do's & Don'ts

- Do's***
- Try to identify Giant Hogweed as soon as possible.
  - Act responsibly in preventing its spread.
  - Wear protective clothing if handling.
  - Call your environmental co-ordinator or the Environment Agency in early.

- Don'ts***
- Waste time as control may take time to devise & implement.
  - Handle, until further advice is taken or if it is completely necessary.
  - Dump soil that may contain seeds or other plant material.