

Giant Hogweed

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is a highly noxious invasive weed. Its sap can burn human skin, making it a particular concern on amenity land, roads and rivers.

Plants are enormous, up to 5m tall, with coffee-table sized leaves and giant flower heads. Mostly found along river banks but can grow in a wide range of disturbed habitats including brownfield sites and areas where fly-tipping has occurred. They spread only by seed, but each individual can bear up to 80,000 seeds, making them very successful propagators.

Landowners have a legal responsibility to prevent the spread of this plant, protect the public from exposure to it and dispose of it correctly.



Identification

Stem

- Up to 5m tall and 10cm wide
- Green with purple blotches
- Regular nodes

Flower

- White (green when immature)
- Up to 50cm wide
- Umbels made of many smaller flowers

Leaves

- Very serrated
- Spiked tips
- 3-5 leaflets
- Coffee table sized leaves (up to 1.5m)
- Dark green rosettes

Seeds

- Penny sized
- 2-4 vertical lines
- Distinctive anise smell





Surveying throughout the Year



Health Hazard

Giant Hogweed sap causes severe blistering on contact with skin followed by exposure to sunlight. Do not handle or brush against the plant.

Never strim Giant Hogweed.





What next?



Step 1: Containment and Protection

When Giant Hogweed is identified on an active site or public access land it should immediately be contained to reduce the hazard to human health. Basic measures should be taken to:

- Establish a barrier around the infestation
- Provide signage warning of the hazard

On site:

- Staff should be made aware of the dangers of touching the plant
- Washing facilities should be provided in case accidental skin contact occurs

Step 2: Site Assessment

The following factors should be investigated when assessing sites infested by Giant Hogweed:

- Source of introduction onto the site/likelihood of re-invasion
- Age of the plant and size of the seed bank
- Proximity to desirable vegetation
- Planned development/need for soil movement of site
- Site hydrology
- Other site ecology

Step 3: Control and Management

A variety of options are available to control Giant Hogweed. Each site should have a professionally tailored eradication programme. Key considerations include:

- Prevention of seed dispersal and seed head collection
- Herbicide or mechanical control to kill adult plants
- Control of the seed bank as well as adult plants. Regular monitoring during the growing season

Site and eradication works should always be carefully controlled to prevent accidental spread. Always seek professional advice.





The Law

- It is illegal to accidentally or deliberately cause Giant Hogweed to spread in the wild (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)
- Giant Hogweed contaminated waste should be disposed of responsibly so as not to cause its spread

Expertise

RPS have offices across the whole of the UK and provide Giant Hogweed management for sites across the country. Our services include:

- Experience of over 10 years management
- Full assessment of all invasive weed issues
- Full control capability with innovative methods
- Research expertise and contacts within universities and the EA

Contacts & Advice

Environment Agency

(www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

Giant Hogweed Best Practice Manual

(<http://www.giant-alien.dk/>)

Heracleum Mantegazzianum

(Tiley et al. Journal of Ecology 84)

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