

Giant Hogweed Invasion!



Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is starting to invade parks and natural areas in the City of Vancouver. This species is a major invasive weed in parts of western Europe and the US in which it has been introduced. It is originally from the Caucasus Mountains in central Asia. It can be recognized by its large size (to 4 m when in flower), its red blotchy stem, and its bisected lower leaves; see photos above.

Giant hogweed competes with native vegetation and can reduce plant diversity. It is also a human health concern because contact with chemicals in the sap and plant juices cause large painful blisters when combined with sunlight. Maintenance workers, gardeners, and children are often exposed inadvertently. Never remove the plant without proper training and equipment!

Giant hogweed populations can be controlled if small founder populations are removed early in the invasion process. We have the opportunity to prevent giant hogweed from establishing in the City of Vancouver using a rapid eradication program. Plants can be killed by severing the root below the ground or using herbicides such as Roundup appropriately. Never handle the plant without appropriate safety protection including gloves, clothing that covers all exposed skin, and goggles.