

IS IT GIANT HOGWEED OR COW PARSNIP?

Giant hogweed is a large, showy invasive plant of high public interest due to the potential for skin irritation upon contact with the plant's sap. However, giant hogweed is often mistaken for a native look-alike.

From late May through early July, giant hogweed is often confused with native **cow parsnip**, which is a pollinator-friendly plant abundant throughout Wisconsin. It is very similar to giant hogweed in appearance and habitat preference.



Photo Credit: Wisconsin DNR

Cow Parsnip



Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service

Giant Hogweed

MYTH BUSTER!

Contrary to popular belief, giant hogweed only causes severe skin irritation, blistering and burning upon contact with the plant's sap. While contact with external parts of either giant hogweed or cow parsnip may cause minor irritation, giant hogweed must be broken open to cause a harsh reaction.



Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service

Giant Hogweed

SIZE MATTERS!

Giant hogweed reaches 8-15 feet high! Cow parsnip is only 3-8 feet high.

GIANT HOGWEED (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)



Photo Credit: Northwoods CWMA



Photo Credit: Northwoods CWMA



Photo Credit: Northwoods CWMA

- **HEIGHT:** 8 to 15 feet high.
- **STEM:** 2 to 4 inches in diameter with purple spots/blotches and stiff hairs/bristles.
- **LEAF SIZE:** Can be up to 3 to 4 feet wide.
- **FLOWERS:** Umbel-shaped flower (a slightly rounded white flower cluster in which the individual flower stalks [rays] arise from the same point to form the complete flower head) can be 1 to 3 feet across.
- **LEAVES:** Compound, lobed leaves (single leaves with lobes that look like a hand and fingers that are pointed), which are deeply incised (very jagged like a steak knife).

COW PARSNIP (*Heracleum maximum*)



Photo Credit: Wisconsin DNR



Photo Credit: Wisconsin DNR



Photo Credit: Wisconsin DNR

- **HEIGHT:** 3 to 8 feet high.
- **STEM:** 1 to 2 inches in diameter; stem may have a few faint purple spots and deep ridges, with fuzzy/soft hairs.
- **LEAF SIZE:** Can be 1 to 2 feet wide.
- **FLOWERS:** Umbel-shaped (a slightly rounded white flower cluster in which the individual flower stalks [rays] arise from the same point to form the complete flower head) can be 6 to 18 inches across.
- **LEAVES:** Palmate-shaped, compound leaves (looks similar to a maple leaf, or an open palm with fingers outstretched that are rounded), and is divided into three segments.

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