



## Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

### Identification Guide

Several plants in New York and the Northeast can be mistaken for giant hogweed. Key features for distinguishing these giant hogweed “wannabe’s” from the real thing are presented below.

**Giant hogweed** may grow to 15 to 20 feet in height. Stems are 1 to 3 inches in diameter, but may reach 4 inches. Stems are marked with dark purplish blotches and raised nodules. Leaf stalks are spotted, hollow, and covered with sturdy bristles (most prominent at the base of the stalk). Stems are also covered with hairs but not as prominently as the leaf stalks. Leaves are compound, lobed, and deeply incised; can reach up to 5 feet in width. Numerous white flowers form a flat-topped, umbrella-shaped head up to two and a half feet across.

GIANT HOGWEED			
<b>HEIGHT</b> 15 to 20 feet	<b>STEM</b> 1 to 3 inch diameter Purple blotches, stiff bristles	<b>LEAF</b> Compound, lobed, deeply incised; up to 5 feet wide	<b>FLOWER</b> White flowers, flat- topped, umbrella, up to 2.5 feet across

**Native Cow parsnip**, while resembling giant hogweed, grows to only five to eight feet tall. The deeply ridged stems can be green or slightly purple, do not exhibit the dark purplish blotches and raised nodules of hogweed, and only reach one to two inches in diameter, contrasted with hogweed stems which can reach three to four inches in diameter. Where giant hogweed has coarse bristly hairs on its stems and stalks, cow parsnip is covered with finer hairs that give the plant a fuzzy appearance. Both sides of the leaves exhibit these hairs but they are predominantly on the underside of the leaves. In contrast to hogweed’s two to two and a half foot flower heads, cow parsnip flower clusters are less than a foot across. The size difference carries over into leaf size with hogweed’s five foot, deeply incised leaves replaced by leaves that are less incised and only two to two and a half feet across.

COW PARSNIP			
<b>HEIGHT</b> 5 to 8 feet	<b>STEM</b> 1 to 2 inch diameter Deeply ridged, green to slightly purple, fine hairs, fuzzy	<b>LEAF</b> Compound, less incised, 2 to 2 1/2 feet across, fuzzy hairs	<b>FLOWER</b> Whitish flower clusters no larger than 1 foot across

**Native purple-stemmed Angelica** is more easily differentiated from giant hogweed by its smooth, waxy green to purple stems (no bristles, no nodules), and its softball-sized clusters of greenish-white or white flowers, seldom reaching a foot across. As with cow parsnip, Angelica is much shorter than giant hogweed, usually no more than eight feet tall. Angelica leaves are comprised of many small leaflets and seldom reach more than two feet across.

ANGELICA			
			
<b>HEIGHT</b> 4 to 9 feet	<b>STEM</b> Smooth, waxy green to purple (no bristles), 1 to 2 1/2 inch diameter	<b>LEAF</b> Many small leaflets, seldom more than two feet across	<b>FLOWER</b> Softball-sized clusters, greenish-white or white, up to 1 foot across

**Poison hemlock**, a non-native biennial, is also shorter than giant hogweed, growing to only four to nine feet in height. While the stem has some purple blotches, it is waxy and the entire plant (stems, stalks, leaves) is smooth and hairless. The leaves are dramatically different from those of hogweed, being fernlike and a bright, almost glossy, green. All branches have small flat-topped clusters of small white flowers. Another distinguishing characteristic is poison hemlock's unpleasant mouse-like odor. The entire plant is toxic, and the volatile alkaloids can even be toxic when inhaled.

POISON HEMLOCK			
			
<b>HEIGHT</b> 4 to 9 feet	<b>STEM</b> Smooth and hairless, waxy green, some purple splotches, 1 to 2 inch diameter	<b>LEAF</b> Fern-like, bright, almost glossy, green	<b>FLOWER</b> All branches have small flat-topped clusters of small white flowers

**Wild parsnip**, like giant hogweed, is of special concern because it, too, can cause phytophotodermatitis, only not usually as severe as that of giant hogweed. This plant can be found extensively throughout NY's Southern Tier, in the region east of Lake Ontario, some Central and Western NY counties, parts of the Catskills and counties east of the Hudson River. Unlike the perennial giant hogweed, wild parsnip is a biennial, producing a rosette of leaves close to the ground in its first year and a single flower stalk with a flat-topped umbel with clusters of yellow flowers in its second year. The plant reproduces by means of the seeds of these flowers; it does not regrow from its root as does giant hogweed. Wild parsnip is much smaller than giant hogweed, seldom exceeding 5-feet in height. Wild parsnip stems are yellowish-green with vertical grooves running their length. Wild parsnip has compound pinnate leaves with 5 to 15 toothed and variably lobed yellowish-green leaves.

WILD PARSNIP			
			
<b>HEIGHT</b> Up to 5 feet	<b>STEM</b> Yellowish-green with verticle grooves running full length	<b>LEAF</b> Compound, pinnate, 5 to 15 toothed, variably lobed, yellowish-green	<b>FLOWER</b> Single flower stalk with flat-topped umbel of clustered yellow flowers