


# GR21: Giant Hogweed/noxious weeds

ACTIVITY ASSESSED		ASSESSMENT DATE	
Giant Hogweed/noxious weeds		MAY 2022	
page 1 of 2		DATE FOR RE-ASSESSMENT	ASSESSED BY
ACTIVITY LOCATION	<b>ALL SITES</b>		<b>GRASSROOTS</b>
persons at risk: all volunteers; especially young persons			
risk level: generally moderate except as indicated			

## VOLUNTEER INFORMATION



Grass Roots do not undertake the clearance of giant hogweed  
 Where there is a likelihood of contact with giant hogweed the risk will be assessed and measures taken to avoid contact  
 However, there may be a chance of accidental contact, in which case the following advice applies  
 This advice is applicable to sites where giant hogweed may be present and is a danger to volunteers

### Extract from Royal Horticultural Society on-line advice page May 2022

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is a close relative of cow parsley originally from Southern Russia and Georgia. It can reach over 3m (10ft) in height. Although this striking plant can be attractive in certain situations, most gardeners will want to eradicate it, as it is potentially invasive and the sap can cause severe skin burns. It is widely distributed in the wild and poses a serious risk to people who are unaware of its potential for harm.

**Areas affected** Gardens and allotments adjacent to infested woodland, heathland or common land

**Main causes** Spreads by seed

### What is giant hogweed?

Although an impressive sight when fully grown, giant hogweed is invasive and potentially harmful. Chemicals in the sap can cause photodermatitis or photosensitivity, where the skin becomes very sensitive to sunlight and may suffer blistering, pigmentation and long-lasting scars.

There is also a native hogweed, which will be a familiar plant to gardeners and those who like to go walking in the UK. It can grow to six foot or so when in flower but is a much smaller plant than giant hogweed. It can cause rashes and other skin complaints but reactions tend not be as severe as with the larger species. *Heracleum sphondylium* can support many pollinators, including beetles, flies, hoverflies, bees and wasps.

### Appearance

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), is a tall, cow parsley-like plant with thick bristly stems that are often purple-blotched.

The flowers are white and held in umbels, (flat-topped clusters, like those of carrots or cow parsley), with all the flowers in the umbel facing upwards. The flower heads can be as large as 60cm (2ft) across. It can reach a height of 3.5m (11.5ft) or more and has a spread of about 1-2m (3.5-7ft).


Giant hogweed is usually biennial, forming a rosette of jagged, lobed leaves in the first year before sending up a flower spike in the second year and then setting seed. True biennials only live for two years, dying after flowering, but giant hogweed does not always behave as a true biennial and in fact some are perennial.

This assessment is based on information from The Conservation Volunteers as amended for GrassRoots Conservation Group activities.

The information contained in this generic risk assessment is produced in good faith It does not render BTCV liable for its use, misuse and no responsibility for any occurrences arising out of its use will be accepted Insurance is essential for groups carrying out conservation activities

© BTCV 1996-2008 Reg Charity in England 261009 and Scotland SC039302 Sedum House, Mallard Way, Doncaster DN4 808

# GR21: Giant Hogweed/noxious weeds

ACTIVITY ASSESSED	ASSESSMENT DATE	
Giant Hogweed/noxious weeds  page 2 of 2	MAY 2022	

HAZARD OR HAZARDOUS EVENT	PRECAUTIONS
Giant Hogweed	<p>Where giant hogweed is present work will be relocated away from the hazard There may be accidental contact with smaller plants or when working in areas of dense undergrowth Wear gloves, cover arms and legs and ideally wear face masks where there is a possibility that volunteers will be working near it Protect from any skin contact with the sap, especially the face, when cutting stems Wash off any sap as soon as possible with plenty of cold water If plants are found, stop work and move away; advise the task leader, Task leader will mark the location and set up a boundary to prevent further contact</p>