

GIANT HOGWEED – BRIEFING NOTE
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT GROUP
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Where did it come from?

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is a close relative of cow parsley. The giant hogweed was brought to the UK from Central Asia in 1893, and is now a common sight on river banks, canal towpaths, woodland and heathland.

What does it look like?

Giant hogweed has long, green stems which branch out into clusters of small white flowers. It is therefore sometimes confused with the common hogweed, cow parsley, elderflower, or bishop's lace.

However, it is set apart by its purple-hued stem, thin spines and leaf stalks covered in spots.

The plants can grow up to 3.5m (11.5ft) high and can span around 1m (3.5ft). The flower heads can be as large as 60cm (2ft) across.

What does it do?

Giant hogweed is invasive and potentially harmful. Chemicals in the sap can cause phytophotodermatitis or photosensitivity, where the skin becomes very sensitive to sunlight and may suffer blistering, pigmentation and long-lasting scars.

What should I do if I do come into contact with it?

The NHS advises that if you touch a giant hogweed, cover the affected area, and wash it with soap and water. The blisters heal very slowly and can develop into phytophotodermatitis, a type of skin rash which flares up in sunlight. If you feel unwell after contact with giant hogweed, speak to your doctor.

Who has responsibility for treatment?

In terms of responsibilities for dealing with Giant Hogweed, this rests with the landowner. If they fail to take action, there are a number of 'responsible bodies' identified in the Scottish Government's Non-Native Species Code of Practice (available at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/08/7367/10>) who have duties and powers to deal with the issue.

The Council are not one of these bodies. The Code of Practice sets out who is and who to contact in the first instance, please see Appendix 1.

What can the Council do?

As part of the Council's responsibilities for greenspace maintenance, we carry out treatment of weeds in areas of Council responsibility only, this includes Giant Hogweed.

If any member of the public spots Giant Hogweed we advise that they do not touch it. They can report Giant Hogweed on Council land by phoning the Customer Service Centre on 01738 476476, or email enquiries@pkc.gov.uk

For any other land please contact the landowner direct as the Council are unable to take action on ground it doesn't own. If you have any problems with this, the Scottish Government website has details of the other organisations who can take action as listed in Appendix 1.

Control Methods

Giant Hogweed can be controlled with herbicide which is best applied in April/ May when the plant is actively growing but still less than 1m tall. Small infestations may be controlled by digging out whole plant when small. Do not touch this plant without protective clothing.

Special Restrictions

Avoid contact with skin. Avoid cutting and do not compost. Developers digging out plants must dispose of contaminated soil and plant waste in accordance with SEPA guidance.

10. Non-Native Species - Which Body is Responsible

Summary

Who is responsible for non-native species in Scotland?

Scottish Ministers (including Marine Scotland), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Forestry Commissioners (FCS) all have responsibilities relating to non-native species in Scotland.

These 'habitat leads' are given specific powers relating to the prevention, eradication and control of non-natives in the 1981 Act ([Chapter 9](#) provides more details) and are responsible for determining priorities for their habitat.

Who do I contact if I have a non-native species enquiry?

The habitat leads all have information on their websites however queries should be directed to SEARS (Scottish Environment and Rural Services) in the first instance:

08452 30 20 50 (24/7 customer service number)

info@sears.scotland.gsi.uk