

Poison Hemlock

Conium maculatum
Parsley Family

Class C Noxious Weed Control Recommended

Identification Tips

- Tall biennial, reaching 8 to 10 feet
- Thick, hairless, hollow stems with purple spotting and extensive branching
- Bright green, fernlike leaves with strong musty smell
- White flower heads that cluster in an umbrella-shaped appearance
- Individual flowers are tiny and have five petals

Biology

- Flowers in late spring
- Reproduces by seed; grows from seed to a rosette in the first year, then develops tall stems and flowers in the second year
- Over 1,000 seeds per plant are produced annually
- Seeds fall near the plant and are moved by erosion, animals, rain, and human activity

Impacts

- Acutely toxic to people and animals
- Renders rangeland, grasslands and crops worthless
- Crowds out desirable native vegetation and garden plants with its aggressive growth

Distribution

- Widespread in Kitsap County; found along roadsides and in riparian areas, ravines, fields, ditches and unmanaged yards and vacant lots
- Prefers moist soil and sun light, but can adapt to dryer soil and shadier conditions

Questions?

Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control
Program Line: **360-307-4242**
http://kitsap.wsu.edu/noxious_weed



All parts of this plant – the roots, stems, flowers, leaves – are poisonous when ingested.



Poison hemlock quickly invades riparian areas, displacing beneficial plants.

What You Can Do

Poison hemlock is so widespread in Kitsap County that control is not required, but this plant should be removed whenever possible, especially in areas that are accessible to people and pets. All parts of the plant are poisonous when eaten and even dead canes remain toxic for up to here years. Toxins can also be absorbed through the skin and respiratory system so always wear protective clothing (*gloves, glasses, mask) when handling this plant. If you suspect poisoning, call for help immediately. In both humans and animals, quick medical treatment can reverse the effects of hemlock poisoning.

Control Methods

Manual: For small sites, pull or dig up plants. Wear protective clothing including eye protection and wash your hands thoroughly after handling plant matter. To be fully effective, all mature plants need to be removed so no new seeds are produced. Do not leave flower heads on the ground, as the seeds can remain viable. Composting is not recommended; instead place in a plastic trash bag and toss into your regular trash.

Mechanical: Plants can be mowed or cut back with a weed-eater before going to flower. Recommend adding a layer of mulch to the area after it has been cleared and replanting with desirable vegetation.

Chemical: Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site.

Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label. Foliar herbicides are most effective if applied to actively growing plants in the spring, followed by another application later in the summer for late sprouts. Selective broadleaf herbicides with the active ingredient of triclopyr, 2,4-D and mesulfuron work well for lawn or pasture areas, as they won't harm grasses. When using this type of herbicide or one with glyphosate (such as Round-up, which is non-select and will harm grasses), apply to the entire leaf and stem surface and do not cut down the treated plants until they have died. This can take two weeks or more. Another effective method is to cut the stem and apply concentrated herbicide directly to the freshly cut stem. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. For questions about herbicide use, contact the Kitsap County Noxious Weed Control Program.



Wild Carrot

Poison hemlock is often confused with wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) as well as other similar-looking members of the parsley family including fennel, chervil and anise. However, poison hemlock can be distinguished in a couple of ways. It grows to heights of 8 feet or more, its leaves give off a strong musty smell; and its hairless stems have purple blotches or spotting. In contrast, wild carrot typically only grows to about 3 feet; its plain green stems have fine hairs with fewer branches; and it flowers later in the summer.

*Don't be fooled:
Wild carrot (sometimes called Queen Anne's Lace) is often confused with poison hemlock.*

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Modified from the King County Noxious Weed Program