



## Giant Hogweed

### GIANT HOGWEED (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Giant Hogweed is a highly invasive, non-native plant which is injurious to humans and animals. This plant is often found along the banks of rivers where its aggressive growth quickly shades out our native plants reducing their habitat and resulting in bank erosion. Like Japanese Knotweed, it is a criminal offence to grow or cause the growth of Giant Hogweed.

There is more public awareness of Giant Hogweed in recent years with injuries being publicised in tabloids. From a health & safety perspective it is good practice to take effective measures to reduce the risk where possible.



### GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT GIANT HOGWEED

Giant Hogweed is a tall plant which can reach over 3 metres (10 feet) in height. The thick stems are green/ mottled purple and carry large jagged green leaves which can be up to 1.5 metres wide. The plant flower head can be up to 0.5 metres wide and is formed by flat topped clusters of tiny white flowers which are held in umbels. The stems, stalks and leaves of this plant are covered with fine hairs which give the appearance of the stinging nettle. When Giant Hogweed dies back over the winter it can be identified by the woody stalks or large seed umbels.

Although principally biennial, each Giant Hogweed plant can live for up to 4 years, by this time the plant should have achieved its maximum height and flowering capability. Giant Hogweed spreads by seed with each plant producing up to 50,000 seeds. Dispersed seeds can remain viable for up to 15 years before they germinate. Moving soils containing Giant Hogweed seed will cause spread of the plant.

### RISK OF INJURY

Giant Hogweed has phototoxic sap which causes injury by contact; commonly by brushing against the hairs on the stalks and underside of leaves. A chemical reaction occurs when sap is exposed to sunlight which can result in skin inflammation including severe blistering, scarring and recurrent dermatitis. The effect is often not immediate with blistering occurring within 24-48 hours after exposure and dense pigmentation visible after 3-5 days. If sap enters the eye it may cause temporary or even permanent blindness. Giant Hogweed sap can become more toxic as the year progresses and the plant is exposed to more sunlight.

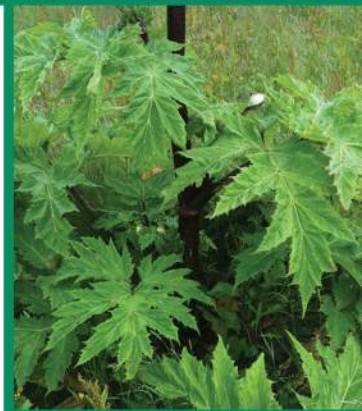
If working within an area of Giant Hogweed the correct PPE must be worn. In the event that accidental contact occurs, cover the area to keep it away from sunlight, wash the sap off using soap and water or eye wash as appropriate. Seek medical advice.

### CURRENT LEGISLATION

Under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside (Scotland) Act 1981, as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment Scotland Act 2011, it is an offence to grow or cause the growth of Giant Hogweed; this includes the movement of contaminated soil if not correctly managed. Soils containing the seeds of Giant Hogweed require to be managed under the current Waste Management Regulations.

Due to the injurious nature of Giant Hogweed, Local Authorities have the powers to enforce that remedial action is taken to 'clean up' Giant Hogweed growth by serving notice under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act.

If Giant Hogweed is suspected on your land, it is your duty to ensure that the public and your employees are protected from the hazards associated with it.



# Himalayan Balsam

## Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

Himalayan Balsam, commonly known as Indian Balsam and Policemans Helmet, is an invasive non native annual plant which has infested the banks of British waterways, shading out the native British plants that stabilise river banks through our winter months. Himalayan Balsam is now a real concern due to erosion of waterways and the adverse impact it is having on our native flora and fauna.

Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (Scotland) 1981 (WCA 1981) controls the growth of Himalayan Balsam. Powers to issue control orders have been provided under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. Soils containing Himalayan Balsam seeds are classified as controlled waste by Part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA 1990) and must be managed in compliance with the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994 or an offence will be committed.

## Identification

Himalayan Balsam grows between 1 and 2 metres in height with 2 or 3 serrated green leaves being arranged at node points along the green / red stems. About 3 months after germination the plant will flower, generally from mid summer until autumn, producing most commonly dark pink or purple flowers, although very pale pink almost white variations can also be found. Flowering is then followed by the production of segmental seeds pods, which, when disturbed 'explode' projecting seeds up to 5 metres from the plant. This method results in highly effective seed dispersal. The small black spherical seeds are buoyant and if they land in water they can be carried great distances downstream, seeds can germinate in the water. Each plant can produce several thousand seeds during the growing season and these can remain viable for 2 years. The plant dies during the first winter frosts and quickly decays making it difficult to identify during the winter months.



# Horsetail

## Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*)

A perennial member of the Sphenophyta family the leaves grow on whorls from nodal sheaths off hollow jointed stems. The fragile root or rhizomes grow up to 1.5 metres deep in soils and will re-grow if damaged which makes it very persistent if being removed by weeding. Horsetail does not flower and is a member of the fern family producing spores for regeneration.

In the construction industry horsetail is problematic causing damage to road and footpath surfaces - preventing Local Authority adoptions.

Horsetail is resistant to most weed killers and the waxy coating on the stem means that it requires a specialist to ensure effective eradication.

