

# Environmental TBT

## Giant Hogweed

Giant hogweed was first introduced to the UK as an ornamental plant in the Victorian period and is now widely spread throughout the UK. It is a perennial plant that flowers only in its fourth year of growth and, having flowered, it dies. Throughout its life each plant can grow over 5m tall, and its flowers can disperse as many as 50,000 seeds allowing the species to spread rapidly and widely. Seeds can remain viable on or in the ground for up to 15 years and it thrives in any habitat, but particularly where soil has been disturbed such as riverbanks, derelict land or railway embankments. It is an invasive species, and its control is legislated through The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Schedule 9.

Giant hogweed constitutes a public health hazard. It's clear, watery sap can cause dermatitis. Skin contact with sap followed by exposure to sunlight can produce painful, burning blisters that may develop into purplish or blackened scars. If you do come into contact with the plant, and especially the sap, you are advised to wash the affected areas immediately, keep them out of direct sunlight and seek medical advice.

It is an illegal offence to spread Giant Hogweed. This includes spreading cuttings the plant or roots and distributing or moving surrounding soil that may contain root material.

### Do

- ✓ Prevent its spread through good on-site management.
- ✓ Have a preliminary ecological appraisal of the works area.
- ✓ Inform your line manager if you believe Giant Hogweed has been found.
- ✓ Contact the project's Environmental Advisor and/or Ecologist if evidence of Giant Hogweed or suspected presence is discovered during works.
- ✓ Inform Client of the presence of Giant Hogweed on their land.
- ✓ Avoid, areas / plant stands where practicable.
- ✓ Any spoil required to be removed from site and suspected of containing Giant Hogweed, must be identified on the WTN and transferred to a facility (usually landfill) permitted to receive it.
- ✓ Any lorries moving the material must be covered.



INF-SHE-SOP-9400-1000  
Biodiversity

INF-SHE-SOP-9400-1050  
Ecological Surveys

INF-TPT-2100-0300 Vegetation  
Permit to Clear

### Don't

- ✗ Touch the plant without the correct PPE.
- ✗ Enter or conduct works within a 7m exclusion zone of the plant.
- ✗ Flail, mow or chip the plant.
- ✗ Excavate or move soil that may contain plant material.
- ✗ Stockpile material suspected of containing Giant Hogweed within 10m of a watercourse, gully, or drain.
- ✗ Drive plant and vehicles through Japanese Knotweed.

Giant hogweed may grow to between 5-6m in height. Except for size, it closely resembles cow parsley, a native British plant. It has distinctive thick dark reddish stems and spotted leaf stalks with sturdy bristles. The stems can be between 5 and 10cm thick. The leaves of giant hogweed may grow to 1.5m wide. It begins growing in March, reaching full height and flowering in late June and July, becoming dormant in September.

