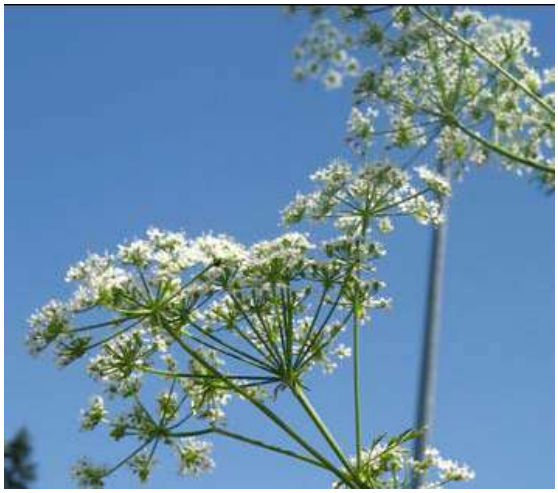
CLALLAM COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL WEED

Poison Hemlock

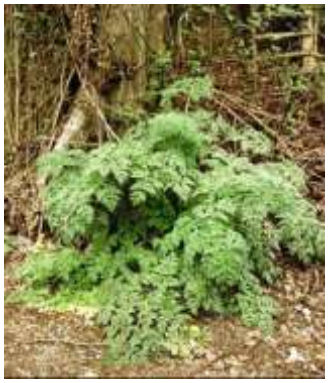
Conium maculatum ParsleyFamily



All parts of poison hemlock (the roots, stems, flowers, seeds, leaves) are poisonous

Identification Tips

- Tall biennial, reaching 8 to 10 feet the second year
- Bright green, fernlike leaves with strong musty smell
- First year plants form low clumps of lacy leaves with reddish or spotted stems
- Second year stems are stout, hollow, **hairless**, ribbed, with reddish or purple spotting/streaking
- Flowering plants covered with numerous small, umbrella-shaped clusters of tiny white flowers that have five petals
- Seeds form in green, ridged capsules that eventually turn brown
- In late winter, look for mounds of bright green, lacy leaves. The largest clumps are second-year plants building up energy to flower and seed later in the spring.

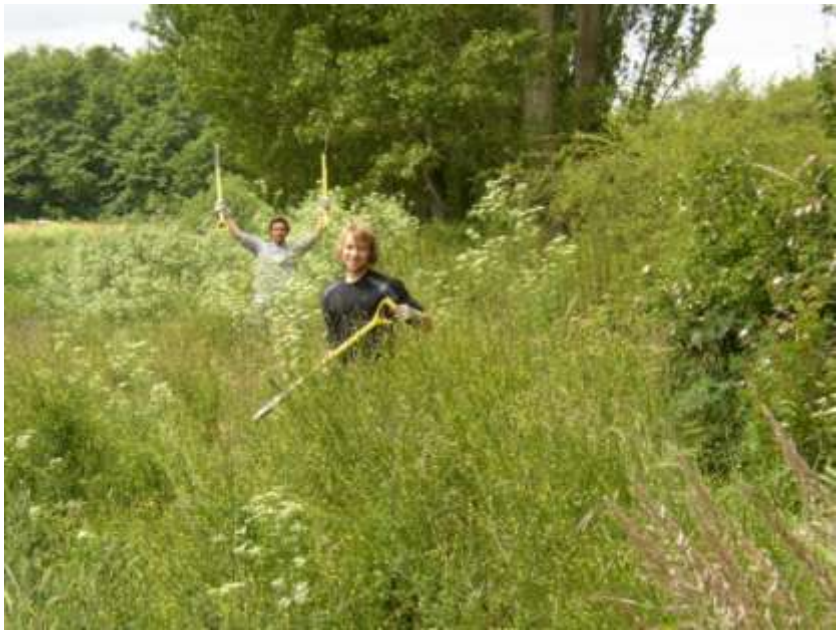


Biology

- Reproduces by seed.
- First year grows into a rosette; second year, develops tall stems and flowers
- Rapid growth from March to May, flowers in late spring
- Up to 40,000 seeds per plant are produced
- Seeds fall near the plant and are moved by erosion, animals, rain and human activity
- Seeds viable up to 6 years and germinate throughout the growing season; do not require a dormant period

Poison hemlock seedling

Impacts



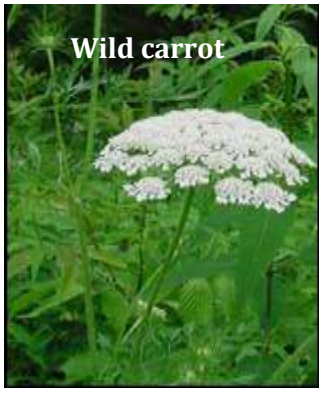
- Acutely toxic to livestock, wildlife, humans; causes death by respiratory paralysis after ingestion
- Aggressive growth crowds out desirable vegetation
- Early spring growth makes it more likely to be eaten by animals when there is limited forage available

Distribution

- Mainly found on the east side of Clallam county with only a few sites found west of Port Angeles; found along roadsides, riparian areas, ravines, fields, ditches and un-managed yards, vacant lots and pastures
- Prefers moist soil and sun, but can adapt to dryer soil and shadier conditions

Look-A-Likes:

There are many plants that look similar to poison hemlock including fennel, chervil, anise, coltsfoot and wild carrot. The most distinctive feature of poison hemlock is that the entire plant is hairless. In contrast, the look-a-likes have hair somewhere on the plant such as the stem or leaf surfaces. Below are photos of some look-a-like plants. If you are unsure of what you are seeing please contact our office.

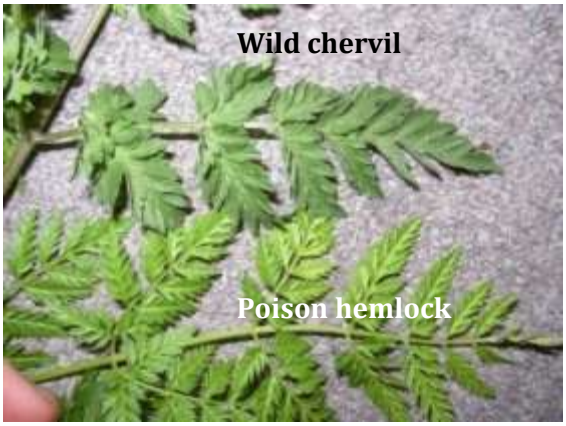


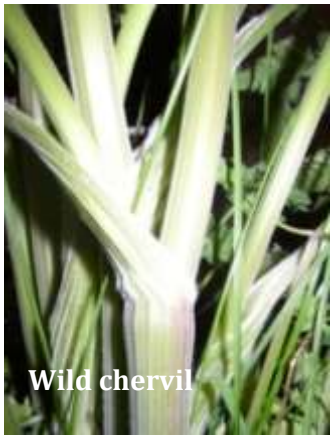
Wild carrot, *Daucus carota*, otherwise known as Queen Anne's Lace is often confused with poison hemlock. However, wild carrot typically only grows to about 3 feet tall. Its plain green stems are **covered with fine hair** and have fewer branches. Wild carrot flowers later in the summer than poison hemlock.

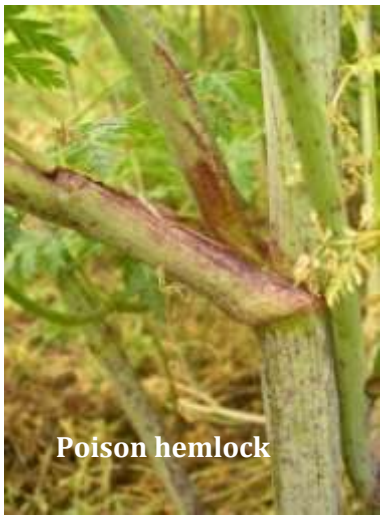
Bur chervil, *Anthriscus caucalis,* is quite common in Clallam County and often found growing right next to or with poison hemlock. It can be distinguished from poison hemlock by its hairy stems which have purple streaks instead of purple splotches. Bur chervil blooms before poison hemlock, and its foliage is generally a lighter green than poison hemlock.

Pacific water parsley, *Oenanthe sarmentosa,* is another look-a-like. It is distinguished from poison hemlock by the lack of purple spots on the stems.

Wild Chervil, *Anthriscus sylvestris,* looks very similar to poison hemlock. The distinguishing traits are the hairy stems and the less divided leaves of wild chervil.







What You Can Do

If you find poison hemlock on your property, remove it before it goes to seed. **All parts of the plant are poisonous when eaten and even dead canes remain toxic for up to three 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, medical treatment can reverse the effects of hemlock poisoning.

Control Methods

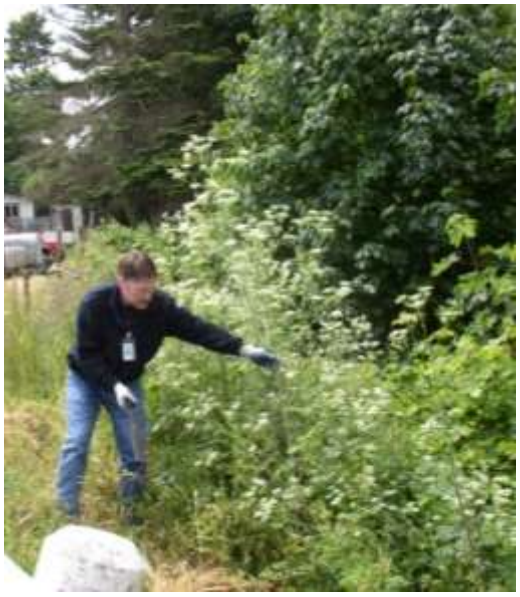
Integrated Pest Management

- The preferred approach for weed control is Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM involves selecting from a range of manual, mechanical, chemical, cultural and biological control methods to match the management requirements of a specific site. The goal is to maximize effective control and to minimize negative environmental, economic and social impacts.
- IPM means using an adaptive approach. Control methods should reflect the available time, funding, and labor of the participants, the land use goals, and the values of the community and landowners. Management will require dedication over a number of years, and allow for flexibility of methods used as appropriate to the current situation.

Prevention:

- **Avoid** introducing soil or gravel from areas known to have poison hemlock.
- **Remove** seedlings when young because they can usually be pulled easily and they have not had an opportunity to reproduce.
- **Replant** with a desirable (preferably native) plant species, to discourage reinfestation.
- **Dispose of weeds properly;** place in a trash bag and toss into your regular trash. Do not burn poison hemlock debris, the smoke can be toxic.
- **Plant parts may not be safe for compost piles. Being left on site can also be an issue because the toxins decompose slowly, taking several years to dissipate.**
- **Monitor** the site for several years; promptly remove new seedlings.

Manual Control:



- For small sites, pull or dig up plants. Remove entire root.
- 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.

Mechanical Control:

- **Mowing does not kill poison hemlock.**
- Mowing should only be used as a form of control when trying to delay plant growth until such time that the plant can either be dug or conditions are appropriate to apply herbicide.
- If you mow, protect yourself with a dust mask to avoid inhaling toxins while mowing.

Cultural Control:

- Covering treated sites with cardboard, adding a thick layer of mulch and/or replanting with desirable vegetation will reduce germination of poison hemlock seeds present in the soil.

Chemical:

- **Read and follow all label instructions. Only use products labeled for the type of site where you intend to apply them. Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label. Always check the label for any grazing or re-entry restrictions.**
- 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 or newly germinating seedlings.
- Spray plants before they flower for best results.
- Spraying may not prevent seed production in mature plants.
- Using a selective broadleaf herbicide with the active ingredient 2,4–D will work well for lawn or pasture areas as it won't harm grasses.
- Glyphosate products (such as Roundup) are also effective, but will also kill grass as well as broadleaf plants.
- Apply the herbicide to the entire leaf and stem surface. Avoid cutting treated plants, or delay mowing as long as possible or until plants have died, to allow herbicide to move through the plant. Depending on the herbicide, plants may take more than two weeks before showing significant symptoms.
- Seeds germinate throughout the season, so repeat treatment is necessary to eliminate all plants. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. For questions about herbicide use, contact our office.

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