POISON HEMLOCK HAS ARRIVED

This EXTREMELY toxic plant has made its way into Huntington and surrounding counties.

Easily mistaken for Queen Anne's lace, wild elderberry, and other toxic and non-toxic look-alikes; this plant is DEADLY.

In fact, it is considered one of the MOST DANGEROUS PLANTS IN THE USA!

It is rapidly spreading along streams, rivers, fields, and roadways – making its way into town and country yards. Removal must be done with caution, and must be done.

Action needs taken before seeds are spread, which begins occuring in JULY! Left unchecked, even a single plant can become a full blown infestation. One plant may produce up to 30,000 seeds that remain viable for 2 to 6 years.

For the safety of our community, families, pets, livestock, and the native plants it will shroud – It is each of our responsibility to safely and effectively take action. Always exercise caution while in the vicinity of these plants, and while removing them.

Please read through the following pages for information about identification, dangers, look-alikes, removal processes, and resources.

POISON HEMLOCK IDENTIFICATION

Stem

Poison hemlock stems are hollow, hairless, and slightly grooved, except at the nodes. They can be partly or mostly purple, with purple–reddish blotches and give off a strong odor when crushed. In its first year, poison hemlock grows low as a rosette, so the stem spots may be hard to see.

Leaves

Finely divided, lacy, fern–like, bright green, finely divided, and hairless with toothed edges and have a strong musty odor when crushed; very similar in appearance to Queen Anne's Lace. Up to 18 inches long by 12 inches wide. The petiole to stem attachments are covered by a sheath.

Flowers

Tiny white flowers, each with 5 petals, arranged in umbrella–shaped clusters on ends of branched stems. Clusters are typically 2–3 inches across.

Height

2–10 feet

POISON HEMLOCK – DANGERS

ALL PARTS OF POISON HEMLOCK (ROOTS, STEMS, LEAVES AND SEEDS) ARE EXTREMELY TOXIC TO HUMANS AND LIVESTOCK WHEN INGESTED. SMALL AMOUNTS CAN BE DEADLY.

This toxin impacts the nervous system causing trembling, salivation, lack of coordination, dilated pupils, weak pulse, respiratory paralysis, coma and death. Extra care should be taken to wear protective clothing and eyewear before working with or exposure to poison hemlock.

The biggest risk with poison hemlock is ingestion. Lethal doses are fairly small, so it is important for livestock owners to remove it from pastures if possible. Toxins from this plant can also be absorbed through the skin and lungs, so be sure to wear gloves and a mask when handling these plants.

The plant has sap that can be harmful to the skin, so caution should be taken with hand removal. It has a long tap root (10 inches) and extensive fibrous roots.

If you think you may have accidentally ingested poison hemlock, you should go immediately to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

There isn't an antidote for hemlock poisoning, so it can be difficult to treat. Inform your provider if you believe you have come in contact with poison hemlock.

Your provider will treat you based on your symptoms and the severity of your condition. Treatment may include:

- Mechanical ventilation if you're having trouble breathing.
- Antiseizure medication to control seizures.
- Hemodialysis for renal failure.
- Digestive system cleanse to get rid of the toxin.
- Intravenous (IV) fluids to prevent dehydration and provide nutrition.

POISON HEMLOCK LOOK-ALIKES

ANGELICA – native and critical for healthy wildlife ecosystems







STEM
Thick, purple to green (varies by plant), hollow and hairless

LEAVES
Toothed and alternate with large petioles, stalked, with a large sheath and triangular blade

FLOWERS
Tiny white to greenish flowers in umbels, some varieties include pink and purple flowers

HEIGHT
3–7 feet

YARROW – native and critical for healthy wildlife ecosystems





STEM
Green, thin, and grooved with small wooly hairs

LEAVES
Feather-like, frilly leaves are unique to the yarrow plant and set it apart from potential look-alikes

FLOWERS
White florets in an umbrella-shape, some varieties have yellow, pink, and red flowers

HEIGHT
1–3 feet

POISON HEMLOCK LOOK-ALIKES

ELDERBERRY – native and critical for healthy wildlife ecosystems






STEM
Green to brown depending on age and have a warty appearance

LEAVES
Opposite, compound, lance-shaped, 4–12 inches long, and have with 5–7 leaflets

FLOWERS
Tiny white frangrant flowers can appear in flat-topped or rounded clusters, developing berries

HEIGHT
6.5–13 feet

TALL MEADOW RUE – native, critical, and considered threatened




STEM
The stems can be purple to varying degrees and mostly hairless

LEAVES
Most leaflets are shallowly lobed in 2 or 3 parts, compound, about 1 inch long with a rounded base

FLOWERS
The flowers are arranged in clusters called panicles and are about 1/3 inch across with no petals

HEIGHT
3–8 feet

POISON HEMLOCK LOOK-ALIKES

WATER HEMLOCK – native, but TOXIC and potentially DEADLY




STEM
Smooth, hairless, hollow, and can sometimes have purple stripes or mottling

LEAVES
Double compound; veins tend to terminate in the notch of the teeth instead of the tip

FLOWERS
Tiny white flowers in flat clusters (umbels) up to 6 inches across

HEIGHT
3–6 feet

COW PARSNIP – native, but TOXIC to the touch!




STEM
Deeply ridged and entirely green with soft, fuzzy hairs

LEAVES
Broad, has three lobes and small teeth at the margin and can appear similar to a maple leaf

FLOWERS
Tiny white flowers in flat-topped clusters. Individual flowers have five petals with notched tips

HEIGHT
3–10 feet

POISON HEMLOCK LOOK-ALIKES

WILD PARSNIP – invasive and TOXIC to the touch!




STEM
Stems are hairless, grooved or ridged, and branched in the upper plant

LEAVES
Leaves are compound with 5 to 15 leaflets each, up to 18 inches long and 6 inches across

FLOWERS
Tiny yellow flowers in flat clusters 3 to 8 inches across at the end of branching stems

HEIGHT
Up to 5 feet

GIANT HOGWEED – invasive and TOXIC to the touch!






STEM
Ridged, 2–4 inches in diameter, with reddish-purple blotches and coarse white hairs

LEAVES
Deeply lobed and compound, up to 5 feet wide, with coarse white hairs at the base of the leaf stalk

FLOWERS
White florets in an umbrella-shaped head up to 3 feet in diameter

HEIGHT
10–15 feet

POISON HEMLOCK LOOK-ALIKES

QUEEN ANNE'S LACE – invasive, sap may irritate skin





STEM
Hairy, green, and vertically veined – growing from a central stem

LEAVES
Alternate, feathery, and lacy leaves that are pinnately divided and increase in size down the stem

FLOWERS
Tiny white flowers in flat-topped clusters. Purple florette in the center.

HEIGHT
1–4 feet

LOOK-ALIKES SUMMARY

While Queen Anne's Lace is the most common look-alike and is generally harmless, it is important to always positively identify a plant before handling or removing it.

– We NEED our wild, native plants. They play a vital role in our ecosystems.

– Natives AND invasives can be toxic to the touch, and toxic or fatal when ingested. Always take proper precautions.

– Management and removal of invasives is your responsibility as a land owner, as is pretecting our native species.

Please follow the steps on our "Removal and Reporting" page to ensure safe and proper land stewardship while addressing Poison Hemlock.

POISON HEMLOCK – REMOVAL

REMOVAL MAY BE DONE MECHANICALLY (PHYSICAL REMOVAL) OR CHEMICALLY (HERBICIDAL POISONING).

It is highly recommended that you call a professional to handle this plant. However, if you choose to manage poison hemlock yourself, be sure to wear proper Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) including gloves, long sleeve shirts, long pants, closed toe shoes, and protective eyewear. Shower afterwards to be sure you have no toxic sap on your skin, launder your clothes, and carefully wash your tools.

HAND REMOVAL

For small infestations, you can dig up the plant by grasping the base of the rosette and pulling. In heavier soils, you may need to use a shovel to remove the entire long taproot. After removal, place the plant in a plastic bag and put it in the trash. Do not compost the hemlock or put it with yard waste. Plant parts remain poisonous even after drying.

PREVENT SEEDING

If you don't have time to remove the entire plant, you can prevent it from producing seeds by removing the flower stock with clippers. Avoid using a weed whacker or mower, as these can spread the plant's toxins through the air.

HERBICIDES

For larger infestations, you can treat the plant with a post–emergent herbicide, diquat, pelargonic acid, glyphosate (all non–selective), and 2,4–D, until it's wet but not runoff. Follow up as needed and monitor for new growth.

• The University of Minnesota Extension recommends the following during the flowering period, "Spray green plants with herbicide or dig the whole plant out, ensuring the flower and/or seed heads are not left on the plant or the ground. With gloves on, cut the flower or seed heads off and place in a plastic bag. Do not mow unless flower and seed heads have been removed."

• Herbicides work best when in rosette stage and before flowering. If mowing needs to be done, target before flowering and seed set.

POISON HEMLOCK – RESOURCES

IF YOU BELIEVE TO HAVE IDENTIFIED POISON HEMLOCK ON YOUR PROPERTY AND NEED ASSISTANCE WITH REMOVAL, IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, OR IF YOU ARE UNSURE OF WHAT TO DO, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT:

PURDUE EXTENSION – Huntington County Office

Address: 1340 S. Jefferson St
Huntington, IN 46750
Phone: (260) 358–4826
Email: (Ed Farris, Director) emfarris@purdue.edu

PARKS AND RECREATIONS – Huntington Office

Address: 634 Webster St
Huntington, IN 46750
Phone: (260) 358–2323
7AM – 3 PM Mon–Fri

YOU MAY ALSO CONTACT A LOCAL LAWNCARE, LANDSCAPING, PLANT CARE, OR INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL COMPANY TO SEE IF THEY OFFER THIS SERVICE.