

Giant Hogweed

Heracleum mantegazzianum

Plants · In flower Jun–Aug · an invasive species



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An enormous biennial or perennial umbellifer reaching five metres, with thick hollow green stems blotched purple and covered in coarse bristles, huge jagged leaves up to a metre and a half across, and vast flat white flower heads. Introduced from the Caucasus as an ornamental, it grows along the Nith and other riverbanks and on waste ground around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

The sap contains furanocoumarins that destroy the skin's protection against ultraviolet light. Contact followed by sunlight causes severe blistering burns, and the affected skin can remain sensitive and re-blister for years afterwards; sap in the eye can cause blindness. Never strim or cut it. It also seeds prolifically along watercourses and shades out native bankside plants.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Carrots (Apiaceae)
HEIGHT	Up to 5 m
STATUS	Invasive non-native; sap causes severe burns — do not touch

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