



# Tool Box Talk

Focus on Performance

## Giant Hogweed

Sust. 26

### What?

Giant hogweed is a non-native species introduced as an ornamental plant in the nineteenth century. It is common alongside riverbanks and canals, derelict land and road and rail embankments.

Giant hogweed can grow up to 5 metres in height. It's stems are green (with purple blotches during summer), covered with spikey hairs and with large dark green serrated leaves. The plant develops flowers in June in the fourth year of growth. The flowers are wide and umbrella like and can produce up to 500 seeds formed in light brown seed pods. After flowering, the plant dies.

### Why?

Giant hogweed can out-compete native plant species. It is listed in legislation as an invasive species. It is illegal to spread it or cause it to grow in the wild.

The stems of the plant contain a sap which, on reacting with sunlight, causes severe irritation and blistering on exposed skin.

### How?

- Do not disturb giant hogweed by tracking through it. If possible fence off with a signed exclusion zone.
- If giant hogweed is known to be within or adjacent to a work area, do not clear vegetation or handle soil likely to contain seeds unless you have been briefed on the giant hogweed management plan or method statement for correct methods handling and disposal.
- Stop work immediately near to any identified stand. Report any discoveries of giant hogweed after works have started to your supervisor or the site management team.
- Wear protective clothing before touching the plant.
- Seek medical advice if you have come into contact with the sap.
- Note that any equipment used could be contaminated with sap so ensure it is handled with care and cleaned after use.



Pictures: Non-Native Species Secretariat

### Questions

1. How might you recognise giant hogweed?
2. Why is giant hogweed a problem on construction sites?
3. Before working in a giant hogweed area, what would you need to be briefed on?

If you have any queries regarding the content of this tool box talk please contact your Sustainability Advisor or Line Manager.