



# POISON HEMLOCK

*Conium maculatum*



- ✦ Other names: Poison parsley, Irish parsley
- ✦ Poison Hemlock is a Class B Designate noxious weed.
- ✦ A tall herbaceous biennial, sometimes perennial, from the Apiaceae Family, Poison Hemlock reproduces solely by seeds.

✦ Poison Hemlock is an erect branching plant that can grow from 10 to 12 feet in height. It's fernlike, finely divided leaves are similar to those of its parsley/carrot cousins. The stem is hollow, smooth, hairless and bright green with purple splotches on it. Its fernlike leaves grow in leaflets of 3 and have a strong odor when crushed. It has a long, white taproot, which may be branched. Flowers are small and white and grow in 4 to 8-inch umbrella shaped clusters. Each flower develops into a green, deeply ridged fruit that contains several seeds. One plant is capable of producing up to 38,000 seeds per season and can remain viable in the soil for up to 6 years.

- ✦ All parts of this plant are extremely toxic to animals and humans. The lower portions of the stem and root are particularly deadly. Dead canes can remain toxic for up to 3 years.
- ✦ Conditions that lead to P.H. poisoning: Leaves are mistaken for the edible plants like parsley, carrot, or Bur Chervil; seeds mistaken for Anise; root for Wild Carrot, or parsnips. Children may use the hollow stems as pea-shooters to blow through. It takes only 4 oz of P.H. vegetation to be fatal to adults, less for children; 16 oz is fatal for a horse or cow.
- ✦ Since Poison hemlock remains toxic for several years after being pulled, care should be taken to bag up and dispose of all dead plant material to prevent accidental poisoning of wildlife or children. Do not compost this plant.
- ✦ Studies indicate that Poison Hemlock has allelopathic characteristics. Research has shown that mowing Poison Hemlock during fruit development stage just after flowering, or before seed set as practiced by many land managers, actually intensifies or concentrates the coniine and other forms of the alkaloids which then act as allelochemicals in the soil.



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## CONTROL OPTIONS

- ✱ Hand removal is recommended for small infestations. When pulling this plant, be sure to remove the entire tap root. Wear gloves, long sleeves, and wash thoroughly after working with poison hemlock. Mowing and cutting of this plant is not effective for control, as the plant simply develops new seed stalks in the same season the cutting occurs.
- ✱ The defoliating Hemlock Moth has been released in several Western Washington counties, but results have been variable.
- ✱ Spot spraying with an herbicide containing the active ingredient *glyphosate* (Roundup Pro, Glyfos, etc.) or products containing the active ingredient *imazapyr* (Habitat® and Arsenal®), may be used effectively while the plant is actively growing, prior to seed production. Spray each plant thoroughly on the stems and leaves, enough to be wet but not dripping. Be aware, *glyphosate* & *imazapyr* are non-selective and will injure any plants that they come in contact with, including grass. After herbicide application the area must be monitored in succeeding years to check for new plants from the existing seed bank.
- ✱ When using herbicides, always read and follow all label instructions and obey all label precautions. (Note: pesticide product registration is renewed annually and product names and formulations may vary from year to year.)

