



The photo above is typical of what you might find along an infested roadside.

This population is too large to hand-cut or pull, a power mower should be used before the seeds set. Plants may re-sprout when cut above the ground, and should be cut again or sprayed, a few weeks later to prevent flowering. Cutting done after seed set will greatly reduce the likelihood that the plants will be able to re-sprout and flower, but will increase the risk of spreading the seeds and creating new problems. Plants cut at this time must all be gathered and destroyed to prevent mature seed from developing and falling to the ground. Another effective way to eliminate reseeding is to hand-collect all seeds after they have set. If control of flowering or seeding plants is carried out over several years, the population will decrease as the seed bank is depleted. If mowing Wild Parsnip, be careful cleaning the equipment as the sap will still be present. It's suggested to clean the mower deck, if mowing while seeds are present and before traveling to the next area or the equipment storage area.

The best defense is to be able to identify the plant and be aware of what you need to do when working around or near it. Below you will find photos of various stages of development of Wild Parsnip. Sap will be present in all these stages, but increasing potency from spring to summer and decreasing potency after seed set to end of plant life. The photos are for the cycle of a second year plant.

Early Spring,



Late Spring or fall



Early Summer



Flowers, Summer



Fall.



Seedling/ Late Summer-Fall



BE AWARE OF WILD PARSNIP. (*Pastinaca sativa*)



Because of its harmful characteristics and concern over its increased spreading over the countryside, Wild Parsnip has been in the news recently.

The plant has become a weed of special concern along roadsides and in abandoned fields. Like many other introduced plants it is very aggressive and spreading rapidly.

Why the special concern about this plant?

Wild parsnip causes "phyto-photo-dermatitis", which happens when the sap of the plant, from broken stems and leaves, touches the skin and is exposed to ultraviolet light (whether cloudy or sunny).

Within 24 to 48 hours, the affected area will first redden and in most cases be followed by blisters that can be painful for a couple of days. In many cases, the blisters will lead to brownish pigmentation that can last for years. Unlike Poison Ivy, the reaction caused by contact with Wild Parsnip sap is not an allergic reaction. Toxin in the sap is absorbed by the skin and energized by ultraviolet light.

Moisture from perspiration speeds absorption. Burning is inevitable if skin comes in contact with juice from cut or broken stalks, leaves or flowers. The juices are most potent while in flower. **No one is exempt.** Symptoms usually take 24-48 hours to develop, but could take longer. Mild exposure is similar to sunburn. Severe exposure causes skin to blister.



Treatment

Once the toxin is absorbed into the skin and is exposed to sunlight, some reaction is inevitable. Immediately cover exposed skin

until it can be washed with soap and water.

To relieve symptoms:

- Cover affected area with a cool, wet cloth.
- If blisters appear, try not to rupture blisters as long as possible.
- To avoid infection, keep area clean and apply antiseptic cream.

Concern:

More people are coming into contact with wild parsnip due to its rapid spread into open habitats and roadsides. Individuals who will be working, hiking, or involved in other activities around it can reduce the risk of exposure by wearing long-sleeved shirts, gloves, and long pants.

During much of July, wild parsnip is one of the dominant yellow-flowered weeds in many roadsides and other right-of-ways, fence rows, prairie restorations, CRP sites and poorly managed pastures.

Botanical basics

Life history: Wild parsnip typically lives for two years. The first year, as a spindly rosette of leaves, it keeps fairly low to the ground while the plant's carrot-like taproot develops. It may live two or more years this way until conditions are right for flowering. The second year, a hollow, grooved flower stalk rises 2-5 feet high, first holding clusters of yellow flowers and later dozens of flat, oval seeds. **Leaves:** Pinnately compound, with a main stem and 5 to 15 leaflets. **Flowers:** Yellow, in flat-topped umbrella-like clusters at the top of the plant. **Season:** Wild parsnip rosettes are among the first plants to become green in spring, and its flowers turn a prominent yellow in midsummer. After flowering and going to seed, plants die and turn brown in fall, but first year rosettes remain green until frost. **Habitat:** Roadsides, abandoned fields, unmowed pastures, edges of woods, prairie restorations.

