



## Wild Parsnip

**Common Name:** Wild parsnip



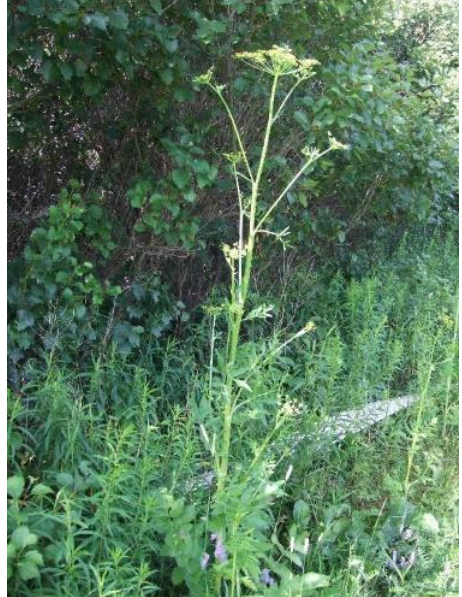
**Scientific Name:** *Pastinaca sativa* L.

### Introduction

Wild parsnip is a biennial or short-lived monocarpic perennial native to Europe and Asia, now widely found across North America. It was brought to North America by settlers and grown as a root vegetable, eventually escaping cultivation. Recognized by its tall, grooved stem and clusters of small, yellow flowers, wild parsnip is a member of the Apiaceae (or Umbelliferae) family. Wild parsnip thrives in a variety of habitats, including roadsides, trails, pastures, and in abandoned fields where it can quickly outcompete native vegetation. It forms a rosette of leaves in the first year while the taproot develops. In the second year it bolts producing flowers on a tall hollow stalk and then dies. Wild parsnip seeds are somewhat similar to those of *Heracleum* and *Angelica* species however, these plants have white flowers with broader leaves with greatly expanded petiole sheaths. Like other members of the Apiaceae family, sap from the plant contains furanocoumarins which can cause skin to react to sunlight, resulting in rashes, blisters, or burns.

Efforts to control the spread of wild parsnip involve a combination of mechanical, and chemical methods. Early detection and prompt action are key to managing infestations and preventing further spread. Public awareness and education about the identification of wild parsnip is a component for control strategies.

# Identification of Wild Parsnip

Wild Parsnip		
		
<b>Seedling<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rosette<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Height</b>
The seedlings have strap-like cotyledons up to 3-cm long.	The first-year growth of wild parsnip forms a basal rosette.	The plant can grow between 0.5 to 1.5 metres in height.

<sup>1</sup> Image by Ken Chamberlain, The Ohio State University, Bugwood.org.

<sup>2</sup> Image by Patrick J. Alexander and the *USDA-NRCS PLANTS* Database, Plants.usda.gov.



**Wild Parsnip**



**Stem**

The stem is green in color with grooves, covered in sparse hairs and hollow except at the nodes.



**Leaf**

The leaves are pinnately compound, with sharp teeth that can be misshapen. The leaves are arranged in opposite leaflet pairs. The upper stem leaves reduce in size appearing as narrow bracts



**Flower**

The flowers are umbrella shaped clusters that are yellowish green in color.

# Prevention and Management

Since wild parsnip only reproduces by seed, a primary goal for any control program should be to reduce seed production and to prevent seedling recruitment. When managing wild parsnip infestations, ensure that you wear personal protective equipment to reduce exposure of skin to the plant's sap. Some control methods are listed below:

## Mechanical control

- Mowing is effective to reduce seed production for small infestations. Mowing should be conducted when flowering begins (May to June) and prior to seed set in late summer or early fall. This can prevent seed production and reduce the spread of the plant. However, mowing should be repeated multiple times throughout the growing season to manage regrowth.
- Hand-pulling is another effective method, particularly for small infestations or individual plants. It is essential to remove the entire root to prevent regrowth, and protective clothing should be worn to avoid skin contact with the plant's sap. Cutting, particularly with tools like shovels or spades, can be used to sever the taproot below the soil surface. After removing the stems from the ground, allow them to completely dry out at the site of infestation. Once dried, carefully place the plant material in black plastic bags and leave them in direct sunlight for a week or longer to ensure effective disposal.

## Chemical control

- Chemical control of wild parsnip typically involves the use of herbicides that can effectively target and eliminate this invasive species. Wild parsnip has been primarily a problem in some areas, such as roadways, where chemical application may be impractical.

# Conclusion

Producers are encouraged to contact their regional NB Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries to discuss management options. Our team of specialists are available to provide guidance and resources for the management of this species.