

# Toolbox Talk - Environment

## Giant Hogweed



### DID YOU KNOW?

Giant hogweed sap contains toxic chemicals which react with light when in contact with human skin, causing blistering within 48hrs.

### IDENTIFICATION

- The stem starts growing in March/April and is green, but develops dark red/purple spots or blotches during summer.
- It is hollow, furrowed or ribbed and has sparse spiky hairs
- Leaves are dark green, have deeply cut lobes with ragged edges, can be one metre across and form in a rosette
- Flowers are white, umbrella like and up to 50cm across and appear from June in the fourth year

### WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

**Environmental harm:** the plant endangers the survival of native plants and this may lead to excessive erosion of soil as the giant hogweed dies back in winter. It can also cause significant harm to grazing animals

**Prosecution:** it is illegal to plant or otherwise encourage the growth of giant hogweed.



This includes moving surrounding soil that may contain either seeds or plant material unless as part of an eradication process

**Health Hazard:** the plant contains large amounts of poisonous sap that, on contact with the skin and in the presence of sunlight, causes severe irritation, swelling and painful water blisters. This reaction can occur up to 24 hours after exposure to sunlight. Contact with eyes can cause temporary blindness

### DO'S & DON'TS

- ✓ Immediately stop all work near to any plant you suspect may be giant hogweed
- ✓ If you come into contact with the sap, cover the affected area to prevent a reaction with sunlight. Wash with soap and water and seek medical advice
- ✗ Enter an identified area of giant hogweed during treatment
- ✗ Excavate or move soil that may contain seeds or other plant material
- ✗ Stockpile material suspected to containing giant hogweed within 10 metres of watercourses, gullies or drains.



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