

## Poison Hemlock Control

Always wear protective clothing and gloves to prevent accidental exposure to the plant's toxic juices. Keep children away from poison hemlock.

**Mechanical:** Small patches of poison hemlock can be carefully dug up, making sure to remove the taproot. Do not cut or mow the plants, as they will only resprout. Dispose of plants in the trash.

**Chemical:** Herbicides containing glyphosate are readily available and can be very effective, especially for larger infestations. Always read and follow the label instructions before applying any herbicide product. The best time to spray poison hemlock is in the spring, when the plant is still young and the leaves are just a basal rosette, before it forms a stem and flowers. Don't apply herbicides to flowering plants because they can still set seed before they die. Check with your local county noxious weed board and the Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook <http://pnwhandbooks.org/weed/> for specific herbicide recommendations.

**Follow-up:** Monitor for and treat areas for seedlings and resprouts. Plant grasses and other desirable vegetation to help prevent further weed establishment at the site.

**Remember:** Toxins will remain potent in dried plant material. Never put pulled plants in the compost or leave them where children or livestock might eat them.



## Contact Us

If you have questions about poison hemlock control, identification or about other noxious weeds, we can help. Please contact us at:

**WA State Noxious Weed Control Board**  
P.O. Box 42560  
Olympia, WA 98504  
360-725-5764; noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov  
<http://www.nwcb.wa.gov>

Or contact your local county noxious weed control board:

### Noxious Weeds in Washington

"Noxious weed" means a plant that when established is highly destructive, competitive, or difficult to control by cultural or chemical practices. RCW 17.10.10

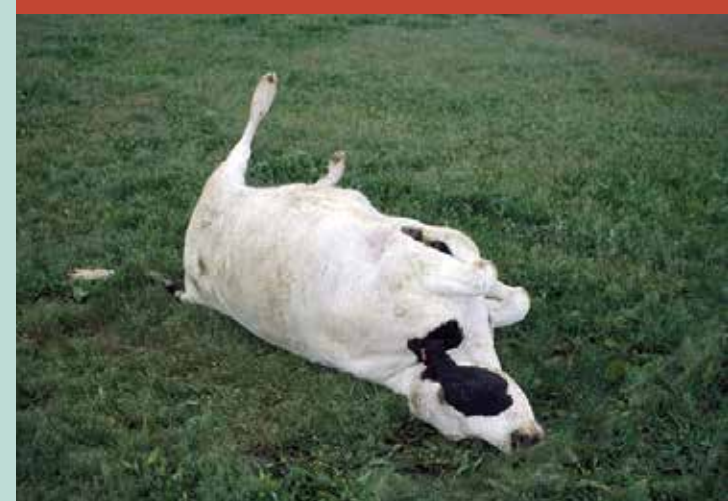
Noxious weeds can reduce crop yields, destroy native plant and animal habitat, damage recreational opportunities, clog waterways, lower land values, or can be poisonous or harmful to people and livestock.

Poison hemlock is a Class B noxious weed in Washington State. While control of this toxic plant is mandatory in many Washington counties, we strongly encourage all landowners to control poison hemlock. Check with your local county noxious weed control board or extension office to learn more about this and other toxic plants.



# Poison Hemlock

*Conium maculatum*



A deadly, toxic noxious weed in Washington

# Identification

Poison hemlock can be mistaken for many edible and ornamental members of the carrot family such as parsley, sweet cicely, parsnip, wild carrot, and anise that have similar-looking flowers, leaves, and seeds. It is critical to be able to identify poison hemlock to prevent accidental ingestion or exposure.

- Plants can grow very tall, reaching heights of eight feet.
- The hollow stem is smooth and hairless and has very distinctive purple blotches all over it.
- It has large, glossy green, finely divided, fern-like leaves that are smooth and hairless.
- Like many members of the carrot family, poison hemlock produces flat-topped flower arrangements consisting of small clusters of tiny, white, 5-petaled flowers.
- Compounds in poison hemlock give the entire plant – especially the leaves when crushed - an unpleasant odor that has been described as musky or resembling the smell of mouse urine.



Thurston County Weed Board

## A Toxic, Noxious Weed

Poison hemlock can be deadly toxic to both people and animals. It contains toxic alkaloids, including coniine and  $\gamma$ -conicein, which are found in all plant parts but is most concentrated in unripe seeds. These poisonous compounds affect the nervous system. Initial symptoms may include a burning sensation in the mouth, nausea, vomiting, confusion, respiratory depression, and muscle paralysis. Death, when it occurs, is usually rapid and is caused by respiratory paralysis.

**Ingestion of poison hemlock should be taken seriously and persons doing so should be taken to the emergency room.**

For further information about poison hemlock poisoning and symptoms, contact the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

## Where does it grow?

An aggressive invasive species, poison hemlock rapidly colonizes streambanks, vacant lots, roadsides, pastures, and meadows, especially where the soil is moist, outcompeting native plants and desirable forage species. It is found throughout Washington State.



## How does it spread?

Poison hemlock is a biennial plant, which means that it typically lives for two years. The first year it forms a basal rosette of leaves. The second year, it develops flowering stems and produces about a thousand seeds per plant. Seeds can be spread by human activities, animals, water, vehicles, or through the movement of soil.

