

	Health, Safety, Quality and Environmental Alert	Alert number: 019-14	Document Reference: RSS/F/HSQE/001
	Injurious Plants- Wild Parsnips	Issue Date: 18/06/14	Author: Steve Milroy

(To be posted on HSQE Notice Boards for a Period of 1 MONTH from date of issue)

Background

Wild parsnip typically grows a low, spindly rosette of leaves in the first year while the root develops. In the second year it flowers on a tall stalk and then dies. The plant can form dense growths and spreads quickly in disturbed areas such as abandoned yards, waste dumps, meadows, open fields, roadsides and railway embankments. Sap will be present all year, but increases in potency from spring to summer.

Effects of Wild Parsnip

Like giant hogweed, it produces sap containing chemicals that can cause human skin to react to sunlight, resulting in intense burns, rashes or blisters. Symptoms usually take 24-48 hours to develop, but could take longer. Mild exposure is similar to sunburn. Severe exposure causes skin to blister.



How to Identify Wild Parsnip

- Grows up to 1.5 metres tall
- The single green stem is two to five centimetres thick and smooth with few hairs
- Compound leaves are arranged in pairs, with sharply toothed leaflets
- Yellowish green flowers form umbrella-shaped clusters 10 to 20 cms across



Risk Controls

Avoid contact with the plant where possible, in particular the sap.

If you must work in an area where Wild Parsnip is present, wear PPE which covers any areas of skin that may come into contact with it (i.e. hands arms and legs).

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 the affected area with a cool, wet cloth
- If blisters appear, try not to rupture blisters as long as possible
- To avoid infection, keep the area clean and apply antiseptic cream
- If symptoms persist visit your GP



Never undertake an activity unless you have been trained, assessed as competent and have the right equipment