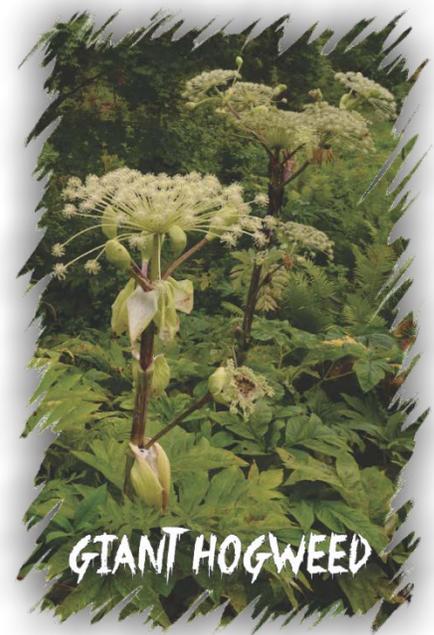


Release Date: Immediate

Open House – Bring The Kids!
**Giant Hogweed & Other
Dangerous Invaders**

Tuesday, June 27, 2017
Central Branch- Whitby Public Library
405 Dundas Street West
2:00pm to 7:00pm

“If it has three leaves let it be!” is a standard rule to remember how to recognize Poison Ivy that we all learned as kids. Unfortunately, Giant Hogweed and Wild Parsnip are new invaders in town that can spoil your summer if you come into contact with them. In response to these invasive aliens, the Town of Whitby and Central Lake Ontario Conservation are hosting an open house to raise awareness about these invasive plants. The open house will be held on Tuesday, June 27 at the Central Branch- Whitby Public Library, 405 Dundas West, Whitby from 2:00pm to 7:00pm. **Bring the kids as there will be interactive displays, identification guides, and colouring stations.**



“Giant Hogweed is an invasive alien plant originally imported from central Asia as a garden ornamental. The plant is extremely large, reaching heights of up to 5 metres,” says Maggie Stevenson, Invasive Species Technician with the Invading Species Awareness Program. The white, umbrella shaped flower heads appearing on the plant in July, can be up to 1 metre across. Giant Hogweed escaped the garden and is quickly colonizing natural areas in southern Ontario, pushing out native plant species as it spreads. “What makes this plant a dangerous invader is that it contains a sap in its leaves, stems, roots and flowers that is toxic to humans,” adds Maggie. When your skin comes into contact with the sap and is exposed to sunlight the result is phytophotodermatitis, a technical term to describe the severe blistering that results. The blisters can in some cases cause permanent scars.

Behind this not so friendly giant is a second alien plant invader with similar health risks, called Wild Parsnip. It too has made a recent appearance along trails and roadsides and is spreading rapidly in southern Ontario. Wild Parsnip, small by comparison to Giant Hogweed, can reach up to 2 metres in height and produces flat topped yellow flowers in July and August. It is more common than Giant Hogweed, and can easily come into contact with people and pets.

Both Giant Hogweed and Wild Parsnip have recently been declared Noxious Weeds by the Province of Ontario under the Weed Act.

Media Contact:

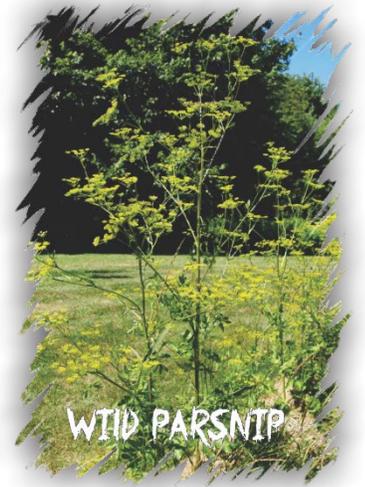
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Healthy watersheds for today and tomorrow.