

# Environmental Hazards – Wild Parsnip

## ***Safety Alert***

August 2017

### **Description:**

Wild Parsnip is a native plant species, from the same family as Giant Hogweed, with similar toxicity. It is more common than Giant Hogweed so the risk of exposure is relatively high.

Exposure to the sap can cause severe blistering once it is exposed to sunlight, and splashes to the eye can cause severe and lasting damage.

Effects are not usually immediate. They generally begin as slight itching or irritation, before developing into burning sensations and blistering caused by the reaction with sunlight. Therefore action should be taken as soon as possible after contact with the sap.

It is often seen growing near the safety barriers.



In full flower from May - August, it has a “dirty yellow/green” flower head and the plants are, typically, in the range of 600mm to 1200mm. It is rarely found in isolation but seems to colonise an area, with dozens or more in any one location.

It could be confused with Ragwort that is also in full flower at the moment, however, Ragwort has a “daisy-like” flower and it is a much brighter yellow.

### **Actions:**

- **Care should be taken to avoid skin contact with the sap.**
- **If the work to be carried out involves walking through, or working close to a colonisation i.e. hedge strimming or barrier repairs, the following precautions must be taken to protect the skin and eyes:**
  - **Wear goggles to prevent splashes to the eyes.**
  - **Wear gloves, long trousers and long sleeved shirts with the cuffs buttoned.**
- **In the event of accidental exposure:-**
  - **Wash the area immediately.**
  - **Cover the skin to prevent exposure to sunlight.**
  - **If blisters appear, try to prevent them bursting to reduce the risk of infection.**
  - **Seek medical attention and inform the Doctor that you have been exposed to Wild Parsnip sap.**

### **Further Information:**

For further information contact the National Health & Safety team on [NH&ST@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:NH&ST@highwaysengland.co.uk)