

Environmental Alert

Asset Delivery, September 2019

Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)

A pungent native species and the ancestor of the common vegetable.

Identification

Flowers: Small, yellow flowers form umbrella-shaped clusters 10 to 20 centimetres across.

Flowers June - August.

Stems: Ridged, hairy and hollow. Up to 2m tall.

Leaves: Green. Serrated edges. Arranged in symmetrical sets of at least five on a single stem.



Images of Wild Parsnip's, flowers, stems and leaves. *Photo credits: Left and centre: Paul Ruddoch on Naturespot.org.uk, Right: Invadingspecies.com*

Habitat

Grows on rough, dry and often calcareous grassland. This species is often noted in numbers near the safety barriers on the network and is widespread in central and southern England.

Health Hazard

Like Giant Hogweed, the sap of Wild Parsnip contains photo-sensitive chemicals known as furanocoumarins. These chemicals can make the skin hyper-sensitive to sunlight and cause a reaction known as phytophotodermatitis. This reaction can occur up to 48 hours after contact and is not dissimilar to a chemical burn where reddening, itching, blistering or burning can occur.

For further information please contact your local Environment Team on:

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Action

- DO NOT TOUCH this plant.
- If accidental contact is made with the plant's sap: wash the area immediately, cover the skin to prevent exposure to sunlight and seek medical advice if blistering occurs.



Severe blistering and burns caused by contact with Wild Parsnip sap. *Photo credit: SWNS.*