



Weed of the Month for June 2017

Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)

Origin: Eurasia

Interesting Fact: Wild Parsnip contains a compound that can cause severe rashes/burns, so do not touch this plant!

Description: Wild Parsnip is a biennial herbaceous plant in the carrot family that can grow up to 5 ft. tall. It has distinct clusters of yellow flowers that bloom in early summer and very large, divided, alternate leaves.

Defining characteristics:

- Large, alternate, compound leaves with large leaflets that have toothed edges
- Celery-like stem
- Clusters of yellow flowers (umbels)



(Left image) Wild Parsnip's clusters of yellow flowers

(Center image) The large, alternate leaves and stem of Wild Parsnip

(Right image) Basal leaves of Wild Parsnip before it bolts



Habitat: Found along wood edges, prairies, fallow fields, and roadsides.

A large patch of Wild Parsnip in the US 50 median.



Ecological threat: Wild Parsnip does very well in full sun conditions, bolting up before native plants and crowding them out. It is especially a problem in old fields and roadsides but could also pose a problem for young prairies.

Control Methods:

- Manual: Second year plants that have bolted can be controlled by severing their taproots with shovels or specialty tools like the Parsnip Predator™. Continuous mowing is also an effective control method.
- Chemical: Foliar application of herbicide to the leaves is effective, preferably before the plant has bolted (sent up a flowering stalk). Broadleaf specific herbicides or glyphosate can be used for foliar applications.

References

Howe, K., Renz, M., Kearns, K., Hillmer, J., and E. Jacquart. nd. *A Field Guide to Invasive Plants of the Midwest*. Midwest Invasive Plant Network. PDF.