

Weed of the Month for June 2016

Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)

Origin: Europe

Interesting Fact: Poison hemlock was used to kill Socrates in 399 B.C.

Description: Poison hemlock is a biennial herbaceous plant in the carrot family that can grow up to 8 ft. tall. All parts of poison hemlock are poisonous to all livestock and humans.

Defining characteristics:

- Purple spotted stems
- Large alternate compound leaves
- Small white flowers in umbrella-like clusters that bloom in early summer
- Big white taproot
- Crushed leaves and roots have a foul parsnip-like odor



(Left image) Poison hemlock's small white flowers

(Middle image) The purple spotted stem

(Right image) The large compound leaves

Habitat: Found mostly on moist soils, near roadsides, railroad tracks, ditches, stream banks, etc.

A roadside infestation
of Poison Hemlock near
Fox Ridge Nature Park.



Ecological threat: Poison hemlock is a pioneer species that can quickly colonize disturbed sites, and it displaces natives in early succession areas. It forms dense stands and grows tall, outcompeting natives for light and space.

Control Methods:

- Manual: hand-pulling, digging up or mowing multiple times close to the ground both at the beginning and end of summer (CAUTION: use gloves when pulling because it can cause a rash)
- Chemical: Using glyphosate or 2,4-D foliar spray, can treat plants before they bud with 2,4-D plus dicamba, possibly will need to apply more than once during the growing season

References

Kaufman, Sylvan R. and Wallace Kaufman. *Invasive Plants*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2012. Print.

SICIM. *Invasive Species: Wanted Dead Not Alive!* Print.