



Poison Hemlock

Conium maculatum L.

Common Names: poison hemlock, cigue maculae, deadly hemlock, poison parsley, cigue tachetee, poison fool's parsley

Native Origin: Europe; introduced to North America in the 1800's as a garden or ornamental plant

Description: A biennial herb in the carrot family (Apiaceae) that grows 3 to 8 feet tall. Stems are stout, hollow, ridged, and purple-spotted. Leaves are shiny green, 3 to 4 times pinnately compound, and clasp the stem at the obvious nodes. Crushed foliage and roots have a disagreeable, parsnip-like odor. Flowers are small, white, and borne in umbrella-shaped clusters about 3 inches across (appearing in early summer). It reproduces from seeds that are ridged and flattened, with 2 seeds borne together. It has a thick, white taproot that may easily be mistaken for wild parsnips.



Habitat: The plant grows on dry to moist soils and is often found near roadsides, field borders, hiking trails, railroad tracks, stream banks, irrigation ditches, waste areas, riparian woodlands and open floodplains of rivers and streams.



Distribution: This widespread species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map.

Ecological Impacts: All plant parts are poisonous; however, the seeds contain the highest concentration of poison. (It was probably used to poison Socrates.) It contains highly poisonous alkaloids toxic to all classes of livestock and humans. Human deaths have occurred from harvesting and consuming the roots as wild carrots or parsnips. It may act as a pioneer species quickly colonizing disturbed sites and displacing natives during early successional areas.

Control and Management: This plant requires active control measures to prevent dominance on a site.

- **Manual-** Hand-pulling, grubbing and/or multiple mowing close to the ground may eventually kill poison hemlock.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate, and 2,4-D. Treat plants before they begin to bud with 2,4-D plus dicamba. Repeat applications may be necessary to reduce densities. Follow label directions and state requirements.
- **Biological Control-**The European palearctic moth or commonly called hemlock moth (*Agonopterix alstroemeriana* C.) may offer possibilities for biological control. The larvae of the hemlock moth can cause severe defoliation by consuming leaves, young stem tissue, flowers and seeds.



Infestation

References: www.ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=9975, plants.usda.gov, www.invasive.org, www.oneplan.org/Crop/noxWeeds/nxWeed21.htm, www.vet.purdue.edu/depts/addl/toxic/plant28.htm, www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/conium.html, www.cbif.gc.ca/pls/pp/poison?p_x=px, www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt200013.html, tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/conimac.html