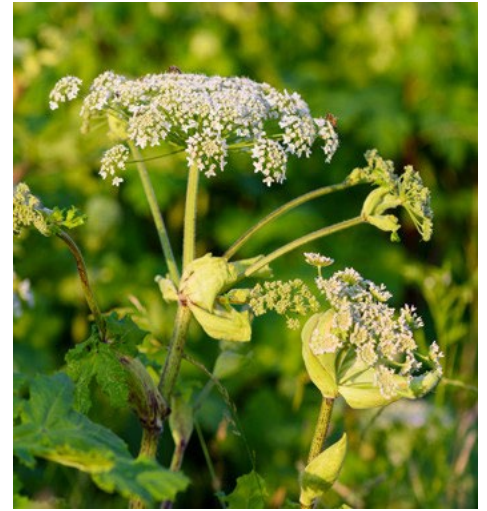


Accompanying Notes for Widely Spread Species Management Measures Questionnaire

giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)



N.B. Please consider the treatment measures you put in place on a site - specific basis. Following some best practice publications (Including the Invasive species Ireland publications) will not always achieve the desired results on your site. For example, those that recommend months and dates often haven't been adjusted to take climate change and local weather patterns into consideration.

N.B. the numbers in this document correspond to the same question numbers in the questionnaire.

- Please supply an estimated area of the **giant hogweed** infestation. If it can be detailed in number of plants, then it is acceptable to just state for example - there are < or > 13 **giant hogweed** plants at this location. If however there is a large area of plants at your location please try to estimate total in metres squared (m²).

If the infestation extends beyond your land ownership and you think that adjacent infestations are preventing you from eradicating at your location, please report other locations, anonymously if you wish, @ www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI

- The best method for demarcation of the infested area is to erect fencing, but sometimes just defining the area with coloured tape or sporadic signage can be adequate in areas of low footfall. To avoid further accidental spread and contact with the plant - you can download warning signage to mark your treatment area - <https://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/NIEA-Giant-Hogweed-A4-Poster.pdf>





7. Treatment methods

The Department will always encourage landowners to attempt to treat invasive plants without the use of herbicides wherever possible - Chemical treatment must only be considered as a last resort.

Points to consider before choosing your method:

- Is the site in a designated area ([web viewer is handy for checking](#)), this will limit available options.
- The use of herbicide will almost certainly be a notifiable operation and therefore need [‘consent’ from Conservation Designation & Protection \(CDP\) team in NIEA](#).
- If the location is not a protected/designated site, there is no requirement to notify NIEA of the use of herbicide (some outdated documents/websites state that there is a requirement).
- Please detail which method/s are being used on your site - you may have more than one - e.g. stem injection and weed wiping at either end of growing season
- Verify and provide details of the operative’s suitability for application i.e. if your location is adjacent to water, operative using herbicide must hold a PA6Aw certificate. They must at least hold a PA6 certificate for any herbicide application
- You must provide annual records of the amount of herbicide used on the site and at what dilution levels they were applied at. This will be especially important if your location is in or adjacent to a designated site or water body - it is a legal requirement (under COSHH (NI)) to keep records of all herbicide applications

Mechanical treatment

Mechanical control usually refers to the mowing, digging out or mechanical cutting of an invasive plant infestation to limit seed production. With mowing, timing is essential. Invasive plants must be removed before the plants go to seed in order to be an effective method of control. Plants should be cut as close to the ground as possible and may have to be treated more than once in a growing season to achieve desired results.

Benefits of mechanical control:

- Works well for areas that have favourable terrain that is accessible.
- Can be used in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Reduces seed production.
- **Giant hogweed** can be mechanically excavated if allowance is made for the extensive seed bank.



- Deep ploughing or tilling is a highly effective form of control. This technique both cuts through the taproot killing the plant and turns the soil over helping to bury the seeds at a depth which inhibits growth.
- Plant heads can be removed with long loppers and bagged up to prevent seed dispersal. This keeps operatives safe from burns provided they are wearing suitable protective clothing (see images).

Limitations of mechanical control:

- Plants must be cut before they flower and produce seed.
- May not be suitable in some environmentally sensitive areas.
- Not suitable for steep slopes or rocky, unstable terrain.
- Will not always kill plants, but will decrease seed production for that year.
- Perennial plants require several cuttings as they flower multiple times through the growing season.
- Plants need to be cut as close to the ground as possible.
- Non-target vegetation may be impacted.
- Must be done repeatedly to exhaust seed bank in the soil.

Suitable protective clothing



Manual Control

Manual invasive plant control refers to digging it out. Manual control works well for dealing with single plants or small infestations that can be eradicated with a small amount of labour. **Giant hogweed** can be manually controlled by tap rooting early in the season (see below).



Considerations for manual control of Giant Hogweed:

- The sap of **giant hogweed** contains a toxic chemical which sensitises the skin and leads to severe blistering when exposed to sunlight - this reaction can re-occur for many years every time the skin is exposed to sunlight.
- The degree of symptoms will vary between individuals with children being known to be particularly sensitive.
- Victims are unaware of the damage being done as touching the plant is painless.
- The cut material or sap on the skin remains active for several hours after cutting.
- Hand cutting should never be undertaken unless the operator is wearing full protective clothing to prevent skin contamination by the sap.

Giant hogweed tap rooting/cutting:

This method is ideal for a single plant or small infestations:

- Cut the taproot approx. 6 inches below ground level using a spade, shovel or anything with a large sharp edge.
- **N.B.** In areas with erosion or on steep inclines (where additional soil may be covering the plant base), plants may need to be cut up to ten inches below the soil.
- When cutting the root, you need to separate the thick stem base bearing old leaf scars from the root below.
- To prevent re-sprouting, the taproot should be severed below the caudex or root crown (where the stem becomes the root).
- If possible (for your safety), cut the plants before the leaves are very large.
- The cut part of the plants should be removed from the soil and left out to dry (safest for control person) or bagged and disposed of.
- If the plants do not die, cut them again when they regrow.
- When using the root-cutting method, another attack strategy is to apply herbicide to the cut root remaining in the soil to help ensure no part of the root grows back the following year.



Digging out / tap rooting giant hogweed



Photo credit: Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State.



Drawing: P. Leth, County of Vestsjælland, Denmark.



Photo credit: Scottish Invasive Species Initiative.

See the giant hogweed species account on Invasive Species Northern Ireland website for further details - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/speciesaccounts/established/terrestrial/giant-hogweed>

and: Site management resources - <https://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/download-resources/site-management-resources/giant-hogweed-management-resources/>

Benefits of manual control:

- Can be used in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Can be used to manage small patches or individual plants.

Limitations of manual control:

- Labour intensive - may require repeating in one season.
- Limited to small infestations.
- Plants must be dug out/cut before seeds are set.

Grazing control

- This type of control involves the use of livestock which consume invasive plant species as a control method.
- Recent studies have shown sheep to be particularly effective in the control and eradication of giant hogweed. Moreover, there appears to be no negative effects to the animals with regards welfare.



- Grazing control works well for dealing with young and immature plants.
- Larger plants that are unreachable by sheep will still need to be manually removed to ensure further seeds are not dispersed.
- The best way to approach this method is to start grazing low numbers of animals and work up as the grazing season continues to avoid over grazing.
- Sheep can always be left to graze for an extra few weeks at the end of the season to clear any remaining plants but ensure they are removed before they cause bare patches of land which are much harder to resolve.

Benefits of grazing control:

- Effective method for clearing large areas of infested land.
- Sheep will feed on everything from new saplings to plants up to 1.5m.
- Minimal time commitment required from land owner.
- Avoids adding unnecessary chemicals to the environment.
- Cheaper method of control.

Limitations of grazing control:

- Animals will sometimes need penned into an area of **giant hogweed** at the start of a grazing season until they develop a 'taste' for the plant.
- Too many sheep or leaving sheep too long on a patch of land can lead to over grazing. This will leave bare ground and potentially prime the land for further seeds to germinate.
- Larger plants that sheep are unable to reach will need cut down before going to seed.
- Annual inspections and periodic monitoring still required.
- Important to research which breed of livestock is best suited to the site - larger animals such as cattle may cause damage (poaching) and others may need fencing to encourage animals to graze on the desired target species.

For further information, please visit - <https://www.invasivespecies.scot/giant-hogweed-and-sheep-trial>



Chemical treatment

The Department will always encourage landowners to attempt to treat invasive plants without the use of herbicides wherever possible - Chemical treatment must only be considered as a last resort.

If a particular brand of herbicide is mentioned in the management measures, the land manager must have checked that it is approved for their planned use.

This can be done by accessing the HSE approved pesticides register - <https://secure.pesticides.gov.uk/pestreg/ProdSearch.asp>

As a government agency we cannot recommend a specific branded product, we can only recommend the generic type such as Glyphosate systemic based herbicides which are the most successful for dealing with invasive non-native plants and many are also approved for use near water.

- Herbicides can be applied by a variety of means including boom sprayers (tractor or quad mounted), weed wipers, back pack sprayers, hand lance, spot spraying and stem injection.
- Selection of herbicide should depend on other crops or plants on site, environmental considerations, and meeting your management measures objectives.
- Large infestations, infestations near water, or infestations on steep slopes may be too costly or too environmentally sensitive to control by chemical means. In these situations, it is important to look at other management measure options.

First, consider if the location is suitable for application of herbicides:

1. Is it on a designated site and have you got 'consent' from NIEA CDP team.
2. Are there any protected species on site that could be damaged by applying herbicides in a non- target manner.
3. Is it an adequate distance away from watercourses and ditches.
4. Is it away from existing amenity areas, lawns and gardens with large amount of footfall.
5. Is it free from disturbance by people or livestock.
6. Is it a suitable distance away from neighbouring properties.

Also, if chemical control leaves a site bare, it is important to detail, **before you apply an herbicide regime**, how you plan to re-vegetate the site so that control is achieved over the long-term (**see notes for point 15**).



Factors that can affect the effectiveness of herbicides include:

- Invasive plants are most susceptible to systemic herbicides, such as those that contain glyphosate, during its active growth stage, so timing of treatment is critical.
- Soils with high organic matter or clay content may require higher rates of chemical than sandy soils.
- Soil moisture and pH can also affect persistence and effectiveness of some herbicides.
- DAERA - Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Pesticides.

The '[DAERA - Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Pesticides](#)' is commonly referenced, although published in 2011, much of the document is still relevant and of use. However just note that, with regards spraying pesticides '*grandfather rights*' no longer exist & the document also states that **"Before you use any product approved for use in or near water (this is usually a herbicide used to remove plants in or around water) first contact the NI Environment Agency (NIEA) on 028 9263 3445."** As mentioned previously this is not the case anymore, there is no requirement to contact NIEA, unless it is in a designated site/ASSI/SAC etc. when you must get 'consent' from the [Conservation Designation & Protection \(CDP\) team](#).

Limitations of chemical control:

- **Giant hogweed** seeds can remain dormant in the soil for 15 years. Even if you treat the plants with herbicides and they die, several thousand seeds are waiting in the ground below for the opportunity to take their place - any control programme needs to continue for several years, including checks for new growth.
- When managing **giant hogweed** it is important to maintain a healthy grass sward, either by using selective herbicides or by sowing grass mixes - a dense grass sward helps to prevent **giant hogweed** seeds from germinating.
- Precautions need to be taken to limit the effects on surrounding non-target plants.
- Precautions must always be taken to avoid spraying or applying herbicides where pollinators are actively feeding, i.e. when plants are in flower.
- Limited use in environmentally sensitive areas or steep slopes.
- May have limitations on certain soil conditions or presence of water.
- Some concern from public/community groups and local councils about the use of glyphosate based products.
- Not always successful.



Spraying giant hogweed with herbicide:



Photo credit: Tom Richards - Wye and Usk.

10. On-site biosecurity

- Strict biosecurity measures must be put in place on treatment sites to ensure land owners/ contractors/ members of the public do not act as vectors in spreading invasive plant species.
- To reduce the spread of the invasive species, it may be necessary to set up cordoned off areas/ exclusion zones to stop people entering these areas whilst treatment is ongoing (example of appropriate signage shown in image below).
- Create an exclusion zone (should include a buffer zone if possible) - put up signs to make people aware, especially as **giant hogweed** poses a public health risk.
- Ensuring recreational (boats, boots, angling) and mechanical equipment is drained if operating in infested riparian locations and cleaned before leaving any infested water body CHECK CLEAN DRY - <https://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/what-can-i-do/check-clean-dry/>
- Restrict access and cordon off stands or infestations until treatment is complete.
- Thorough inspection and removal of contaminants by brushing is recommended for all tools and equipment used on site - this should include clothing and boots - if carrying-out management, check and clean any equipment, e.g. clean soil off spade.
- Ensure that soils from within infested areas are not spread to other areas, treat contaminated soils carefully.
- If manual removal has to take place after the plants have flowered/seeded, make sure plant heads are placed in bags and sealed off to prevent further seed dispersal when the plant head is cut off (see image below).





Plant head removal



Photo credit: Pete Kelly.

Example of appropriate signage



Photo credit: 70023VENUS2009/CC BY-ND.

15. Site restoration

This will depend on the site in question and what its main characteristics are - location, soil types, designation status etc.

- Many plant invasions can be reversed, halted or slowed, and in certain situations, even badly infested areas can be restored to healthy systems dominated by native species.
- An invasive plant control regime is best viewed as part of an overall restoration program - focus on what should be in place of the invasive plant species after removal, rather than simply eliminating the weed then thinking about what is to go in its place afterwards.
- This is especially important along riverbanks (riparian habitats) due to the potential erosion and bank instability that could be caused by removing the invasive plant species.
- Establishing a good sward of grass soon after treatment will help reduce the risk of re-colonisation of the same or other INNS - this can also help suppress regrowth of seedlings from the seedbank.
- When selecting control methods, keep in mind that the ultimate purpose of the work is to preserve native species, communities, and/or functioning ecosystems.
- Restoration management aims at restoring habitat functions and processes on sites disturbed by human activities - it requires that you replace the invasive non - native plants that have been removed with native plants which are able to provide the desired habitat structure and functions.
- It is recommended you consult a professional ecologist to assist selection and sourcing on native species to plant.
- Make sure all necessary precautions are taken to ensure that any topsoil brought onsite for restoration purposes is certified free from invasive plant species.



N.B. If you are unable to complete the questionnaire form electronically, the notes below correspond to the help text on the same numbered points on the form.

1. This number can be found on your original letter.
2. Name of species this incident refers to. This will be detailed on the letter you received.
3. Please see accompanying note 3.
6. Detail which method you have used to warn the public and exclude footfall from the site of infestation to avoid further spread or risk of injury in the case of **giant hogweed**. You can provide photographs if easier.
7. Please see accompanying notes 7.
9. If it is on a designated site you may already have consent to carry out works.
10. Strict biosecurity measures must be put in place to ensure land owners/ contractors/ members of the public do not act as vectors in spreading these invasive non-native species.

For further info - please see accompanying note 10.

12. WTN is the Waste Transfer Note. If wastes are being transported off site, ensure that they are appropriately transported by a licensed waste carrier, who is informed that the waste material contains an invasive species as part of the waste transfer documentation. It is advisable to contact the licensed landfill site in advance to ensure they will accept the waste material. Failure to inform the landfill site that the material contains an invasive species would be an offence under both wildlife and waste legislation.
13. How often each year will you be checking the site for signs of re-growth and for how many years will your monitoring continue? Detail/record who is carrying out the monitoring and how they are qualified to do so.
14. This will be dependent on size, maturity & growing conditions of the plants. You may need expert advice to answer this question.
15. Restoring the site with native species will prevent re-infestation and soil erosion. Please see accompanying note 15.