



Staying Safe Around Giant Hogweed

Giant hogweed toxicity: Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) contains a toxic sap in all plant parts which cause phytophotodermatitis; i.e., the sap prevents your skin from protecting itself from sunlight which leads to a very bad sunburn.

What happens to your skin: The reaction to the sap will get progressively worse over several days. About 24 hours after touching the sap the skin will become red, with an accumulation of fluid (oedema) under the affected part. Within 3 days, a strong inflammatory reaction will become evident, and about a week later the skin will become hyper-pigmented (unusual darkening of the skin), which can last for months. The affected skin may remain sensitive to ultraviolet light (i.e., sunlight) for years.

What to do if the sap contacts your skin: Wash the affected area with COLD water as soon as possible and go to the doctor. If sap goes into the eyes, rinse them with water, use sunglasses and seek medical advice immediately.

Working in Giant hogweed areas: personal safety

- Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at all times, including long gloves, long sleeved tops, long trousers, and stout boots.
- Eye protection is essential: the sap can cause blindness.
- Apply sun block before starting work.
- Do not touch bare skin with gloves that have been in contact with the sap.
- Wash hands with COLD water immediately on finishing work.
- Launder clothes that have been in contact with the sap as soon as possible after finishing work. Launder clothes separately from other clothing.

Working in Giant hogweed areas: general safety

- Ensure operatives are fully aware of the risks before starting work.
- Limit exposure to sunlight by working on dull, cloudy days.
- Do not work in proximity to other operatives as the sap can splash over a distance of 1 metre or more.
- Do not use a strimmer or brush cutter which can cause the sap to splash.
- Keep first aid facilities close to hand, including cold water, soap, and eye wash.
- Wear disposable over boots that can be put on and taken off at entry and exit to areas where Giant hogweed is growing to prevent dispersal of sap and seeds.