



Poison-hemlock

Conium maculatum

**Invasive
Plant
Alert**



One of the biggest threats to natural ecosystems in Saanich is the spread of invasive non-native plants. The District of Saanich appreciates the cooperation of all residents in removing knotweed from private property. For positive identification, please contact:

- On Private Land:**
Saanich Environmental Services:
250-475-5471 or plansec@saanich.ca.
- On Public Lands or Parks:**
Saanich Parks:
250-475-5522 or parks@saanich.ca.



Why is poison-hemlock a problem?

- **Caution:** All parts of poison-hemlock are extremely toxic to humans and animals and can cause serious illness or death if consumed. This is the famous plant that killed Socrates in 399BC.
- Introduced weedy species that establishes and spreads quickly.
- Out-competes native vegetation through aggressive growth, prolific seed production and preference for disturbed sites.
- Renders croplands worthless due to acute toxicity.
- Could be mistaken for edible plants in the same family (e.g. parsley).

What does it look like?

- Extensively branching plant 0.5-3m tall with thick hollow stems; distinctive purple blotches on hairless (smooth) stems.
- Bright green triangular leaves are finely-divided and fern-like with a strong musty odour.
- Small white flowers form a broad umbrella-shaped inflorescence to 0.5m across.



Also known as:

Deadly hemlock, poison parsley, poison stinkweed.

Could be confused with:

- Wild carrot or Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*): smaller plant, grows to about 1m and flowers later in summer
- Pacific hemlock-parsley (*Conioselinum pacificum*): smaller plant usually found in coastal habitats
- Other similar-looking members of the parsley family.

Look for: Smooth stems with purple blotches, musty odour, large size.

Invasive Plant Alert



Other resources

Invasive Plant Council of BC
Garry oak Ecosystems
Recovery Team
Coastal Invasive Plant
Committee
King County, WA Noxious
Weed Control Board

Distribution:

- Originally from Europe, now found across Canada.
- Most common in southwestern BC: lower mainland, southern Vancouver Is. and in the Kootenay, Okanagan and Cariboo regions.

Habitat and biology:

- Biennial plant in the Apiaceae (carrot or parsley) family.
- Forms a short leafy rosette in first year; the following spring develops a tall hollow stem and several clusters of flowers develop, usually April - July.
- Produces over 1000 seeds/plant; seed production continues into winter.
- Senesces and dies after seed production.
- Prefers moist soils in a sunny location, but tolerates shade and drier conditions; most common along ditches, ravines, road sides, fields, vacant lots, unmanaged yards and disturbed sites.

What should you do?

- **Caution:** All parts of this plant are poisonous. Use gloves and protective clothing when handling this plant. Wash all clothing and tools afterwards.
- **Manual removal** is recommended, taking caution to avoid skin contact with plant materials. For larger populations the priority action is to stop seed production. Cut flowering stems as close to the ground as possible. Young plants can be pulled by the root during the early spring when soil is moist. Mature plants should be dug up and removed.
- **Spread the word** about poison-hemlock and other invasive plants to your neighbours.

Proper Disposal

- The District of Saanich is in the process of developing options for disposal of invasive species. Please call Environmental Services or check the Saanich website for updates.
- A current option is to place all plant parts in garbage bags labelled "invasive species" and take to Hartland Landfill.
- DO NOT COMPOST! Buds and flowers can still form viable seeds after being dug up.

Who do you call?

Contact Saanich Environmental Services for positive identification and to learn about poison-hemlock and other invasive species removal efforts in your area.

Phone: 250-475-5471

E-mail: plansec@saanich.ca

Visit the Saanich website www.saanich.ca to learn more

Under the Noxious Weeds Bylaw No. 8080, the District of Saanich requires that all landowners remove from their property any noxious weeds and invasive vegetation that could spread and become a nuisance

