



## Noxious Weed Fact Bulletin

A partnership between Island County Noxious Weed Board & Whidbey Island Conservation District

### Poison Hemlock, *Conium maculatum*



Commonly found on Whidbey Island, Poison Hemlock, *Conium maculatum*, is a member of the carrot family, Apiaceae, in the Order Apiales. It's a Regulated Class B weed in Island County, meaning that it has been designated for control by the Island County Noxious Weed Control Board. Property owners are required to control all Class B weeds.

Leaves are shiny green, 3-4 times pinnately compound, and clasp the stem at the swollen nodes. Stems are stout, hollow, ridged, and purple-spotted. Poison Hemlock has a thick, white taproot that may easily be mistaken for wild parsnips. In Spring, it produces many umbrella-shaped flower clusters in an open and branching inflorescence.

Poison Hemlock contains highly poisonous alkaloids toxic to mammals. Human deaths have occurred from mistaking the roots for wild carrots or parsnips and consuming them. All parts of the plant are poisonous; however, the seeds contain the highest concentration of poison. Eating the plant is the main danger, but it is also toxic to the skin and respiratory system. When digging or mowing large amounts of poison-hemlock, it is best to wear gloves and a mask or take frequent breaks to avoid becoming ill.



*C. maculatum* quickly colonizes disturbed habitats such as roadsides, old fields, fencerows and ditches. It is native to Africa, temperate and tropical Asia and Europe. It is biennial, producing a rosette the first year, and a tall stem and flowers in the second year. It is best controlled by hand pulling, but for larger infestations, repeated mowing can be effective. If mowed too early in the season, it will regrow with a low, spreading habit. Repeated, **frequent** mowing can weaken plants and prevent seeding, and can be an effective control. It spreads by seed dispersal (each plant can produce over 40,000 seeds!) so it's a tough one to eradicate once it's established on your property.



This link to the King County website is also a good source of information:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/poison-hemlock.aspx>

Thanks for your interest in weeds, and as always, if you have more questions you can contact Janet Stein, Island County Noxious Weed Coordinator, at 678-7992, or at: [janet.stein@wsu.edu](mailto:janet.stein@wsu.edu).

For more information on Poison Hemlock, visit the Washington Noxious Weed Control Board website here:

<http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/detail.asp?weed=38>