

Pastinaca sativa, Wild Parsnip

Wild Parsnip is native to Europe. It is common in several different habitats including prairies, savannas, pastures/fields, meadows, roadsides, or vacant lots. This plant contains chemicals that may cause burn-like rashes on people which is triggered by contact with sunlight.

Description: This plant can grow to two to five feet tall. The leaves are alternate and oddly pinnate with about nine leaflets. The lower compound leaves can grow to 18 inches long and six inches across, while upper leaves are much smaller with short petioles. The individual leaflets are three to two inches in size, an elliptic shape, and oppositely arranged. These leaflets also typically have serration on the edges. The upper stem of the Wild Parsnip comes together to form a flat-topped, compound umbel of tiny yellow flowers.

Control: Small patches can be controlled through manual cutting of the roots (1 inch below the ground), or pulling of the plant from the ground (including roots). These methods should be conducted before wild parsnip produces seeds. If controlling the plants with seeds, cut the top of the plant with clippers and then bag the seeds in a clear plastic bag and allow them to rot.

Look-alikes: Wild Parsnip may be confused with other plants in the Carrot family. The umbel is the most distinctive feature.

Flower Time and Description: Each plant can produce hundreds of small yellow flowers, blooming from June to mid-July. These umbels may reach up to 8 inches across, with a flat top. The individual flowers are quite small with five yellow petals.

