GIANT HOGWEED

Heracleum mantegazzianum

May 2017

BEWARE: TOXIC SAP

KEY INFORMATION

Preferred Habitat: Edge of streams and rivers, on moist fertile soils.

Wandle Distribution:

Croydon	Sutton	Merton	Wandsworth
☐	X	X	X

Recommended Control: Mattocking

Other Options: Foliar spraying, removal of buds, stem injection

Biosecurity: Avoid treatment once the plant has gone to seed. Always clean all equipment and PPE worn on site before leaving – Check Clean Dry.

EARLY DETECTION, RAPID RESPONSE

Wandle Strategy: Tackle all known stands of GHW each year before individual plants set seed.

SPECIES INFORMATION

Origin: Caucasus Mountains of Europe & Asia.

Biology: GHW spreads by seed and can be both insect-pollinated or self-pollinated. A single plant produces between 20,000 to 100,000 seeds, the majority of which will be dispersed within a 4 m radius from the parent plant. Once GHW bears fruits and sets seed it dies.

Seeds can persist and survive in the soil for up to 2 years. Following a period of cold and wet conditions, the seeds germinate at high densities.

Dense stands can quickly be formed from a single plant that is permitted to run to seed, and therefore early detection and rapid response is key.

Long distance dispersal is facilitated by water along a river, or by man which is why biosecurity is a must.

GHW is a perennial species with a rosette stage. If damaged GHW can persist in a rosette stage for three to five years due to stored reserves in its roots.

IMPACTS ON THE WANDLE

WARNING: RISK TO HUMAN HEALTH

GHW poses a significant risk to human health, producing a toxic sap which can cause "***phytophotodermatis***", when affected skin is exposed to sunlight, causing severe skin blistering, equivalent to third degree burns.

Due to this risk to human health, GHW lowers the recreational value of the landscape.

At high densities, GHW can suppress and dominate native vegetation by shading out smaller plants.

In winter, GHW dies back leaving bare soil exposed and at risk of erosion. This contributes to bank instability and increased sediment input to the river. In slow moving waters, this silt will accumulate and smother the river bed, rendering the habitat unsuitable for fish spawning.

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RECOMMENDED CONTROL: MICRO MATTOCKING

Equipment: Full PPE, micro mattock

Qualifications: None. *Training in using a mattock to remove this plant is recommended.*

PPE: Gloves, coveralls, waders/wellingtons and face shield.

Time of Year: March – April, while the plants are in their rosette stage.

Micro-mattocking should be used early in the growing season when the plants are < 1 m high and in the rosette stage.

Method:

The plant produces a toxic sap. Always wear full PPE when working with this plant.

Remove the plant without damaging the stem by digging down alongside the roots with the mattock. Sever the root far below the union of the stem and roots (right) this point must be removed intact.

It is important to dispose of removed biomass carefully, preventing members of the public coming into contact with it. The best method is to double bag, seal and remove biomass from site to be incinerated.

Always wash & rinse all equipment and PPE after use as the toxic sap can be transferred on to exposed skin days/weeks later.

OTHER CONTROL OPTIONS

FOLIAR SPRAY: When plants are taller than 1 m, or occurring at high densities

STEM INJECTION: When plants are taller than 1 m and growing at low densities or in locations where mattocking is not possible.

REMOVAL OF BUDS AND FLOWER HEADS: If low numbers of plants are discovered late in the season, inflorescence removal by cutting off the stems with buds on in early June is advised to prevent the plant running to seed.

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