



## GIANT HOGWEED MUNICIPAL WORKSHOP

Conservation Halton Administration Office, Burlington Ontario  
April 23, 2010, 9:00 to 12:00

### Summary

#### 1) Welcome and Introductions

Robert Edmondson  
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#### 2) Giant Hogweed Overview (*PowerPoint Presentation*)

Brenda Van Ryswyk  
Natural Heritage Ecologist  
Conservation Halton  
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Brenda Van Ryswyk provided an overview of Giant Hogweed and public health issues associated with this species. Giant Hogweed is an introduced, invasive species which was originally from Eurasia, from the area straddling Western Asia and Eastern Europe. It was introduced into North America as a garden ornamental. This species spreads easily and can soon become out of control. It was first reported in Ontario in 1949 and has been in the Conservation Halton watershed for approximately 15 to 20 years.

The plant is a biennial from the carrot family and can live for several years. Once it flowers and bears fruit, it dies. It prefers full sun and moist, well-drained soil but has also been found growing in the shade. It is a very large impressive plant which exceeds 2 metres in height at maturity. It has large, deeply incised, sharp-lobed leaves. The plant is identified by its large height (>2 metres), stiff, hollow stems with purple mottling and a ring of stiff hairs at the leaf joints. Multiple flowering heads occur at the top of a tall flower stalk. Each flowering head is approximately 30 cm in diameter. The seeds are oval and flattened, 6-10 mm in length with prominent large, dark veins.

The plant has spread primarily by humans as an ornamental garden plant. It is also dispersed by water, allowing the establishment of the plant in floodplains along creeks. Wind and animals may also account for some dispersal.

Giant Hogweed is a public health threat, causing photo-dermatitis. Contact with sap makes skin photosensitive resulting in painful blisters. It is also a threat to biodiversity, with the giant hogweed shading and out-competing the surrounding native species.

Conservation Halton is tracking invasive species, including Giant Hogweed in our watershed. Staff are also members of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council and participate on two subcommittees, Communications and Horticultural Outreach. In 2009, the Conservation Halton Board of Directors passed a recommendation to work with partners to address the issue of Giant Hogweed. It was felt that working together we could better understand the species and its distribution in our watershed, share information and provide common messaging to the public,

and coordinate future control efforts. There is also a need to educate the nursery and greenhouse industry on the hazards of invasive species and Giant Hogweed. Consideration should be given by the Province to update the Weed Control Act to include Giant Hogweed as a noxious weed.

### **3) Local Experience - Town of Oakville**

Peter Williams  
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Peter Williams, Williams and Associates, has undertaken Giant Hogweed control efforts on behalf of the Town of Oakville in 2009 and 2010. He described his experiences dealing with this species.

#### **Various mechanisms to control (eradicate or reduce)**

There are number of control options which have been used to control Giant Hogweed. One method is to fence it off and graze it, disking also works effectively. With a small population, digging it up works best, but not if you have more than a few plants. If there is more, the seeds will disperse readily. Other than mowing, ploughing, livestock grazing, the only other way to effectively control Giant Hogweed is with herbicides - Round-Up or other broad-leaved herbicides. He has had experience using Milestone (<http://www.dowagro.com/range/products/milestone.htm>). He uses 75ml in a backpack and sprays only the foliage of the plant. He recommends to not spray the ground and avoid overspray as you do not want to kill the other vegetation. Wet it until it drips off. He prefers to mix stronger and apply less. Herbicide is taken up in the foliage. Check regulations for setbacks from watercourses. Peter described the spraying he conducted in mid summer 2009 in the Sixteen Mile Creek in Oakville. He said it took 3-4 days with limited effectiveness. This year he plans to do an early and late treatment and feels that they can accomplish more when the plants are smaller in size, possibly doing the whole channel in one day. He estimated that 2 treatments would be approximately 4-6 person days. Milestone costs approximately \$700 to \$1000 for ten litres.

If digging out the plants or cutting seed heads, it was recommended that the material be disposed of in a black garbage bag and left in the sun for three weeks to kill the seeds. Burning was not recommended because of the potential exposure to the sap in the smoke.

#### **Competitive Plant Advantage**

If you are trying to eliminate the Giant Hogweed population, it is important to ensure that other vegetation is in place to stabilize the soil and prevent new seedlings from becoming established, after the Giant Hogweed is removed.

#### **Public Safety Challenges**

Public use areas should be identified and controlled in regards to the public safety risk. Signage isn't enough, one needs to show due diligence for liability reasons. In public areas, do not cut or mow because of sap exposure. Do not use volunteers for control programs. Protective gear: rubber suits (sap can seep through cloth), eye protection, foot protection, etc. are recommended.

#### **Control Strategy**

Upstream seeds dispersal is an issue – headwater infestations should be tackled to reduce the seed dispersal downstream. To effectively eradicate the population, one needs to complete a persistent 5-6 year program. If you let it flower and seed, this only extends the issue and eradication timeline. As the Giant Hogweed becomes better established it forms a multi-layered canopy. Given the stand composition of Giant Hogweed, the multiple layers can be difficult to eradicate.

### **Timing**

The best time to control with herbicides is late April to late May, given that there is less competition from other vegetation and the Giant Hogweed leaves are small (Note that this is dependent on proper identification to ensure that the correct species is removed). Fall treatment is also effective, but it is difficult to re-establish other vegetation after herbicide treatment since it is nearer the end of the growing season. It is recommended that a multi-season approach: a spring and fall application, 2-3 times in the first year and 2 times in the following year to set it back and get it under control. A mid-summer herbicide application is not recommended because of the heat (in combination with protective gear) and competing vegetation. For smaller populations, removal of the flower heads may provide some control. However, it is best to wait until the flowers are well developed so they do not produce another flowering stalk. The best time for digging up the plants is in the spring and repeat for successive years.

## **4) Legislative Approach, Common Messaging and Outreach (*PowerPoint Presentation*)**

Brenda Axon  
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Brenda Axon provided a presentation describing the legislative approach to dealing with Giant Hogweed and common messaging and outreach opportunities. In Canada there is no federal or provincial legislation which prohibits bringing Giant Hogweed into Canada or that designates it as a noxious weed. However, the United States has designated Giant Hogweed under the Federal *Noxious Weeds Act* (1974). This legislation requires that it must be reported and controlled when found and prohibits the importation or interstate movement on this species.

The *Weed Control Act* of Ontario was enacted to reduce the infestation of noxious weeds that negatively impact agriculture and horticulture, reduce plant diseases by eliminating plant disease hosts, and reduce health hazards to livestock caused by poisonous plants. It requires that all property owners are responsible for destroying noxious weeds on their property unless it has been deemed by a weed inspector that it is far enough away from land used for agricultural or horticultural purposes. If a property owner fails to comply with the Act, a Weed Inspector may have the weeds destroyed and charge the costs against the land in taxes. In Ontario, 23 weeds are considered noxious under the *Weed Control Act*. These species have been designated as noxious because they could negatively impact agriculture or horticulture. Currently the list does not include Giant Hogweed. There has been a recent movement to have it added to the provincial noxious weeds list. A resolution was passed by Huron-Kinloss Township which encouraged other municipalities to pass similar resolutions encouraging the province to take action. Halton Hills, Milton and Mississauga all endorsed the Huron-Kinloss Township resolution. The difficulty has been that Giant Hogweed has not been typically regarded as a threat to agriculture and therefore there has been reluctance to consider it as a noxious weed.

As an alternative, the Weed Control Act allows municipalities, with an appointed weed inspector, to pass a local by-law designating any plant as a local weed. Halton Hills has included Giant Hogweed as a 'Nuisance Weed' under their Community Standards By-law. This by-law requires that every landowner shall destroy and remove all Nuisance Weeds and weed seed on their lands (farmland and natural areas are excluded). 'Nuisance Weed' is defined as any of the weeds in listed in a schedule of the by-law, including poison ivy, ragweed, thistles or any other plant that may cause allergic reactions or health problems for individuals. The by-law also requires that every property including vacant lands and agricultural lands outside the urban boundaries as defined in the Town's Official Plan shall be kept free of Noxious Weeds pursuant to the *Weed Control Act*.

Milton has a Property Standards By-law which requires that heavy undergrowth, noxious weeds and locally designated weeds under the Weed Control Act shall be eliminated from a yard or agricultural lands. However, they do not have a list of locally designated weeds.

*[Addendum: The Town of Milton has noted that although Giant Hogweed is not expressly mentioned in the Property Standards By-law, the by-law can deal with Giant Hogweed under s. 5.1.1(c) which requires owners to maintain their yards in a suitable condition free from hazards and that the owner shall remove any hazardous condition or substance that may create a health hazard.]*

Burlington has a Nuisance Weed and Tall Grass Control By-law. This by-law includes a list of Nuisance Weeds, however, Giant Hogweed is not included on the list. The by-law requires that grass and weeds be cut when they exceed 30 cm. Therefore, there are no legislative controls for Giant Hogweed in Burlington.

The *Cosmetic Pesticide Ban Act* regulates the use of pesticides across Ontario and bans the sale of pesticides for cosmetic purposes. The Act allows pesticides to be used to control plants that pose health and safety risks when touched, such as Poison Ivy and Giant Hogweed.

Conservation Halton has been taking steps to increase public awareness of the risks associated with Giant Hogweed, both from a health hazard perspective and to prevent further introductions and range expansion. Staff have prepared a Giant Hogweed Fact Sheet, articles in our Focus magazine which is distributed to 100,000 homes, and website information. Staff have also been working with landowners to assist in identification and recommend removal strategies. Staff are also working with OMAFRA to research the effectiveness of various control measures using Scotch Block as a test site.

In conclusion, it is recommended that the province be petitioned to include Giant Hogweed on the Noxious Weed List and to prohibit the import and sale of invasive species such as Giant Hogweed. Municipalities are encouraged to consider listing Giant Hogweed as a nuisance weed or locally designated weed with supporting by-laws for its control. It is also recommended that Conservation Halton work with the local and regional municipalities and Health Units in drafting strategies for the control of Giant Hogweed. Conservation Halton plans to work with OMAFRA to research suitable control measures for Giant Hogweed at Scotch Block. It is recognized that while total eradication is unlikely, range expansions can be prevented by strategic management and public education.

## **5) Distribution of Giant Hogweed**

A map showing the distribution of Giant Hogweed in the Conservation Halton watershed was presented and discussion followed regarding additional sites where it is known to occur. Currently the species is primarily found within the Sixteen Mile Creek watershed, with only a few locations where it has been found in Bronte Creek (see attached distribution map).

## **6) Partner Experience – Round Table Discussion**

### **Town of Milton**

- Combination of roads and parks. Ditch lines were sprayed last year. Road allowance as well. Uncertain which chemical was used.
- Parks department working on isolated patches found within parks by digging.
- Planning and development – Working on new phase and secondary plan on Sixteen Mile Creek – south of new bridge at Louis St. Laurent. Concerned about a grove of Giant Hogweed in the floodplain and land coming into public ownership.
- Suggestion was made to include Giant Hogweed eradication in the conditions of development approval or as part of the EA process as well as property standards by-law.
- There is a concern for natural areas along watercourses. It was noted that there is nothing in the *Conservation Authorities Act* to regulate this issue.

### **Town of Oakville**

- Through the parks by-law process working on town lands
- Town used to deal with nuisance species with a weed inspector but this program is not active anymore
- Have been posting safety alerts along Sixteen Mile Creek to make the residents aware

### **Halton Hills**

- Parks – Staff attending have had no dealings with the new by-law this year.

### **Region of Halton**

- No previous control experience.
- Working with Town of Oakville on collaborative control program on Sixteen Mile Creek property

### **City of Burlington**

- Have had a few phone calls from the public over the last few years
- If Giant Hogweed found on city property, using Round-Up for control.
- Working with landowner on Lakeshore road allowance with intentionally planted population. Landowner convinced it was Cow Parsnip. After several meetings, landowner was in agreement with removal.
- Building Department deals with private property issues. Not present at meeting.
- Weed inspector deals with vegetation height restrictions.

### **City of Mississauga**

- Previous efforts of cutting seed heads, digging, and cutting it down in previous years. This year potential spot spraying program will commence, but populations in the Credit River valley are too large and extensive. Digging has not worked well.
- There is a need to put together list of focal areas to concentrate on and implement an education signage program to encourage the public to stay on the trails.

### **Royal Botanical Gardens**

- Applied herbicide in 2004 in one location and another in Valley Brook (harvested seed heads). Planned to apply herbicide (not able to this year) and will be digging them up and removing flowering stalks. Another small population located in Cootes Paradise north shore property (Hickory Valley).

### **Region of Halton Health Department**

- Receiving sporadic calls
- Looking to communicate with communities with common messaging
- Looking to discuss with health community to educate on signs and symptoms for proper diagnosis (i.e. Local walk-in clinic practitioners were not aware of the plant when a CH field staff member reacted to Giant Hogweed)

### **Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority**

- Confirmed 5 populations, all on private lands/road allowances
- Three of these are located in ditches along road allowances. The Region of Durham has been spraying them in the last 2 years
- One large population is located on private land and landowner contact has yielded a negative interest in controlling the spread. Land is on developable lands.
- Durham Health Department has been educating physicians on signs and symptoms.

## **6) General Discussion on Current Efforts Related to Giant Hogweed – All**

- By-Laws
- Education, Common Messaging
- Coordinated Control Measures
- Nursery Outreach

- Landowner Outreach
- Monitoring and Tracking Giant
- Hogweed Distribution
- Joint Funding Programs (i.e. Federal Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program)
  - Take a coordinated control approach, where practical, both from a resource and financial standpoint. Need to recognize that eradication is unlikely, but control is possible.
  - Coordination is needed on a watershed level, i.e. lower reaches of the Sixteen Mile Creek in Oakville and northern reaches in the Town of Milton and Halton Hills.
  - OMAFRA is interested in using Scotch Block (CH Lands, Sixteen Mile Creek) to test herbicide applications to determine the most effective means of eradicating it.
  - The herbicide Milestone has been used for many years in Wellington County with success. Further case studies/examples will add further credibility to this method.
  - Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee – Encourage council to adopt it on an invasive species/nuisance species list
  - Encourage councils to adopt a resolution similar to that of Halton Hills, Milton and Mississauga requesting that the province add Giant Hogweed to the Noxious Weeds list.
  - Opportunity for coordinated approach on signage and education
  - In addition to the formation of a committee, sending notice to clerks and municipalities would be beneficial.
  - Conservation Halton will coordinate mapping and inventory of populations. New populations can be reported using an online reporting form on the Conservation Halton website.
  - Funding identified as a barrier/issue. Conservation Halton, in conjunction with the Town of Milton, applied to the Federal Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program in 2009 and was turned down. Conservation Halton staff are considering applying again this year, however, it is uncertain if the program will run this year. To date there is no closing date for applications.
  - Horticultural Industry
    - Support provincial approach to horticultural nursery program through the Horticultural Outreach Program Sub-committee of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC) [www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca](http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca)
    - Provide alternative species to stock/grow.
  - Media – suggest article for the Landscape Ontario (based out of Milton)
  - Benefits of Giant Hogweed – fairly limited but it does provide a food source for pollinators, attractive plant
  - Other suggested stakeholders - EEAC, different department representation from each municipality, local horticultural industry, OMAFRA

## 7) Next Steps

- Distribute Workshop Summary to Partners
- Form a Giant Hogweed Committee with representation from municipal partners and organizations to develop a coordinated strategy for the control of Giant Hogweed, including common messaging and outreach
- Encourage OMAFRA to select a control test site in Conservation Halton's jurisdiction, preferably at Scotch Block reservoir located in the headwaters of the Sixteen Mile Creek
- Conservation Halton staff will continue to track the distribution of Giant Hogweed within the Conservation Halton watershed. Workshop attendees are encouraged to submit information regarding locations where this species has been recently encountered via the Conservation Authority website.
- Encourage municipalities to consider listing Giant Hogweed as a nuisance weed or locally designated weed with supporting by-laws requiring its control.
- Continued outreach to the public and horticultural industry. Municipalities are welcome to use the Conservation Halton's Factsheet. Media releases will continue to be produced.