

Wild Parsnip Recommendation: Digging

Digging with a shovel is recommended for removing small infestations of wild parsnip. The best times for removing the plant are right after a rain when the ground is soft or during a drought when the taproot shrinks. This can be an effective control if done before the plant has gone to seed. This technique is easiest in moist soil and during the spring when the taproot is a manageable size. In addition to removing wild parsnip with a shovel, you can sever the tap root with a hoe or a sharp object 2.5 to 5 cm below the soil. However, this method is subject to error. As a result, it is necessary to return to the site every few weeks to check for re-sprouts and missed plants.

Following removal, wild parsnip plants may be spread out on the ground to dry. Place the plants in a black garbage bag and dispose of the bags with household garbage. **Do not compost** if the plant has already gone to seed. If the removed plant has seeds, place the plant in a black garbage bag and let it sit in the sun for at least a week. Dispose of the bags with household garbage.

After the wild parsnip infestation is controlled, rehabilitate the site by planting native species that will out-compete the wild parsnip seedlings and prevent re-infestation.

CAUTION

When controlling wild parsnip, ALWAYS wear protective clothing, including waterproof gloves, long sleeve shirts, long pants, rubber boots, and eye protection. Ideally, wear disposable “spray suit” coveralls over normal clothing (spray suits are commercial grade waterproof coveralls). Tape coveralls at the wrist to minimize potential skin exposure to the sap. Remove protective clothing carefully to minimize sap exposure and wash clothing thoroughly.

More information about the health effects of wild parsnip is available at <https://healthunit.org/health-information/home-health-safety/dangerous-weeds/>