

Wild Parsnip Recommendation: Mowing

Mowing is recommended for controlling larger wild parsnip infestations. Poorly timed mowing can disperse seeds. The best mowing time depends on flowering and seed production. **Do not mow** if the plant has gone to seed. To prevent further seed dispersal, **mow in June** when the umbel starts to flower. As a general rule, do not mow anytime seed production has begun; normally seed production will start in mid-July. If mowing is completed when the umbel starts to flower, one or two mows may be effective. However, **weekly** mowing will also suppress the infestation.

Be aware that mowing can also allow sunlight to reach the wild parsnip rosettes that are lower than the mower blades, prompting rapid growth. Cut plants will likely re-sprout after mowing, so it may be necessary to repeat mowing and/or combine mowing with other control methods, such as tarping. Mowing should be repeated for several seasons to be effective. After the wild parsnip infestation is controlled, rehabilitate the site by planting native species that will out-compete the seedlings and prevent re-infestation.

CAUTION

Care must be taken when mowing to prevent the transfer of sap onto equipment and people. Wear protective clothing, including waterproof gloves, long sleeve shirts and 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.

Mowers and any other equipment used should be thoroughly cleaned after use on wild parsnip to prevent the spread of seeds and the sap (See: Clean Equipment Protocol for Industry available at <http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/index.php/municipalities>). Take caution after mowing, as mown plants are not as noticeable as full grown plants. Fresh mowed stems and new growth can be a hazard for people walking barefoot as they may not be visible or recognizable.

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