

## *Gardeners Beware of Poison Hemlock*

As the weeds continue to grow at the Mahaffey home place, I have started working on the task of identification. It is important to know what you are seeing, especially if you want to use a chemical spray to control or kill a specific weed.

In an OSUE Buckeye Yard and Garden Line newsletter, Joe Boggs (Hamilton County OSUE) shared some important information about Poison Hemlock, (*Conium maculatum*) a non-native weed that is among the deadliest plants in North America. This biennial weed spends its first year as a basal rosette and the second year as an erect, towering flowering plant that can measure 6 – 10 feet tall. Despite its common name, Poison Hemlock is not a tree; it is member of the carrot family, Apiaceae (formerly Umbelliferae).

It is important to remember that all parts of this plant are poisonous to both animals and humans. Use caution when managing this plant! While Poison Hemlock can be partially managed by mowing and tilling, the most effective control approach involves properly timed applications of selective or non-selective post-emergent herbicides including glyphosate. It is a prolific seed producer, so applications of herbicides made now will control both the first season rosette stage and the second season flowering stage, before seeds are produced.

Proper disposal of the plant residue is key to prevent injury to people and animals. Bag or burn large amounts of Poison Hemlock. Proper disposal of residue when cleaning equipment is required to prevent spreading this invasive weed.

The plant contains highly toxic piperidine alkaloid compounds, including coniine and gammaconiceine, which cause respiratory failure and death when ingested by mammals. The roots are more toxic than the leaves and stems; however, all parts of the plant including the seeds should be considered dangerous. Unfortunately, this dangerous toxic plant is becoming more common throughout Ohio including growth in landscape plantings where close proximity to people increases poisoning risks.

A native of Europe, Poison Hemlock was introduced to North America as a garden/ornamental plant. It may be confused with wild carrot (Queen Anne's lace) or wild cow parsnip, both of which have white umbrella-shape flower clusters. Wild carrot has a hairy stem, while cow parsnip has a ribbed stem. Neither have the **purple spotting on the stems** that is characteristic of **Poison Hemlock**.

Poison Hemlock has serious infestations along many roadsides and is invading adjacent private property. Highway personnel and private landowners must become aware of this problem and learn to identify and control this highly invasive species.

Poison Hemlock reproduces only by seeds. One plant can produce 30,000 seeds that remain viable for 3 to 6 years! Fortunately, the seeds do not have wide spreading capability and remain in the infestation area. They can be carried by animals, water, wind, and equipment and vehicles. Along roadways, mowing and utility equipment are a sure means of seed dispersion.

For additional information: Purdue University Extension Invasive Plant Series:

(<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/fnr/fnr-437-w.pdf>), Midwest Invasive Plant Network (MIPN)

Invasive Plant Control Database: <http://mipncontroldatabase.wisc.edu/Default.aspx>, or What's Invasive! Android or iPhone app.

Tune in on **Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.** to view **The Southern Ohio Farm Show**, a new program offered by the OSUE Extension offices from Brown, Clermont, and Highland Counties. The program will include a market update, weather forecast, and each episode will include a feature topic. The Southern Ohio Farm Show will be broadcasted through Zoom. Register for the free program at <https://go.osu.edu/thesouthernohiofarmshowregistration>.

Have you been enjoying the roller coaster weather? Here's hoping we have seen the last of the frost warnings! I have been working the areas closest to the house and almost have the weeds eliminated from the garden beds I see every day when I walk to the mailbox! The herbs are planted in the pots on the deck (that have been covered with sheets a few nights because of frost warnings), and I have a pot full of lettuce and Swiss chard that sits right by the patio door. I clipped some greens for a salad this morning and hope to sauté the Swiss chard for lunch tomorrow. What have you been harvesting from your garden?