



Stewarton Woodlands Action Trust (SWAT)

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GIANT HOGWEED

Giant Hogweed is a highly invasive, non-native, toxic weed. Its sap, which is found in all parts of the plant, can injure humans and pets, including causing serious blisters, skin burns and even blindness. Skin burns can last for several months and, even once they've gone, the skin can remain sensitised to sunlight for years to come.

Around Stewarton, Giant Hogweed is primarily found near watercourses such as the Clerkland Burn and Annick Water. However, seed dispersal has resulted in it spreading further afield in some locations. **Landowners have a legal responsibility to ensure that Giant Hogweed is kept under control, so it does not spread beyond their borders.**

Each plant can produce tens of thousands of seeds that remain viable for up to fifteen years. This is why it is so invasive, and treatment is needed annually during the April to June growing season before seeds are released. Fully-grown, Giant Hogweed is typically 2-4 metres tall, with large white clusters of flowers up to 80 cm across. Its leaves are very large and sharply divided and can be over 1 metre across. The stems are green with purple blotches and covered with bristly hairs.



Giant Hogweed - early growth. Photo © Derek Harper



Seed-head forming - Photo © Robin Stott



In flower - Photo © Derek Harper

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For further details about Giant Hogweed in Scotland please see the NatureScot website at <https://www.nature.scot/scots-warned-dangers-giant-hogweed> and one of NatureScot's initiatives at <https://www.invasivespecies.scot/giant-hogweed>

Other invasive plant species that SWAT helps to manage locally are Japanese Knotweed (in mid to late September) and, in Lainshaw Woods, Rhododendron Ponticum. If you are located in or around Stewarton and concerned about **Giant Hogweed** or other non-native, invasive plant species encroaching on your property, please feel free to contact SWAT using the details provided above.

Formed in 2004, SWAT is an environmental organization that is run by local volunteers. Our team includes several members who are trained and qualified to work with approved herbicides near watercourses using stem-injection equipment, leaf wipers and knapsack spot-sprayers while wearing full PPE.

As a registered charity, SWAT relies on donations to carry out its work.