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Noxious Weed – Wild Parsnip

Wild Parsnip was added to the State Noxious Weed List on March 10, 2010. It was listed as a Prohibited Noxious Weed and added to the Control List – “Prohibited noxious weeds that are listed to be controlled are plants that are established throughout Minnesota or regions of the state. Species on this list must be controlled, meaning efforts must be made to destroy all propagating parts and prevent seed maturation and dispersal, thereby reducing established populations and preventing reproduction and spread as required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 18.78. Additionally, transportation without a permit, propagation, or sale of these plants is prohibited.”

Wild parsnip populations are currently concentrated in the southern and eastern areas of Todd County. It is not widespread in Todd County and we would like to prevent it from spreading further.

Since most people don't know anything about wild parsnip, I am providing some information about the plant, its dangers, and ideas on ways to control it.

Wild parsnip has many five-petaled yellow flowers that form in flat-topped umbels at the end of stems. The plant grows 4 to 6 feet tall and reproduces by seed. It typically blooms from late May – June. It spends several years in the rosette stage, then bolts, blooms and dies. It is highly invasive and can out compete native vegetation. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to five years.

Wild parsnip is toxic to humans if the skin comes in contact with the plant's sap. The sap contains chemicals that are activated by sunlight and can cause serious burns and blisters. Avoid skin and eye contact with this sap. I recommend educating children about this plant and discouraging them from touching the plant.

If you need to work with the plant:

- Wear clothing that covers your arms and legs.
- Wash clothes that come in contact with the sap.
- Work with the plant on cloudy days, and always wash your skin immediately after coming in contact with the sap.
- If you are using string trimmers or power mowers in areas where this plant grows, wear eye/face protection, in addition to long pants, long sleeves, and gloves.

If you get sap on your skin:

- Wash the skin thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Protect the exposed skin from sunlight for at least 48 hours.
- If you experience a skin reaction, call your physician.

There are several control and management methods for wild parsnip, but it will take a commitment of several years of consistent efforts to decrease the plant population and keep it from becoming a serious problem.

- Small patches of wild parsnip can be weeded by using a shovel to sever the tap root 1 – 2 inches below ground level **prior** to seeding. Hand pulling of wild parsnip is **NOT** recommended due to the hazards resulting from skin exposure to the plant's sap. **Gloves and protective clothing should be worn to prevent absorption of toxins through the skin.**
 - Cut plants can be collected and burned or composted on site.
- Mowing can be done when wild parsnip plants are first flowering – usually late May or early June.
 - You will need to repeat mowing throughout the summer to cut newly bolted plants and any re-sprouts.
 - Mowing will need to be done on an infestation for several years until the seed bank is exhausted.
 - Wash all equipment after mowing to prevent transporting wild parsnip seeds to other areas.
- Herbicide application has been successful against wild parsnip. Please follow all label directions, or hire a state certified herbicide applicator to perform chemical applications. Do not cut sprayed plants for at least 2 weeks after herbicide application to allow for chemical translocation to the roots.
 - Perform herbicide application during early spring on rosettes or newly bolted plants, and/or in the late fall to rosettes.
 - As with mowing, herbicide treatment will need to be done on an infestation for several years until the seed bank is exhausted.
 - Becker County has been experimenting with various chemicals and have good results with the following chemicals:
 - 1 oz/acre Escort (Metsulfuron) + surfactant,
 - .5 oz/acre Telar (Chlorsulfuron) + .5 oz/acre Escort (Metsulfuron) + surfactant,
 - 5 oz/acre Milestone (Aminopyralid) + .5 oz/acre Escort (Metsulfuron) + surfactant,
 - 5 oz/acre Milestone (Aminopyralid) + .5 oz/acre Telar (Chlorsulfuron) + surfactant.There is now a generic available for Escort.

