

# Poisonous Plants of Washington State



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**

**PREPARED BY**  
WSDOT  
Environmental Services Office  
January 16, 2019



**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information:** This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equal Opportunity at [wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov) or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA(4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.

**Title VI Notice to Public:** It is the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). For additional information regarding Title VI complaint procedures and/or information regarding our non-discrimination obligations, please contact OEO's Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7090.

## Table of contents

Introduction	1
Three types of plant irritation	2
Recommendations	3
carrot family ( <i>Apiaceae</i> )	4
common cowparsnip ( <i>Heracleum maximum</i> )	6
giant hogweed ( <i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i> )	8
poison hemlock ( <i>Conium maculatum</i> )	10
western water hemlock ( <i>Cicuta douglasii</i> )	12
wild parsnip ( <i>Pastinaca sativa</i> )	14
buttercups ( <i>Ranunculus</i> spp.)	16
climbing nightshade ( <i>Solanum dulcamara</i> )	18
English ivy ( <i>Hedera helix</i> )	20
poison ivy ( <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> )	22
poison oak ( <i>Toxicodendron diversilobium</i> )	24
spurges ( <i>Euphorbia</i> spp.)	26
stinging nettle ( <i>Urtica dioica</i> )	28
black locust ( <i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> )	30
devil's club ( <i>Oplopanax horridus</i> )	32
non-native blackberries ( <i>Rubus</i> spp.)	34
black hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus douglasii</i> )	36
oneseed hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> )	38
roses ( <i>Rosa</i> spp.)	40
References	42

## Introduction

### HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

Each page of this guide discusses poisonous or harmful plants across Washington State. Species are grouped with similar looking species and then occur in alphabetical order by common name. Use this guide as a field reference. It can be kept in vehicles or field gear for easy reference.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTIONS

Each plant species includes the following information: where it occurs in Washington State, its habitat, a species description meant for identification at arms-length, potential symptoms if encountered, and actions to take following exposure.

### LIMITATIONS

This guide provides information on commonly encountered poisonous and harmful plants in Washington State, however, it is not a complete guide. Other harmful plants may occur in the landscape. Many plants may be poisonous if ingested. This guide focuses on risks associated with topical skin encounters for people working or recreating outdoors. It does not cover poisonous plants in relation to culinary use, edible purposes, or medicinal use.

Reaction descriptions and treatment recommendations in this booklet provide generalized information and do not replace professional medical advice. **CALL 911 OR POISON CONTROL 1-800-222-1222** and seek immediate medical services for severe reactions to poisonous plant exposure, or if you are uncertain of the severity of the exposed individual.

## Three types of plant irritation

There are three general ways plants can cause skin irritations (contact dermatitis):



**CHEMICAL IRRITATION:** chemical compounds are absorbed directly into skin, including in winter months when plants appear dormant or are harder to identify without leaves, flowers, or fruits (e.g. poison oak/poison ivy).



**LIGHT SENSITIVITY:** oils or sap from some plants can cause skin irritations that increase greatly in severity when exposed to sunlight (e.g. many plants in the carrot family). This is called phototoxicity or photoirritation.



**MECHANICAL INJURY:** plants with sharp features that may puncture the skin, with some introducing toxins (e.g. nettles, devil's club).

Note: Initial exposure to a plant may not produce a reaction. Symptoms can occur following subsequent exposures, even when prior exposure to the same plant did not produce a reaction.

## Recommendations

Wear protective clothing including long sleeve shirts and pants, gloves, and protective eyewear. Always wash hands before eating or touching your face, eyes, mouth, or genitals. If clothing is exposed to poisonous plant oils, wash clothing separately in hot water with detergent, including boots and boot laces.

### MEDICAL ATTENTION/FIRST AID

If exposed to harmful plants, wash hands and affected areas as soon as possible with plenty of oil-removing soap or detergent and cool water, then blot dry with a clean towel. Over the counter products such as calamine lotion, topical steroids such as hydrocortisone cream, or oral antihistamines such as Benadryl may be used, and in most cases may be all that is needed for some reactions. If a rash worsens, blisters develop, swelling occurs, eyes are affected, or any allergic reactions occur such as difficulty breathing or hives, promptly seek professional medical help.

Tecnu makes several useful products that can help with removing plant oils as well as treatment of rashes from poisonous plant materials. Tecnu Original: Outdoor Skin Cleanser may help with prevention by removing oils, and Tecnu Calagel may help with treatment by relieving itch and pain. Consider carrying these products in your first aid kit.

## carrot family (Apiaceae)

Many species in the carrot family are poisonous and can cause severe skin reactions when oils or sap are encountered, and even death if ingested. It can be difficult to tell the difference between potentially harmless species and harmful species, so it is best to avoid contact with plants in this family.



**LOCATION:** Can be found in both eastern and western Washington in a range of habitats.

**HABITAT:** Includes weedy, disturbed, or urban areas, ditches, roadsides, riparian areas, wetlands, and forests.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

All parts of some plants in this family can be poisonous, including: roots, stem, leaves, flowers, seeds, oils from plant. Some species are extremely toxic and can cause death, while some species in this family have milder toxins. Some people may react, while others will not experience any reaction. Symptoms can occur during subsequent exposure, even when prior exposure to the same plant did not produce a reaction.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**FLOWERS:** Flower shape is called an umbel and resembles an umbrella with stalks holding up a flat top or convex head of smaller flowers. Flowers are typically white to pale pink or purple, sometimes yellow. Flowers have five petals

**STEMS:** Stems often hollow, may have purple spots, streaks, or tint.

### SYMPTOMS & TREATMENT

Oils or sap from some species in the carrot family cause mild to extremely severe skin rashes which increase in severity when combined with exposure to sunlight.

This is called *phototoxicity* or *photoirritation* and may result in:

- Itching, burning, blisters or rash
- Severe skin inflammation
- Temporary or permanent skin discoloration or scarring
- In eye, can lead to temporary or permanent blindness

Some plants in this family, if ingested, can lead to death.

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATION

Avoid contact with all members of the carrot family if unsure of species identification.



## common cowparsnip (*Heracleum maximum*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed native plant found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Moist areas at low to mid-elevations, in stream banks, wooded areas, wetlands, ditches, and roadsides.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Sap is poisonous and is present in all portions of the plant. Phototoxic.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** June to August, in its 2nd year, 1st year only basal leaves present

**FLOWERS:** flat-topped umbel (umbrella shape) with many small white flowers

**LEAVES:** large and lobed (maple leaf shaped), along stem and at base, leaf base enlarged

**STEMS:** robust, hollow, grooved, single stem, sometimes purple spotted, fine white hairs

**HEIGHT:** 3 to 10 feet

### SYMPTOMS

- Oils from plant are phototoxic making symptoms worse when exposed to sunlight
- Rash
- Skin blistering
- Skin discoloration

### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- May cover with cool cloth to reduce swelling
- Do not expose affected area to sunlight
- Should resolve on its own without treatment
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions
- If eyes are exposed rinse with cool water and wear sunglasses, seek medical attention



## giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)



**LOCATION:** Introduced plant, occurring in western Washington.

**HABITAT:** This is a horticultural, non-native plant, most commonly found in disturbed sites near residential areas, including ditches, roadsides, and vacant lots. Establishes in moist soil and can invade riparian areas and wetlands.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Sap is extremely poisonous, is present in all parts of the plant, and more highly concentrated on lower part of the stem, on white hairs on the plant, and in flowers and seeds. Phototoxic.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May through July, in its 2nd or 3rd year, 1st year only basal leaves present

**FLOWERS:** convex umbel (umbrella shaped) with many small white flowers

**LEAVES:** extremely large, up to 5 feet across, deeply lobed, along stem and at base

**STEMS:** robust, ridged, hollow, with purple spots or streaks, and prominent white hairs

**HEIGHT:** extremely large plant, 8 to 15 feet

### SYMPTOMS

- Oils from plant are phototoxic making symptoms worse when exposed to sunlight
- Severe rash and burns
- Painful blistering
- Scarring
- Long term sensitivity to sunlight

### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- Do not expose affected area to sunlight
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions
- If eyes are exposed, rinse with cool water and wear sunglasses, seek medical attention



Photo by kevsexotics (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

## poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, introduced plant, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Disturbed areas with moist soils, including ditches, beaches, wetlands, riparian areas, waste places, urban areas, and farmland.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Sap is poisonous and is present in all portions of the plant.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May to August, in its 2nd year, 1st year only basal leaves present

**FLOWERS:** umbel (umbrella shape) with many small white flowers

**LEAVES:** large, dissected (lacy/fern-like), leaf base enlarged, and only on the stem

**STEMS:** hollow, branched, ridged, purple spotted or streaked, hairless

**HEIGHT:** 6 to 8 feet

### SYMPTOMS & TREATMENT

Extremely poisonous if ingested, even in small amounts, and can result in fatality. Seek immediate medical attention if ingested or if eyes are exposed.

Absorption of the toxin found in this plant occurs through the skin as well as intestinally. Avoid handling this plant and seek immediate medical attention if any symptoms develop after exposure.

#### SYMPTOMS

- Early symptoms may include nausea, stomachache, confusion, weakness, dizziness, drowsiness, and vomiting
- Skin irritation including redness, swelling, or blisters, burning sensation, numbness

#### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- If eyes are exposed rinse with cool water
- Seek immediate medical attention if any symptoms occur after exposure to this plant



## western water hemlock (*Cicuta douglasii*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native plant, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low to moderate elevations, in wetlands or areas with moist soils, including streams, ditches, and wet pastures.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

All parts of the plant are poisonous, with higher concentrations of the toxic compounds in roots and stem bases.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** June to August, in its 2nd year, 1st year only basal leaves present

**FLOWERS:** umbel (umbrella shape) with many small white to greenish flowers

**LEAVES:** dissected, sharply pointed and toothed, along stem and at base

**STEMS:** solitary or a few together, hollow, may be purple tinged, hairless, thickened at base

**HEIGHT:** 2 to 6 feet

### SYMPTOMS & TREATMENT

Extremely poisonous if ingested, even in small amounts, and can result in fatality. Seek immediate medical attention if ingested or if eyes are exposed.

Absorption of the toxin found in this plant occurs through the skin as well as intestinally. Avoid handling this plant and seek immediate medical attention if any symptoms develop after exposure.

#### SYMPTOMS

- Early symptoms may include seizure, nausea, vomiting, muscle twitch, increased pulse, excessive salivation or frothing at the mouth, and dilation of the pupils

#### TREATMENT

- Seek immediate medical attention if any symptoms occur after exposure to this plant



## wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)



**LOCATION:** Scattered locations throughout the Pacific Northwest, introduced plant, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Disturbed areas including ditches and roadsides, prefers drier soils.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Sap is poisonous and is present in all portions of the plant. Phototoxic.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May to July, in its 2nd year, 1st year only basal leaves present

**FLOWERS:** umbel (umbrella shape), with unequal length flowering stalks, and many small yellow flowers

**LEAVES:** coarse, dissected into leaflets, toothed or lobed, along stem and at base, getting smaller farther up the stem

**STEMS:** grooved, hollow, may be purple tinged, hairless

**HEIGHT:** 1 to 3 feet

### SYMPTOMS

- Oils from plant are phototoxic making symptoms worse when exposed to sunlight
- Severe rash and burns
- Painful blistering
- Skin discoloration

### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- Do not expose affected area to sunlight
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions
- If eyes are exposed rinse with cool water and wear sunglasses, seek medical attention



Photo by Victor M. Vicente Selvas (Public domain), from Wikimedia Commons

## buttercups (*Ranunculus* spp.)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native and introduced plants, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Occurs in a variety of habitats, including cultivated varieties in residential landscapes. Common habitats include moist woods, meadows, open fields, wetlands, riparian areas, as well as drier sites like roadsides and urban areas.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Sap is poisonous and is present in all portions of the plant.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** generally in spring

**FLOWERS:** generally with 5 yellow petals (sometimes white or red tinged), either occurring singly or in loose clusters. Some species have other flower characteristics

**LEAVES:** usually simple, lobed, or dissected

**STEMS:** erect or creeping

**HEIGHT:** various, but generally not much taller than 4 feet

### SYMPTOMS

Some people may experience allergic skin reaction to sap including:

- Red rash
- Blisters
- Burning sensation

### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions



## climbing nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, introduced plant, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low elevations, in disturbed areas, roadsides, forests, moist clearings, riparian areas, and wetlands.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

All parts are poisonous if ingested. Some people may experience mild skin irritation, to more severe rash, when contacting the foliage.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May through September

**FLOWERS:** clusters of purple and yellow flowers. 5 purple petals curled backwards towards the stem, with bright yellow anthers protruding out of the petals

**FRUITS:** clusters of drooping egg-shaped berries, mostly red, sometimes orange, yellow, or green

**LEAVES:** variable, pointed tip, some with heart-shaped base, others with lobes, or with one or two leaf appendages at base

**STEMS:** climbing, sprawling, semi-woody, sometimes covering other vegetation

**HEIGHT:** variable depending if it is sprawling or climbing on other vegetation

### SYMPTOMS

- Highly toxic if ingested
- Some people may have skin reactions such as rash or blisters if skin comes in contact with the plant

### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions



Photo by Mary Ellen (Mel) Harte, Bugwood.org



## English ivy (*Hedera helix*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, introduced plant, primarily found in western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low elevations in forests, disturbed areas, and near residences.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Sap from leaves or stems. Sap from crushed or broken stems can cause a rash. Just brushing against the leaves will not cause a reaction for most people.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May to June

**FLOWERS:** clusters of many small greenish-cream flowers

**FRUITS:** dark purplish/black round fruits

**LEAVES:** evergreen, waxy/leathery, broadly triangular shaped with lobes or wavy leaf edges

**STEMS:** woody vines, creating a sprawling groundcover or vining up other vegetation, some stems may become very thick and woody when climbing up trees

**HEIGHT:** varies depending on growth habit

### SYMPTOMS

- Some people may experience allergic skin reaction including itching or weepy blisters after exposure to sap in the leaves

### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions



## poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native plant, primarily found in eastern Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low elevations and foothills, in open forests and forest edges, riparian areas, and disturbed areas.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Leaves, stems, and roots of the plant contain poisonous oils, including the stems when leaves have fallen off in the fall, winter, and early spring prior to leaf emergence.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** April to July

**FLOWERS:** many small greenish-cream flowers

**FRUITS:** small white berries with greenish or yellowish tinge, in drooping clusters

**LEAVES:** three leaflets (“leaves of three, let it be”), leaf edges usually smooth or may be lobed, may be shiny or glossy, young leaves often rust-colored or red, turning yellow or red in the fall before falling off

**STEMS:** the plant has various growth habits with woody stems forming shrubby thickets, vining up trees, or establishing as a groundcover, stems can be reddish in color

**HEIGHT:** varies depending on growth habit



### SYMPTOMS

- Red rash
- Swelling
- Itching
- Bumps, patches, streaking, or weeping blisters
- Itching occurs within 5 to 24 hours after exposure, and swelling and blistering occurs within 48 hours
- A prior exposure may not produce a reaction, while a subsequent exposure may result in a mild to severe reaction



### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap (detergent/dish soap that cuts oils) and cold water, or Technu Skin Cleanser
- Scrub under nails with brush
- May cover affected areas with cool cloth
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions
- Seek medical attention for severe reactions including exposure to eyes or mouth, rash on face or genitals, swelling, difficulty breathing, or if a severe reaction has occurred in the past
- Oils from the plant can be easily transferred between clothing, footwear and shoe laces, tools, pet fur, or between your own body parts. Take care to wash all exposed items or discard them



## poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobium*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native plant, primarily found in western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low elevations, in open forests and forest edges, flood plains, wooded edges and cliffs of Puget Sound and Salish Sea shorelines, riparian areas, and disturbed areas.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Leaves, stems, and roots of the plant contain poisonous oils, including the stems when leaves have fallen off in the fall, winter, and early spring prior to leaf emergence.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** April to July

**FLOWERS:** many small greenish-cream flowers

**FRUITS:** small yellow berries in drooping clusters

**LEAVES:** three leaflets (“leaves of three, let it be”), leaf edges may be lobed (like an oak leaf), wavy, or toothed, often shiny or glossy, young leaves often rust-colored or red, turning yellow or red in the fall before falling off

**STEMS:** the plant has various growth habits with woody stems forming shrubby thickets, vining up trees, or establishing as a groundcover, stems can be reddish in color

**HEIGHT:** varies depending on growth habit



### SYMPTOMS

- Red rash
- Swelling
- Itching
- Bumps, patches, streaking, or weeping blisters
- Itching occurs within 5 to 24 hours after exposure, and swelling and blistering occurs within 48 hours
- A prior exposure may not produce a reaction, while a subsequent exposure may result in a mild to severe reaction



### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap (detergent/dish soap that cuts oils) and cold water, or Technu Skin Cleanser
- Scrub under nails with brush
- May cover affected areas with cool cloth
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions
- Seek medical attention for severe reactions including exposure to eyes or mouth, rash on face or genitals, swelling, difficulty breathing, or if a severe reaction has occurred in the past
- Oils from the plant can be easily transferred between clothing, footwear and shoe laces, tools, pet fur, or between your own body parts. Take care to wash all exposed items or discard them



## spurges (*Euphorbia* spp.)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native and introduced plants, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** A variety of habitats including disturbed sites. Many spurges are escaped from cultivation.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Milky sap or latex found in broken stems or leaves. Phototoxic.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

There are many species of spurges and characteristics are variable. Often they have a cluster of small flowers, with larger leaf like structures directly below the flower cluster which may be showy compared to the small flowers. The Christmas plant, Poinsettia, is a spurge.

### SYMPTOMS

- Milky juice from plant is phototoxic making symptoms worse when exposed to sunlight
- Skin irritations, with severity varying from person to person
- Eye irritation, with burning sensation and blurred vision

### TREATMENT

- Wash affected area with generous amounts of soap and cold water
- Do not expose affected area to sunlight
- If eyes are exposed rinse with cool water and wear sunglasses, seek medical attention
- Over the counter medications can be used to treat symptoms
- Steroids can be prescribed for severe reactions



## stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native plant, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low to sub-alpine elevations, found in diverse habitats including moist soils in shady forests, mountains slopes, and in sagebrush.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Stinging hairs on leaves and stems. Tips of hairs puncture skin and deliver stinging liquid.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May through September

**FLOWERS:** small, inconspicuous clusters of drooping flowers

**LEAVES:** heart-shaped with coarsely serrated edges (like saw teeth)

**STEMS:** erect and square sided

**HEIGHT:** 3 to 8 feet

### SYMPTOMS

- Small red, raised stinging bumps or hives occur immediately after contact, resembling mosquito bites
- After initial sting, bumps can become itchy
- Stinging, redness, and bumps are temporary and generally clear up within a relatively short time after exposure

### TREATMENT

- Upon initial contact, try to avoid touching the exposed area for about 10 minutes to avoid pushing the plant compound deeper into the body. This allows the plant oil to dry on the skin. After plant oils dry, the skin can be washed with soap and cool water
- A cool wet compress may be applied to relieve lingering discomfort
- In most individuals the reaction is very minor and treatment is not necessary
- In rare cases, some people may have a more severe allergic reaction, and should seek immediate medical attention if difficulty breathing or swelling in the mouth is experienced, or other signs of severe reaction such as nausea, stomach cramps, vomiting, or diarrhea occur



Photo by brewbooks (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Photo by Richard New Forest (CC BY-SA 3.0)



THORNY PLANTS TO AVOID

**black locust** (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, introduced tree, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Often near residences, disturbed areas, and along river banks.

**POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT**

Thorns on stems.

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION**

**BLOOMS:** May to June

**FLOWERS:** clusters of drooping, white pea flowers

**FRUITS:** flattened, brown pea pods

**LEAVES:** many oval-shaped leaflets, resembling the shape of garden pea leaves

**STEMS:** woody trees with thick fissured silvery/gray or brown bark

**HEIGHT:** can reach over 80 feet



THORNY PLANTS TO AVOID

## devil's club (*Oplopanax horridus*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native plant, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low to mid elevations, in moist forests, riparian areas, drainages, wetlands, and ditches.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Thorns on stems and leaves.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May to July

**FLOWERS:** flowering stalks with clusters of small, greenish-white, inconspicuous flowers

**FRUITS:** bright red clusters, on erect to drooping stalks above leaves

**LEAVES:** large, lobed (maple leaf shaped), with prickles on under side along veins, and stalks attaching leaves to stem

**STEMS:** woody, erect, tan, with dense thorns

**HEIGHT:** 3 to 9 feet tall

### TREATMENT

- immediately remove the prickles with tweezers
- wash affected areas of skin carefully with soap and water
- apply over the counter anti-inflammatory cream if rash occurs
- If a rash worsens or other symptoms develop seek medical attention
- If prickles become stuck in the eyes, flush with copious amounts of water and seek medical attention



THORNY PLANTS TO AVOID

**non-native blackberries (*Rubus* spp.)**



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, introduced, thicket forming bushes, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Common in many habitats including disturbed areas, waste places, forest edges, and roadsides.

**POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT**

Thorns on stems.

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION**

**BLOOMS:** May to June

**FLOWERS:** five petals, white to pink tinged

**FRUITS:** red to dark purple/black berries

**LEAVES:** several to five, large rounded or toothed leaflets

**STEMS:** woody arching canes with thorns, may be red or green

**HEIGHT:** up to 15 feet



THORNY PLANTS TO AVOID

## black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native shrub or small tree, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low to mid elevations in moist or dry areas.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Thorns on stems.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May to June

**FLOWERS:** five white petals in clusters

**FRUITS:** deep red to dark purple/black berries in drooping clusters

**LEAVES:** simple with toothed tips, waxy/leathery

**STEMS:** single to multi stemmed small trees or shrubs, with long thorns along younger stems

**HEIGHT:** up to 20 feet



Photo by Nadiatalent (Public domain), from Wikimedia Commons

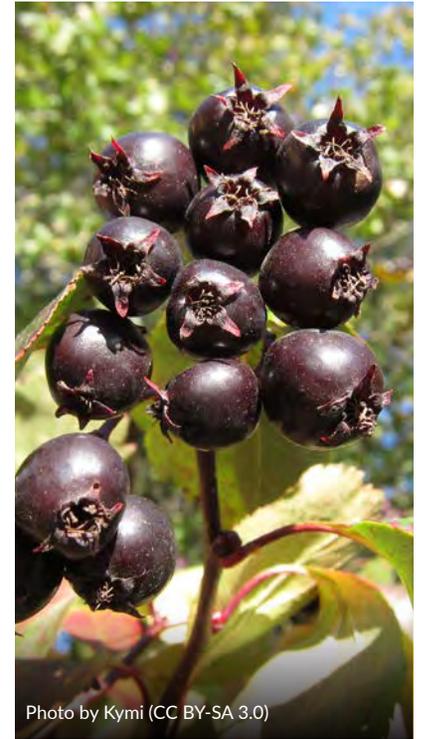


Photo by Kymi (CC BY-SA 3.0)



Photo by Dave Powell, USDA Forest Service (retired), Bugwood.org (CC BY 3.0 US)



Photo by Matt Lavin from Bozeman, Montana (CC BY-SA 2.0)

THORNY PLANTS TO AVOID

## oneseed hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, introduced shrub or small tree, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Low to mid elevations in moist or dry areas.

### POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Thorns on stems.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May to June

**FLOWERS:** five white petals in clusters

**FRUITS:** bright to deep red in drooping clusters

**LEAVES:** lobed and toothed, shiny/waxy

**STEMS:** single to multi-stemmed small trees or shrubs, with long thorns along younger stems

**HEIGHT:** up to 40 feet



THORNY PLANTS TO AVOID

roses (*Rosa* spp.)



**LOCATION:** Widely distributed, native and introduced, thicket forming bushes, found in both eastern and western Washington.

**HABITAT:** Common in many habitats including forests and riparian areas.

POISONOUS OR HARMFUL PORTION OF PLANT

Thorns on stems.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION

**BLOOMS:** May to July

**FLOWERS:** five petals, usually light to dark pink

**FRUITS:** red drooping fruits

**LEAVES:** several to many toothed leaflets

**STEMS:** woody arching canes with thorns, may be red, green, or brown

**HEIGHT:** up to 15 feet



Photo by Krzysztof Ziarek, Kenraiz (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Photo by Walter Siegmund (CC BY-SA 3.0)

## References:

- Giblin, D, Legler, B (eds.). 2003+. WTU Image Collection Web Site: Vascular Plants, MacroFungi, & Lichenized Fungi of Washington State. University of Washington Herbarium. Accessed 26 Dec 2018. Available at: <http://biology.burke.washington.edu/herbarium/imagecollection.php>.
- Hitchcock, L., Cronquist, A., Edited by Giblin, D. et. al. 2018. Flora of the Pacific Northwest. Second Edition. Seattle, Washington. University of Washington Press.
- MacKinnon, A, Pojar, J, & Alaback, P. B. 1994. Plants of the Pacific Northwest coast: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia & Alaska. Vancouver, British Columbia: Lone Pine Publishing.
- Turner, M, Gustafson, P. 2006. Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest. Portland, Oregon. Timber Press.

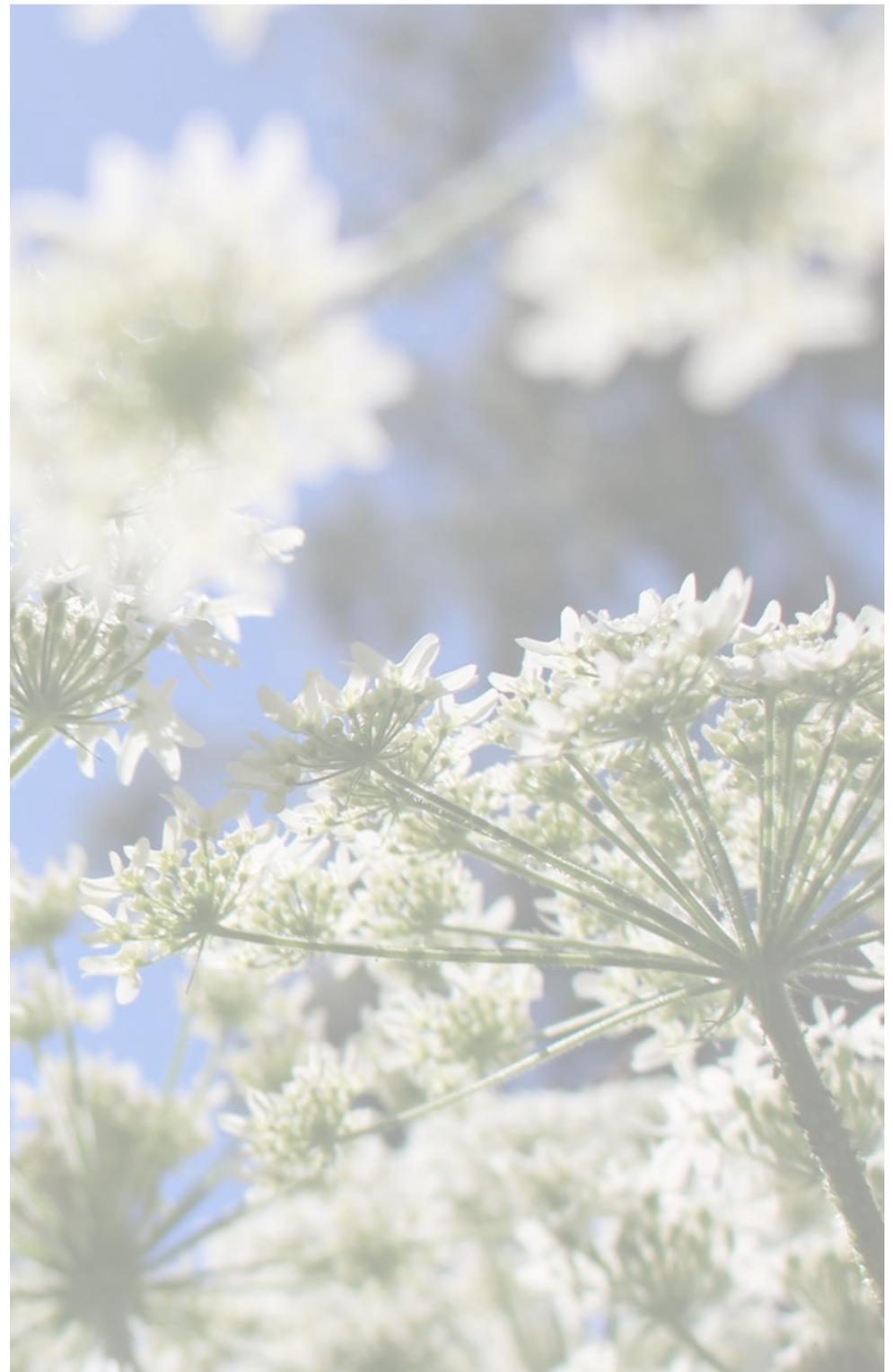
### **For more information, contact:**

**Tatiana Dreisbach, Wetland Biologist**

WSDOT, Environmental Services Office  
Olympia, Washington

360-570-2433

[tatiana.dreisbach@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:tatiana.dreisbach@wsdot.wa.gov)



Seek immediate medical services for severe reactions to poisonous plant exposure or if poisonous plants are ingested. Contact a medical professional for advice if you are unsure of the severity of the exposed individual.

**CALL 911 OR POISON CONTROL 1-800-222-1222**



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**