

# Poison hemlock

*Conium maculatum*

Parsley family

## Key identifying traits

- ❑ A big plant normally 6 to 8 feet tall
- ❑ Flowers are small and white consisting of 5 petals and borne in numerous umbrella like clusters
- ❑ Stems are erect, stout, and purple spotted with distinct ridges and extensively branched
- ❑ Leaves are fern like and have a musty odor
- ❑ Has a large white fleshy tap root
- ❑ Seeds are paired, 1/8 inch long, brown, ribbed and concave

## Biology and ecology

- A biennial, occasionally growing up to 10 feet tall
- Tolerates poorly drained soils and often found along streams and ditch banks
- Also found on roadsides and gradually invading perennial crops and pastures
- All plant parts including the white fleshy root are poisonous to humans and livestock
- It was the liquid extracted from this plant that Socrates reportedly used to kill himself in 399BC

## Control

*Prevention* - Learn to identify plants; know your property; beware of parsley type plants invading along waterways or wet roadsides

*Biological* - The poison hemlock moth has been a very effective defoliator of Poison hemlock plants where introduced on large infestations in Washington state.

*Cultural* - Good vegetative cover lessens likelihood of initial infestations

*Mechanical* - Tillage, digging and pulling are all effective controls but care must be used in handling

*Chemical* - Several effective at label rates but must use care near water



**Where found** – Occasionally found in Stevens County, generally in wet, poorly drained areas including ditch banks, bogs and wet pastures