

OUTDOORS

Wild parsnip are increasing around Borderland

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Yellow flowers known as wild parsnip are increasing

around Borderland. An invasive plant species, wild parsnip may look lovely from a distance, but

it should be approached with caution. In combination with sunlight, the sap of the wild parsnip can

cause blistering burns if it makes contact with skin. The chemical reaction is called phytophotodermatitis. Often, long-term darkening of the skin and scarring occurs after the burns heal, report local folks who have experienced it and resource managers.

Wild parsnip competes with native plant species. Once established, it spreads quickly and seeds remain can propagate after four years in the soil. Wild parsnip's yellow flowers are arranged in flat-topped clusters with glossy green alter-

nating leaves with serrated oval shaped leaflets. Wild parsnip has a long white tap root that is edible. It is believed that wild parsnip, native to Europe and Asia, was introduced as a food in the Americas and has since escaped, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The DNR last year initiated a wild parsnip control project on the Littlefork River and Waldbillig Wildlife Management Areas. The plan involves mowing infested areas over several years in hopes of removing

the seed stalk to thwart its spread. An observable decline in the number of flowering plants should occur around four years.

Similar efforts can be made on private land. Wild parsnip can be mowed when it is flowering, usually during July, to set back seed production. If this is done for several consecutive years the number of plants should decline. In minor infections, or in a small area, consider cutting the plant's tap root below the surface using a shovel or pulling the plants. A spot application of herbicide is another option.

Remember to always wear protective gear, such as gloves, long-sleeved shirts, pants and shoes, that covers skin when working with this noxious weed and avoid contact with the sap.



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A single rosette of a wild parsnip growing with gusto in a field in International Falls.

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