

# Wild chervil

## (*Anthriscus sylvestris*)

### Homeowners Fact Sheet

#### Tips for identifying, controlling, and monitoring wild chervil on your property

#### Background

Wild chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) is a biennial or short-lived perennial invasive plant from the carrot family that is native to Europe. It was first introduced to the United States in the early 1900s in wildflower mixes intended to reproduce European countryside. Wild chervil will grow in a variety of soils, but prefers moist, rich soils. Unfortunately, it has infested roadsides, woodland edges, creek banks, and floodplain forests in northeast Illinois.

#### Why Should You Care?

Wild chervil leaves out early in the spring before native plants and is able to outshade and displace those plants so that many native animals that depend on native plants lose shelter and food throughout the infested area. This plant produces a lot of seeds that can be spread by birds, water, and mowing after seed set. It also produces lateral buds at the top of its roots that can break off and grow into new plants. In addition, it is the host for a virus that infects carrots, parsnips, and celery.



White flowers blooming from early (Photo taken by B. Haberthur)



Paired seed pods ready for spreading! (Photo taken by B. Haberthur)



Carrot-like taproot of the wild chervil plant. (Photo taken by C. McGlynn)



Wild chervil infestation in floodplain forest in Kane County. (Photo taken by C. McGlynn)

#### Identification

- Grows along stream banks, creeks, and roadsides (moist soils)
- Hollow stems grow 3 – 6 feet tall
- Leaves are alternate and fern-like (very fine and delicate looking)
- Roots are thick, tuberous, grow quickly, and can grow over 6 feet deep.
- Leaves form a basal rosette in the first season. In the second season plants produce flowers and seeds and then die.
- White flowers with five petals form 3 inch flat-topped umbrella-like clusters that bloom from early May to mid-June during the plant's second year.
- Each flower produces two joined, shiny seed pods that turn from green to brown.
- Some look-a-likes include the invasive poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), non-natives like Chinese hemlock parsley (*Conioselinum chinense*), Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*) and caraway (*Carum carvi*).
- It is distinguished from similar plants by stems that are ribbed or furrowed, entirely green, hairy on the lower portion and smooth on the upper portions and with a fringe of hairs at the stem nodes.

## Some Suggested Control Methods

**Mechanical** Wild chervil is very difficult to control because of its extremely deep taproot and its resistance to herbicides. Pulling of flower stalks without removal of the entire rosette and taproot encourages the crown to re-sprout in the following year. The taproot is frequently up to 6 feet deep, making hand pulling almost impossible. Mowing before seed set will eliminate seed propagation but have no impact on vegetative spread from root buds. Mowing can deplete root reserves if done repeatedly before the plant sets seed.

**Chemical** Several readily available general use herbicides will work on wild chervil, including 2.5% glyphosate, 0.5% clopyralid, metsulfuron methyl (1 gram/gallon), and aminopyralid (less than 5%). Herbicide should be applied to leaves shortly before blooming and one month after a pre-bloom cutting. Many different formulations are available so please check product labels. Use a product labeled for aquatic use if the plant is growing in wetlands. Do not apply herbicide near or on water. Follow instructions on herbicide label, add dye to the solution, and spray the solution on plants on a day when there is little chance of rain washing the herbicide from the leaves and wind blowing the herbicide away from its target. Coat leaf surface lightly—not to the point of the leaf dripping with herbicide. Herbicide may take several weeks to produce visible effects (browning of leaves). Dispose of used gloves in trash and wash contaminated clothing separately.

## Follow-up

As wild chervil is removed from your site fill that space with native or non-invasive plants by seeding or planting. When these plants become established they will help keep out wild chervil and other invasive plants. Be sure to continue monitoring for wild chervil seedlings! Some native alternatives include: in sunny places - meadow anemone (*Anemone canadensis*), stiff gentian (*Gentiana cinquefolia*), and common mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*); in shady areas - meadow garlic (*Allium canadense*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and prairie willow (*Salix humulus*). In addition, you could plant native grasses that are not susceptible to the herbicides used for wild chervil. Some recommended species include: big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Bicknell sedge (*Carex bicknellii*), and little bluestem (*Schyzachirium scoparium*).

## Precautions

- Plant may cause skin irritation so use caution and wear gloves when handling.
- If mowing or weed wacking an infested area be sure to clean your equipment prior to leaving the site and working in a new area.
- If using herbicide, be sure to follow all label instructions and all state herbicide regulations.
- Monitor treated area!

## Equipment & Supplies You May Need

Loppers or machete

Weed wacker and/or mower

Herbicide (glyphosate)

Rubber gloves and appropriate eye protection

Long pants, long sleeved shirt, closed-toe shoes

Spray bottle

Liquid dye (food coloring or Rit dye works)

Patience, persistence, and commitment (this will take several years)

## Additional Resources

Illinois Wildflowers [http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/grasses/grass\\_index.htm](http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/grasses/grass_index.htm)

Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania [http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_010305.pdf](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_010305.pdf)

King County (Washington) Wild Chervil <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/animalsAndPlants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/wild-chervil.aspx>

Midwest Invasive Plant Network Control Database <http://mipncontroldatabase.wisc.edu/>

Northeast Illinois Invasive Plant Partnership <http://www.niipp.net>

University of Vermont Extension - Wild Chervil <http://pss.uvm.edu/vtcrops/articles/WildChervil.pdf>



Lake County Forest Preserves  
[www.LCFPD.org](http://www.LCFPD.org)

