



# Wild Parsnip *Pastinaca sativa* L.

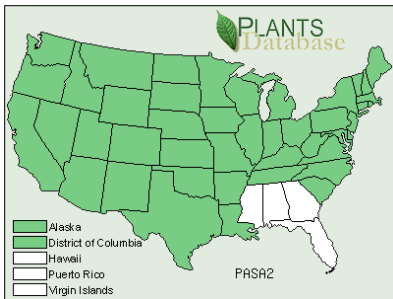
**Common Names:** parsnip, wild parsnip

**Native Origin:** Eurasia

**Description:** An erect herbaceous plant in the carrot family (*Apiaceae*) growing 4 or more feet in height. Seedlings emerge from February through April, form rosettes and grow vegetatively for one or more years before they form an aerial shoot (bolt) and flower. Rosettes bear upright leaves averaging 6 inches in height. Leaves are pinnately compound and leaflets are oval to oblong, hairless with saw-toothed edges and arranged in pairs along stalk. Hundreds of small yellow flowers are produced on each plant and bloom from June to mid-July. Large yellow seeds are round, flat and slightly ribbed. Plants die after producing seeds. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for four years. The root system is made up of a long thick yellow to white taproot.



**Habitat:** It is located in a wide range of growing conditions including dry to wet prairies, oak openings and calcareous fens (rare wetland community watered by mineral-rich, alkaline groundwater or seeps). It is commonly found along roadsides, pastures, and in abandoned fields.



**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in MI, OH, PA, TN, VA, and WI.

**Ecological Impacts:** Wild parsnip invades and modifies open disturbed habitats. Once an infestation begins, it can spread across an area to form dense stands.

**Caution:** This plant contains chemicals in the leaves, stems, flowers and fruits that can cause intense, localized burning, rash, and/or blistering when coming in contact with the skin. Contacting with the sap may increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight. The resulting dermatitis is more like a burn than a rash and is sometimes referred to as false or artificial sunburn.



**Control and Management:** Wear gloves, long sleeves, and long pants for protection when working to control this plant.

- **Manual-** Parsnip is among the first plants to emerge and may be easily detected and dug out. For large populations, a power bush cutter can be used to cut plants at the base of the stem before flowering, however, plants may resprout. Burning does not harm plants, they simply resprout.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate or triclopyr to spot treat basal rosettes. Follow label and state requirements.
- **Natural Enemies:** The parsnip webworm damages some individual plants severely, but is not known to devastate whole patches.

**References:** [www.forestimages.org](http://www.forestimages.org), <http://plants.usda.gov>, [www.nps.gov/plants/alien](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien), [www.botany.wisc.edu/wisflora/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=PASSAT](http://www.botany.wisc.edu/wisflora/scripts/detail.asp?SpCode=PASSAT), [www.uwgb.edu/biodiversity/herbarium/invasive\\_species/passat01.htm](http://www.uwgb.edu/biodiversity/herbarium/invasive_species/passat01.htm), <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/pastsat.html>, Czarapata, Elizabeth J. Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, An Illustrated Guide to their Identification and Control, 2005 p. 70-72, [www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/weedguide/singlerecordframe2.asp?id=540](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/weedguide/singlerecordframe2.asp?id=540), [www.pnas.org/cgi/content/full/102/43/15529](http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/full/102/43/15529)