

Premeeting -Poison Hemlock 10/24/19 Leon

Attendees: Mark Renz, UW Madison Weed Specialist; Marian Moore, Landowner Tsp; Ben Johnston Landowner and Volunteer, Willton TSP; Howard Garves, Landowner, Sparta TSP; Christina Mulder, Monroe Co. LCD; Megan Michelson, Forester, WI DNR and MCISWG Chair; Greg Selbrede Leon Township Chair and landowner of meeting site.; Courtney and Ryan Selbrede Landowners, Leon TSP.

We invited Mark Renz because this is an important plant to recognize and learn management techniques. We have mapped it in a couple of areas by Highway 21 and management efforts on those populations are being monitored by environmental staff from Fort McCoy. More recently we have discovered large numbers of poison hemlock in the road sides along Mascot Ave (Jefferson TSP) and Hwy 27 between Leon and Melvina.

Mark started the discussion with a description of the key identifying characteristics. The plant is rather large (6 foot plus) has umbelliferous flowers and foliage similar to wild carrot (Queens Anne's Lace) and purple coloration on the stem during the growing season. At the time of the meeting the plant was entirely brown, but the flower shape and size are distinctive. The life cycle of the plant means that new seedlings will be growing in the form of rosettes near the mother plants. This scribe had been to the site earlier and found some small green leafy material under the brown stems, but failed to recognize that the large green plants (4' wide by 3' high) a few yards away were Poison Hemlock rosettes. The foliage of wild carrot is similar but when crushed smells of carrot, poison hemlock foliage has a nasty smell, some people say it is reminiscent of mouse pee.

Addressing the poisonous nature of the plant, Mark explained that all parts of the plant are potentially toxic, but that animals or humans would need to consume approximately half a percent of their body weight for a lethal dose. Cattle usually eat around the plants unless there is nothing else left to eat. Using goats for management would not be advised as they could die. Animals could also be afflicted if the plant was cut and baled as hay.

Mowing can keep the population down if done before seeds mature. June would be ideal. We noted that the Jefferson TSP had just mowed their roadside (October) including several areas of poison hemlock potentially making the situation along Mascot Avenue even worse.

We can only speculate how the plant got here, perhaps in fill for some construction project, perhaps for some power infrastructure by the highway. The spread can then be accelerated by inappropriate timing of roadside mowing and perhaps, more pertinently for this site, late season flooding (of the Little La Crosse River).

Herbicides that are labeled for control of broad leaves in pastures and right of ways are effective if applied to rosettes in fall or spring before the plants flower. Glyphosate will work too but will kill the grass too leaving a dead spot that could become weedy. For a useful management database search Poison Hemlock in The MIPN site <https://mipncontroldatabase.wisc.edu/>

Asked how big of a potential area could the plant end up spreading to Mark said wherever there is Queens Anne Lace this plant could end up naturalizing.

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