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Wild Carrot

Daucus Carota L.

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Wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) was introduced from Europe and is the genetic source of edible carrots. The weed is an abundant seed producer. It grows in meadows, pastures, along roadsides, and in non-crop areas.

Wild carrot is found in sandy or gravelly soils and in wet areas. It is abundant west of the Cascades in Oregon and Washington and is locally well established on the east side of the mountains. Wild carrot is a Class C noxious weed in Washington. Counties in the Columbia Basin where carrot seed is grown require control of wild carrot.

Wild carrot causes problems in pastures, hay fields, Christmas tree farms, grass seed fields, and most other open areas that are not tilled annually. It is an especially serious threat in areas where carrot seed is produced, because it hybridizes with the crop and ruins the seed.

Often, the second cutting of a hay field is mostly wild carrot because competition with the crop for light temporarily falls after the first cutting.

There is no record of wild carrot toxicity in this country, but there are reports from Europe that wild carrot may be mildly



Figure 1.—Note the curved bracts at the base of the flower that are unique to wild carrot.

toxic to horses and cattle. They usually avoid grazing it, but a high concentration of wild carrot in hay is a potential problem because livestock eat hay less selectively than green forage. Sheep appear to graze wild carrot without any harmful effect.

IDENTIFICATION

Wild carrot forms a rosette of leaves the first year, then flowers produce seed and die the second year. Wild carrot also is known as Queen Anne's lace because the finely cut, lacy leaves often were used in fashionable head-dresses and bouquets of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

Wild carrot grows from a deep whitish tap root that has a distinctive carrot odor. Mature plants reach 2 to 4 feet high with erect stems and few



Figure 2.—The wild carrot rosette is now starting to produce the flower stalk.

branches. Stiff hairs cover the entire plant. Leaves divide several times, forming many long, narrow segments. Leaves on the lower part of the plant have stalks. Those on the upper part of the plant are directly attached to the stem.

White flowers are clustered at the end of the stem in flat, umbrella-like structures (umbels) 2 to 4 inches in diameter. One to several flowers in the center of the umbel often are purple-tinged. Umbels are surrounded at the base by long, forked, modified leaf structures or bracts.

Other plants that might be confused with wild carrot lack these conspicuous bracts.

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Flowering occurs from July to September. When the seeds ripen, the umbels contract into the shape of a hollow cup or nest. Seeds are $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long with one distinctly flat side and one rounded side that is ridged with bristles. Seeds may remain on the plant after it dies, falling gradually throughout the winter as weathering occurs. See PNW 418, *Hedgeparsley*, and PNW 367, *Wild Chervil*, to look at a wild carrot seed.

CONTROL

MECHANICAL. Wild carrot is often found in waste areas, old pastures, and meadows. Plowing these areas and planting to a cultivated crop for 2 years decreases the infestation. Frequent cultivation in these crops promotes seed germination and destroys the seedlings before plants can flower and produce seed. This process helps deplete the supply of seeds in the soil. Another approach is to mow after stems elongate but before flowering.

CHEMICAL. Chemical control is more effective when herbicides are applied to plants in the seedling stage. As plants mature, the herbicides are ineffective or more chemical is required to kill them. Yearly applications are necessary to control the young seedlings that arise from the seed bank. Chemicals are available to selectively control wild carrot in grass plantings, and with careful timing in grass and clover pastures.

Herbicide registrations change frequently; therefore, this publication does not contain specific herbicide use instructions. Registered uses are summarized each year in the *Pacific Northwest Weed Control Handbook*.

In addition, detailed instructions for herbicide use are provided on herbicide container labels and in other literature provided by herbicide manufacturers.

USE PESTICIDES SAFELY!

- **Wear** protective clothing and safety devices as recommended on the label. **Bathe or shower** after each use.
 - **Read** the pesticide label—even if you've used the pesticide before. **Follow closely** the instructions on the label (and any other directions you have).
 - **Be cautious** when you apply pesticides. **Know** your legal responsibility as a pesticide applicator. You may be liable for injury or damage resulting from pesticide use.
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