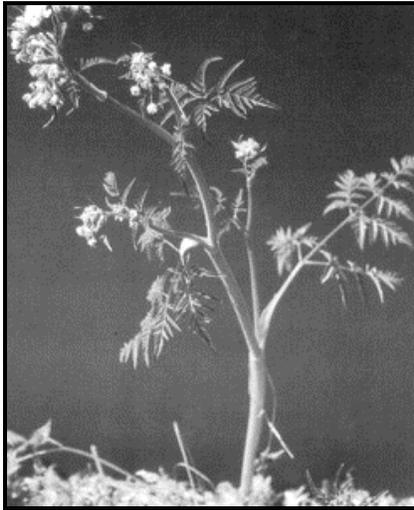


## Wild Chervil - A Relatively New Weed Problem in Central Vermont



Credit: Province of Nova Scotia

Wild Chervil, *Anthriscus sylvestris* (L.) Hoffm., is a weed belonging to the parsley family (Apiaceae) and is becoming a serious problem in hay fields and pastures in central Vermont. It's three to four foot heights, fern-like leaves and white flowers arranged in a compound umbel pattern are quite pronounced during late May to early July and are commonly found along roadsides and in meadows in central Vermont.

Over the past five years, this weed has spread rapidly. It propagates by both seed and by lateral budding at the top of the root. It competes aggressively with forage crops for light, water and nutrients and often kills off the surrounding vegetation by shading it. It is particularly damaging to forage crops but has not been a problem in cultivated or tilled fields.

Wild chervil is not poisonous to livestock and, although it is unpalatable when large, animals will graze it effectively when small. The stems are very slow to dry and, if harvested in forage, will reduce crop quality due to molding. This weed also serves as a host for the parsnip yellow fleck virus that infects carrots, celery, and parsnips.

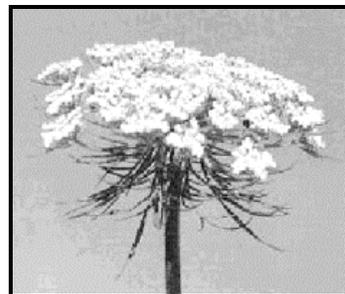
### Plant Description

The plants produce hollow flower stems, up to 6 feet tall. The stems are branched and covered in soft hair, particularly near the base. The leaves are arranged alternately on the flower stems and are nearly hairless. Each leaf is divided into smaller leaflets, which in turn are also divided. The base of each leaf stalk surrounds the stem.

Flowers are produced at the top of the stems in a flat-topped mass called a compound umbel, starting around late May to early June. Individual flower stems grow from the same point forming umbellets, many of which form an umbel. Each flower is white and has five notched petals that are larger toward the outside of the umbellet. The flowers have been confused with those of wild carrot (*Daucus carota* L.), or Queen Anne's lace. A good way to distinguish wild carrot is to look for the unique curved bracts at the base of each umbel. In addition, wild chervil is the first of the parsley family to flower in Vermont and wild carrot flowers later in the season.



Wild Chervil (no bracts)



Wild Carrot (with bracts)

## **Biology, Habitat and Life Cycle**

Wild chervil is native to Europe where it is a very common along roadsides and pastures. It was probably introduced in North America in wildflower seed mixes that were designed to imitate the plants commonly found in British meadows and hedgerows. It will grow in a variety of soil types, but prefers rich, moist soils. It may be found along roadsides, edges of woods, and in waste places.

Wild Chervil can be either a biennial or short-lived perennial that spreads by seed and root budding. As a biennial, it forms a rosette in the first year, flowers the second year producing seed, and then dies. However, if it is disturbed in its first year or early in its second year (before producing flowering stems), it may grow as a rosette for successive years. At this point it becomes a short-lived perennial, and will not die until it flowers and sets seed. This weed is a heavy seed producer and will spread rapidly. Birds, water and human activity are responsible for seed movement. Mowing operations undertaken after seed set can cause linear movement along right-of-ways.

## **Control**

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. An effective control for seedling plants is to dig up the plant, including the roots, before flowering but this would be very labor intensive.

There has been limited research evaluating herbicides for wild chervil control. A study in Nova Scotia in 1997 found dicamba (Banvil) to provide good control applied when plants were in the vegetative stage. The same study also reported good control when there was a combination of mowing pre-bloom followed by an application of dicamba one month later. In both cases, dicamba was applied at 2 lbs. a.i. per acre. They did not evaluate some of the herbicides such as Ally, Stinger or Crossbow that have been show to provide good to excellent control of wild carrot.

## **References**

Anonymous. Wild Chervil. Province of Nova Scotia. AgCanada, Production Technology Branch. Website: <http://agri.gov.ns.ca/pt/ipm/weeds/pibw9601.htm>

Hoeg, Rick, Doug Doohan, Tim Thomsen, and Steven Harris. Control Of Wild Chervil In Grass Forage. Province of Nova Scotia. AgCanada, Production Technology Branch. Website: <http://agri.gov.ns.ca/pt/projsum/97/b97cherv.htm>

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