

Wild Chervil Control in Vermont -2009 ed.



What: Wild chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) is a member of the parsley/carrot 'umbellifer' family and is native to northern Europe & Britain, where it is called cow parsley. It looks like a robust, branching version of Queen Anne's Lace, but wild chervil blooms in Vermont mid-May to mid-June, while Queen Anne's Lace blooms in July/August. Garden chervil is a tiny herb in the same family - it resembles wild chervil only in that both have ferny, triangular-shaped leaves. Leaves of wild chervil are quite sharply pointed.

Life Cycle: Wild chervil exhibits many strategies that allow it to out-compete most other plants. It sprouts early in the spring, grows rapidly and can shade out other plants. It reproduces by seeds (800-1200 per plant) and also vegetatively by producing small off-set plants around the parent. This is especially true if it is disturbed after flowering begins. Its strong root allows it to revive after it has been cut, so it needs to be weeded out or cut repeatedly to use up the carbohydrates the root has stored.

CONTROL: Prevention & Persistence pay off

Goals: 1- Keep chervil from establishing itself in new areas.

2- Reduce existing plots and re-claim areas now covered by chervil.

For small patches & individual plants:

- ◆ **Dig it out.** Easiest in moist soil. Use a narrow trowel or heavy knife to loosen the roots first. Try to get all the root and the tiny babies too.
 - ◆ **Cut at or below soil level.**
 - ◆ **Re-cut** if plant flowers again – watch for sneaky low branches with flowers!
 - ◆ **Remove plant material so that it dries out** – pile and 'poach' in the sun by covering with clear or black plastic or toss small batches on the road (but only up until seeds begin to form).
 - ◆ **Pulled plants in roads are swell**
- advertisements of your efforts and encourage others to take responsibility too!**

For larger patches:

- ➔ Cover w/ 2 layers black plastic or other heavy material, weigh down well. Leave 2 years. Re-plant the bare ground when you remove the cover.
- ➔ Or Cut, cut, cut. Begin in April & cut repeatedly with a string trimmer or mower set as low as possible.
- ➔ **Mowing machines spread chervil seeds. Be very careful that you completely clean the machine before moving to other areas.**
- ➔ Plan on mowing 3+ times a year, especially if the plant re-flowers. Expect to mow several years in a row.
- ➔ Ideally mow when flowers first begin in mid-May & again at second flowering – probably early July.
- ➔ Leave it alone once seeds form.
- ➔ Re-plant large areas with other plants, such as conservation mix, so that the disturbed soil doesn't invite more weeds.

Skin Danger: The plants are full of moisture and a weed wacker will spray moist bits of stem all around. If this plant juice gets on your skin, and if it is then activated by ultraviolet light (available even on cloudy days), it may cause a burn on your skin. This can be painful and can leave scars. So cover up and wash off promptly.

- ❖ Sheep and goats eat young chervil.
- ❖ Cows & horses don't.
- ❖ It can ruin hay due to its high moisture content.

Herbicides like glyphosate (=Roundup) are not successful against chervil, and they can be dangerous to the person applying them and to other plants, insects and animals.

Mechanical methods are best.

Think of our task as **PEP:**

1. **Prevention** is the only sure way to keep Chervil from establishing itself in more places. Stop your car and pull or cut single plants when you first see them! Stopping the spread by removing the isolated plant that will be a clump next year is probably more important than attacking dense road-side clumps. ~~~~ "**A stitch in time saves nine!**" ~~~~ Also ask town & state road crews to mow roadsides before mid-June or not at all. Unless we stop the spread along roadsides, we will continue to be re-infested.
2. **Early** Work early in an infestation, early on when you first spot a patch, and early in the year – Chervil Season is mid-April through mid-June, and again in the fall.
3. **Persistence** is the final tool that will make us successful – we've got to keep at it without becoming discouraged. Read my "Psychological Aspects of Working with Invasive Plants".

More info:

<http://www.uvm.edu/mastergardener/invasives/invasivesindex.html>

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