



**Cornell University**  
Cooperative Extension  
Clinton County

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**Wild Parsnip**

Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) has been around for a while but only in the last 4-5 years has it really become widespread. This plant causes a less itchy but more severe skin reaction than poison ivy involving blisters and skin discoloration and scarring that can last for years.

It's easy to recognize in July when in flower. The first year wild parsnip forms a rosette of leaves close to the ground. The second year it sends up a 3-4 foot tall flower stalk which flowers, sets seeds and then the whole plant dies. Each plant produces plenty of seeds to keep future generations coming.

The flower looks very much like a Queen Anne's lace to which it's related, except these flowers are a greenish yellow. The leaves are more coarse than Queen Anne's lace. It's very common along highways and in fields that are infrequently mowed.

The irritating substance in wild parsnip is unique in that it needs light to take effect. It's the combination of your skin coming into contact with the leaves or chopped pieces of this plant then sunlight hitting your skin that causes the reaction.

For more information about these plants or for help with identifying them contact our office or email a photo to our local Web site: <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/clinton>



This is Queen Anne's Lace  
It's okay to touch



**Wild Parsnip –  
Don't touch this plant!**

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