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Mowing: A Reasonable Alternative to Manage Wild Parsnip Along Roadsides

It is that time of year again; now that winter plowing is (almost!) finished, Town and County Highway Departments are starting to look at their next major task: mowing along roadsides. The **Environmental Management Council** would like to take this opportunity to let you know that you can control the spread of Wild Parsnip along your roadsides with relatively minor changes to mowing schedules.

Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) is an invasive plant from Europe and Asia. It can be found growing in a broad range of habitats, especially disturbed areas along roadsides, and near playgrounds.

Wild parsnip is especially noxious because its sap can combine with sunlight to cause severe burns on exposed skin that has come into contact (pedestrians; highway workers; etc.). One recent report noted that wild parsnip was growing past the fence at a local ballfield. If anybody hit a home run, the kids who chased the ball were all at risk of severe burns. (See <https://dec.ny.gov/animals/105364.html>)

Typical methods of control of wild parsnip have involved use of herbicides, and mowing. The **Environmental Management Council** proposes that, by planning roadside mowing schedules, it may be possible to control, and over time to eradicate wild parsnip without having to use herbicides (except in very limited circumstance).



We notice that wild parsnip flowers along our roadsides in late June-early July. By mid-July into August those flowers create seeds that are easily dispersed by wind or other factors.

Mowing wild parsnip before July will prevent plants from seeding out, and prevent the spread of wild parsnip.

Though plants may re-sprout and re-flower, seed production will be greatly reduced.

Highway crews should take precautions to wear long sleeved shirts and long pants when mowing, in order that they don't get hit with wild parsnip sap while mowing. Rinsing off mowing equipment is also recommended.

EMC: Everybody Must Care!