



# Poison Prevention Press

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## MPC Poison Safety Info on the Go

Get important poison safety tips and other information wherever you are.

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Save Poison Help, 1-800-222-1222, as a contact in your mobile phone to always have it available at your fingertips.

## Did you know that...

- Socrates died in 399 BC after drinking hemlock juice?
- Poison hemlock was sold as a garden plant in the 1800's called 'winter fern'?

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## Poison Hemlock

Poison hemlock is a toxic weed that grows in almost every state in the United States. It is found in fields and vacant lots and along roads, fences, and streams. It grows in moist soil environments. All parts of the plant are toxic due to an alkaloid called coniine.

### What Does Poison Hemlock Look Like?

Poison hemlock have hollow green stems with red or purple spots and streaks on them. The leaves along the stems are green and look like ferns. They have white flowers that are in clusters shaped like umbrellas. The white flowers typically bloom during June and July. It can be up to 6 to 10 feet tall when it's fully grown!

### Common Look-a-Likes

- Queen Anne's lace – Poison hemlock and Queen Anne's lace both have white flowers that grow into an umbrella shaped cluster.
- Wild carrots or wild parsnips – Both are in the same plant family as poison hemlock. The roots of poison hemlock are white like those of wild carrots and parsnips.
- Elderberry – Poison hemlock has similar leaves and white flowers as elderberry.
- Water hemlock – Poison hemlock has similar spotted stems and white flowers as water hemlock.

### Danger

Picking poison hemlock for any reason other than to dispose of it is dangerous. We recommend using extreme caution when foraging for wild carrots and parsnips. In general, we discourage foraging for wild carrots and parsnips. Several cases of severe poisoning, including death, have happened due to mistaking hemlocks for carrots or parsnips.

Touching any part of the plant — flowers, leaves, stem — can cause skin irritation.

Eating any part of the plant can be harmful. Initial symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, confusion, slowed breathing, and an increased heart rate. Later symptoms include slowed heart rate, seizures, and muscle paralysis. Death is possible due to respiratory paralysis.

### Disposal

Poison hemlock can be pulled or dug out of the ground. When handling poison hemlock, it is important to wear personal protective equipment. This includes long sleeves, gloves, long pants, close-toed shoes, and protective eyewear. When you are finished working around this weed, remove and wash your clothes.

An herbicide (weed killer) can also be used to get rid of the weed. When using an herbicide read the directions on the label before using it and follow them.

Do not burn poison hemlock. Inhaling the smoke can irritate the lungs.

Call 1-800-222-1222 to speak with a poison expert if you or someone you know has come into contact with or eaten poison hemlock. Poison specialists can be reached 24/7/365 for free.