

Heracleum maximum

Native to Maine

Cow Parsnip
Poochki













Coastal and Upland
Forests, Fields, Riverbanks, and Roadsides

Leaves



LeafPeeper, Vital Signs

Look for leaves that are very large (up to 40 cm across!) and are divided into lobes. Each leaf is composed of 3 leaflets, with the middle leaflet being the largest. Leaves have toothed edges.

LEAF ARRANGEMENT	LEAF TYPE	LEAF/LEAFLET SHAPE	LEAF/LEAFLET EDGE
 ALTERNATE	 SIMPLE	 PALMATE	 SMOOTH
 OPPOSITE	 COMPOUND-PALMATE	 OVAL	 TOOTHED
 WHORLED	 COMPOUND-PINNATE	 ROUND	 WAVY

Plant



LeafPeeper, Vital Signs

Look for a tall plant up to 1.8 m. Younger plants will be smaller. Leaves branch off of one main stalk. Cow parsnip grows best in moist to semi-wet soils.

Stem



LeafPeeper, Vital Signs

Look for ridged, green stems (2.5-5 cm in diameter) with fine white hairs. (If the stem has purple splotches you might be looking at invasive giant hogweed!)

Seasonal Change



LeafPeeper, Vital Signs

In summer, look for an umbrella of flowers that is about 30 cm wide and consists of 15-20 flowers. Each flower has five petals.

Similar Species

Giant hogweed is a similar species. Hogweed has more than 50 flowers per umbrella while the cow parsnip has no more than 20. Giant hogweed also has purple splotches on the stem whereas cow parsnip does not.

Did You Know?

Native Americans used the dried stems to make drinking straws or flutes for children. The roots can be used to calm toothaches, and the flowers can make an insect repellent. Be careful! The plant contains a phototoxin that can react with sunlight to cause blistering.