



What's Working:

Invasive Species Control

February 2015

Wild Parsnip Control

2013-2014 Information

- Three consecutive years of late spring burns led to one-half to one-third less abundance of wild parsnip from mortality of mature plants rosettes, and/or seed bank in a research study at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa (Brian Eachus, Luther College – 2014 SER Great Lakes Chapter Meeting).
- This is year 8 of parsnip removal at my 5-acre Waterville Twp removal area. I have removed approximately 300 plants so far this spring but that includes seedlings that came up as a group under a missed plant. Otherwise, the parsnip population seems to have collapsed. It has taken 8 years of persistent effort to control a wild parsnip population at a Waterville Township removal area by cutting off all seed deposition and pulling. Diligent searching this year turned up 40 plants, a big difference from the 18,000 I pulled 7 or 8 years ago. The seeds are viable longer than the 2 years you read about, I would say 4 or 5 years at my site (Hugh Valiant).



2008-2012 Information

- I have been removing wild parsnip from approximately 6 acres every year since 2006, by hand pulling. Removal has been thorough, with essentially all seed-bearing plants, and hence seed deposition, eliminated each year. The plants are primarily located along woodland trails, in a wet meadow and along a restored prairie edge, all of which have a history of mowing. It seems probable that the plant was introduced to this isolated site by mowing with a contaminated mower.

I have counted all plants as they are weeded. Over five years plant numbers have decreased from 8,000 in 2006 to 2,000 in 2010. As of August, 2010, juvenile plants were still visible in moderate abundance, primarily in the meadow. As these plants mature and are removed in the next year or two, I expect that abundance will continue to decline.

Long sleeves and gloves are required. Try to get the plants before the seed is viable. Dispose of the seed-bearing plants where there is no danger of seed germination. Based on my experience, I suspect that seed longevity estimates might be somewhat low. The youngest plants at this site originate from seed dropped

no later than 2005. A parsnip predator reduces labor slightly and eliminates broken stems. Do not use it on anything other than parsnip, though, as the tool is not sturdy enough for larger plants. (Hugh Valiant, Conservation Landscapes LLC).

- Cutting root 1" below ground, being careful to avoid touching cut vegetation as it can cause severe blisters.
- Repeated mowing starting when the plant starts to flower. In some cases mowing can cause more harm than good; if mowing early in the year wild parsnip will re-sprout like a stump sucker on a tree sending out 2-3 plants (Wright SWCD).
- Glyphosate (2%) or 2,4D treatments to basal rosettes March to May or August to October.
- Effective herbicides include 2,4-D and Weed-B-Gone (until plants reach 8-inches), Curtail and Crossbow (with a surfactant), Round Up and Ranger (all effective from early spring until plants turn woody and produce viable seed) (Wright SWCD).
- Once the plant has gone to seed and is viable, cutting the tops of the plants with a scissors or clipper and bagging the seed, and burning will reduce the number of viable seeds (Wright SWCD).