

Wild chervil

The problem

Wild chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), also referred to as wild parsley or cow parsley, is a troublesome weed that has successfully invaded roadsides, ditches, pastures, forest edges, and dykes in various areas throughout North America. It prefers disturbed sites with rich, moist soils, and can persist under partial shade. Native to Europe, wild chervil was introduced to North America in wildflower seed mixes. In Canada, wild chervil can be found on the west coast of British Columbia, Ontario, and the east coast of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Quebec.

Wild chervil resembles other members of the carrot family, so it can remain undetected until it becomes an issue by forming extensive dense patches. In stands, it grows 30 cm to 1.5 m tall and looks similar to wild carrot, although wild carrot does not form as extensive or dense patches. Once patches of wild chervil are established, the plants will spread aggressively and can be very difficult to eradicate. Dense stands of wild chervil will choke out desirable vegetation and native plant communities, reducing wildlife habitat, crop production, desirable forage and hay species in rangelands, and expose sloped soils to erosion. In addition, wild chervil can act as a host for the yellow fleck virus which can affect crop species in the carrot and parsnip families.

What to look for

Wild Chervil is a biennial or short-lived perennial species that can reproduce through both seeds and clonal buds. In its first year, a cluster of finely divided, fern-like leaves grows to form a basal rosette. In the second year, an erect hollow stem covered with small hairs will bolt from the rosette and grow up to 1.5 m tall. At the end of each stem, small white flowers will form in panicles of umbels with five small, white petals. Seed maturation will begin in late June and can spread easily by mechanical equipment and recreational vehicles, as well as by birds, humans, and water. One plant can produce over 800 seeds and will remain viable in the seed bank for about two years. The plants will develop a tap root that grows up to 1.8 m deep and will produce clonal buds that detach from the parent plant after it goes to seed.

Some key characteristics to differentiate wild chervil from other species:

- Wild chervil flowers very early compared to other lookalikes, in late May and finishing by July. Wild carrot does not start flowering until June and continues flowering until September.
- Wild chervil has compound fern-like leaves that clasp the stem at the base and have hollow, distinctively ridged stems. Wild carrot has more finely divided leaflets that smell like carrot when crushed.
- Wild chervil seeds are smooth and turn green to dark brown. In contrast, wild carrot seeds have rows of hooked spines and often remain in bird's nest-shaped clusters on the wild carrot plants.

Envu solutions

Apply herbicides early, shortly before blooming or a month after pre-bloom cutting.

Applying Navius® FLEX to small chervil plants – preferably when they are 10–15 cm tall – can improve control. If chervil plants are taller than 15 cm, or for heavy infestations, effective control requires complete spray coverage of the foliage. Use application equipment that gives the best coverage of all chervil plants while minimizing spray drift. Remember, taller plants, railroad ties, guardrails, and other obstacles can shield or shadow smaller plants and limit contact with shorter chervil plants that are targeted for control.

Late summer or fall control of wild chervil rosettes is effective as long as the plants are still green. In late summer and fall, photosynthates are moving to the root, which is an advantage for root control with many foliar herbicides. Using herbicides with residual control is essential to prevent the germination of seedlings after treatment and will also prevent seed production the following year. After control, the establishment of competitive cover is important to prevent new infestations.

Cleaning equipment after herbicide application to a site, mowing, ditching, or any other work on infested sites will help to prevent linear spread down rights-of-way.



Chervil in flower.



Chervil covering ground.

Application type	Solution	Rate	Application timing
Post-emergent control	Navius FLEX + 0.25% v/v non-ionic surfactant	167 g/ha	Spring emergence period (mid-May) – preferable before the wild chervil grows to 15 cm in height Fall period (September) – ensuring proper water volume for coverage of plant and that plants are actively growing

For more information about effective vegetation management, contact your Envu representative or visit ca.envu.com.

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