

Poison hemlock  
*Conium maculatum* L.

## POISON HEMLOCK

Apiaceae  
(Parsley family)

Poison hemlock is a biennial native to Europe that grows 6 to 8 feet tall with occasional plants growing to 10 feet tall. Stems are erect, stout and purple-spotted with distinct ridges and extensively branched. Leaves are shiny green, finely pinnately divided three or four times and leaflets are segmented and 1/8 to 1/4 inch long. Lower leaves on long stalks clasp the stem; upper leaves on short stalks. Foliage has strong musty odor. Flowers are borne in many umbrella-shaped clusters, each supported by a stalk. Flowers are white with sepals lacking. Paired seeds, 1/8 inch long, are light brown, ribbed and concave.

It occurs on borders of pastures and cropland, gradually invading perennial crops (i.e. alfalfa). Poison hemlock tolerates poorly drained soils and frequents stream and ditch banks. All plant parts are poisonous including the large white taproot. Humans have been poisoned by mistaking the plant for parsley.



*Stems of poison hemlock are covered with purple spots at all growth stages.*



*Leaves on mature plants, as well as seedling plants (shown here), are fern-like in appearance because they are divided three and sometimes four times.*