

Plants which Resemble Wild Chervil

Wild Chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris* L.) can be confused with a number of other plants in its parsley/carrot (formerly Umbellifer, and now called Apiaceae) family. Distinguishing them is often a matter of size since family members range from 3 inches tall (diminutive garden chervil) to 15 feet (giant hogweed).

Identifying wild chervil is not easy since it is not in most wildflower books or garden books.

Look at the leaves as well as the flowers. Wild chervil leaves are pointed and ferny and have an overall triangular shape.



Following are pictures of 6 Plants that Resemble Wild Chervil.→

[For pictures and descriptions of 4 more wild plants which can be confused with wild chervil -- Cow Parsnip, Angelica, Giant Hogweed and Queen Anne's Lace-- go to:
http://www.state.ma.us/dfa/pestalert/giant_hogweed_photos.htm

For another document of more umbellifer family members which resemble Giant hogweed – and wild chervil – go to
http://www.hort.uconn.edu/cipwg/giant_hogweed_links.html
And download “**Giant Hogweed and Look-a-Likes**”.]



← **Queen Anne's Lace, Wild Carrot, Bird's Nest**

Daucus carota

- 1-4' tall
- Flat-topped clusters of flowers July-August.
- Usually with 1-2 tiny purple florettes at center.
- Stiff green 'bracts' under each flower.
- Leaf 'plumey' and delicate.
- Overall, blooms later than Wild Chervil, is smaller and much more delicate, and flowers are flat-topped, not rounded.
- After blooming the flower curls upward so that it resembles a bird's nest (see the 2 center blossoms at left).
- A true biennial. Plant dies after flowering.

→ **Goutweed, Bishop's weed, Ground elder, Housemaid's knees**

Aegopodium podagraria

- Originally planted as a garden groundcover. Impossible to eradicate.
- Tiny flowers in flat-topped clusters held well above compound leaves.
- Blooms mid-late summer.
- Some varieties are variegated (=leaves are partially white).
- On VT Noxious Weed Quarantine so it is illegal to move or distribute it.



← **Sweet Cicely**

Osmorhiza claytonia

- Soft, hairy plant, 1-3' tall.
- Hairy leaves have 3-5 main parts, toothed edges.
- Crushed stem smells like anise or licorice.
- Miniscule white flowers in a spare umbriel.
- Seeds are black, curved, about 1" long. Stick to clothing and fur.
- Blooms early, May-June, and often in shade.
- In gardens the plant is more robust, but still hairy all over and soft.



← **Honewort, a.k.a. Wild Chervil**

Cryptotaenia Canadensis

This is NOT the same plant as the invasive plant now threatening Vermont.

- Found in rich woods and thickets
- 12" to 20" tall
- Leaves divided into 3 segments with cut edges and toothed margins, otherwise solid.
- Most of leaves are at bottom of plant.
- Minute white flowers held above foliage.

This plant shows why relying on common names is problematic. The correct photo of Wild Chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) is mis-labeled as *Cryptotaenia canadensis* in the (otherwise) excellent guide, *Wildflowers of Vermont, 2001*, by Kate Carter. Corrected in 2nd ed.

→ **Bishop's Flower, False Queen Anne's Lace, White Dill**

Ammi majus

- An invasive garden annual.
- Often used by florists
- Grows from 2.5' to 6' tall.
- Foliage is thin, resembling dill and giving an airy effect.
- Flower is very white and resembles a slightly domed bouquet of miniature Queen Anne's Lace.



← **Wild Parsnip, Poison Parsnip**

Pastinaca sativa L.

- Yellow/chartreuse blossoms in July-August.
- 3'- 6'
- Compound leaf with about 7 leaflets on each side.
- Has high concentration of furocoumarin chemicals, which cause phyto-photo-dermatitis. When absorbed by skin, furocoumarins are energized by ultraviolet light (present during sunny and cloudy days) causing them to bind with nuclear DNA and cell membranes. This process destroys cells and skin tissue, causing severe burns (hence the nickname 'poison parsnip'). More info at: <http://www.wnrmag.com/stories/1999/jun99/parsnip.htm>
- On the increase in Vermont.