

# Wild Chervil Control in Central Vermont

...bring back the green!

**What:** Wild chervil (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) is native to northern Europe & Britain where it is called 'cow parsley'. It is a member of the parsley/carrot 'umbellifer' family. Queen Anne's Lace, which blooms in August, is actually wild carrot. Garden chervil is a tiny herb in the same family. It resembles wild chervil only in that both have ferny, triangular-shaped leaves.

**Life Cycle:** These plants are biennials, living for 2 years. The first year they store energy in a root. The next spring they use that stored energy to get a jump on other plants by sending up a flower stalk early. After successfully flowering and setting seed, the plant dies. However, wild chervil ALSO creates small off-set plants around the parent. Pretty smart! So we need to be smart too!

## **CONTROL: Persistence pays -- or -- The tortoise won the race!**

- Goals:** 1- Keep it from spreading to new areas and covering larger plots  
2- Reduce existing plots and re-claim areas now covered by chervil

### **For small patches & individual plants:**

-**Hand-pull or weed out.** Fairly easy in moist soil. Easiest if you loosen root with a trowel first.

-**Cut at or below soil level.**

-**Re-cut** if plant flowers again – watch for sneaky low branches w/ flowers!

-**Remove plant material so that it dries out** – toss on road or pile and 'poach' in the sun by covering with clear or black plastic.

-Pulled plants in roads are swell advertisements of your efforts and encourage others to take responsibility too!

### **For larger patches:**

-Cut with string trimmer or mower.

-Or stab individual plants below the crown with a dandelion/asparagus forked tool or even a sharp spade. This can starve the plant.

**Mowing machines have spread chervil seeds and you need to be very careful that you completely clean the machine before moving to other areas.**

- Plan on mowing again the same year if the plant re-flowers. Expect to mow several years in a row. Ideally mow when flowers first begin in mid-May & again at 2<sup>nd</sup> flowering – probably early July.

-Re-plant large areas with other plants, such as conservation mix, so that the disturbed soil doesn't invite more weeds.

***Skin Danger:*** The plants are full of moisture and a weed wacker will spray moist bits of stem all around. If this plant juice gets on your skin, and if it is then activated by ultraviolet light (available even on cloudy days), it may cause a burn on your skin. This can be painful and can leave scars. So cover up and wash off promptly.

- ❖ Sheep and goats eat chervil.
- ❖ Cows don't.
- ❖ It can ruin hay due to its high moisture content.

**Herbicides** like *Roundup* are not successful against chervil, and they can be dangerous to the person applying them and to other plants, insects and animals.  
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Mechanical methods are best.

Think of our task as PEP:

1. **Prevention** to keep Chervil from establishing itself in more places. Stop your car and pull or cut single plants when you first see them! Stopping the spread by removing the isolated plant that will be a clump next year is probably more important than attacking dense road-side clumps. ~ "A stitch in time saves nine!"
2. **Experiment** to see what works best. All of us can perform little controlled experiments to learn more about Wild Chervil. Tell others what worked for you!
3. **Persistence** is the final tool that will make us successful – we've got to keep at it without becoming discouraged.

**If we keep working at it, we can control it.** Wild chervil has spread so quickly that it has taken many of us by surprise, but we CAN stop its spread and begin to reclaim the areas it has inundated by being persistent and by preventing it from taking over new areas. Each of us can take responsibility for an area, and can involve our towns & highway departments to *bring the green back*.