

# Wild Parsnip



Found on roadsides, fence rows, prairie restorations & poorly managed pastures. Most abundant in sites dominated by perennial grasses that are mowed once or twice annually. Seedlings are among the first plants to greenup in the spring. One of the dominant yellow-flowered weeds in July.

The plant forms a rosette of leaves arranged in a spiral fashion during the first year of growth and a large taproot. Fully developed rosettes have 10-15 pinnately compound leaves with broad ovate to oblong leaflets. During the second year, it produces erect stems that grow 5 feet tall and terminate in umbrella-shaped clusters of small yellow flowers. After a plant flowers, it dies.

## Seedlings

Emerging first are 2 linear seed leaves. The first true leaves are small and ovate. Then, compound leaves are formed.

## Stems

The stem is compressed during the rosette stage of growth and elongates during the second year to form an upright flowering stalk that is 2-5 feet tall, branched, hollow except at the nodes, grooved, and somewhat hairy. Stem leaves are smaller than but similar in appearance to basal leaves.

## Leaves

Leaves are alternate (1 leaf per node) and compound with 5 to 15 leaflets. Leaflets are shiny, oblong, coarsely-toothed, and mitten or diamond shaped. Leaves attach to the stem by long petioles with broad bases that encircle the stem at each node. Petioles have 2 ridges on the upper surface and 3 more on the lower surface.

## Flowers

Plants form a primary umbel on the top of the main stem, with secondary and tertiary umbels produced as side shoots from main stalk. Flowers are small and have 5 yellow petals. The clusters are between 4 to 8 inches in diameter.

## Similar Plants:

*Golden Alexander.* The leaves of golden alexander have a palm shaped outline. Wild parsnip leaves have 5-15 leaflets, golden alexander always has 3.

*Poison Hemlock.* Grows nearly 10 feet tall. The stems are covered with purple mottling. Wild parsnip has a parsnip-like odor while poison hemlock has a mouse-like odor.

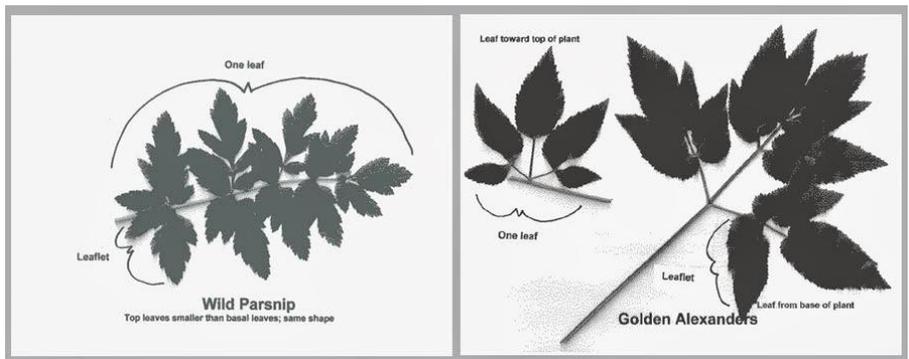
*Queen Anne's lace (wild carrot).* Grows in wetter habitats compared to wild parsnip. Wild carrot is a smaller plant, its leaves are more finely divided, and it has white flowers.



# Wild Parsnip



Queen Anne's Lace Rosette



Wild Parsnip versus Golden Alexander