Wild Parsnip ID Clinic

For Pesky Plant Volunteers

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University of Minnesota | CFANS College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences | Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants & Pests Center

Wild parsnip

Pastinaca sativa

An invasive plant on Minnesota's Noxious Weed Control list.

Plant Except for nettles, all members of carrot family (*Apiaceae*)	Danger Source: USFWS	Native or not	Flower color
Golden alexanders		Native	Yellow
Goutweed (aka ground elder, bishop's weed, snow-on-the-mountain)		Not native	White
Wild parsnip	Don't touch	Not native	Yellow

Wild parsnip

Pastinaca sativa

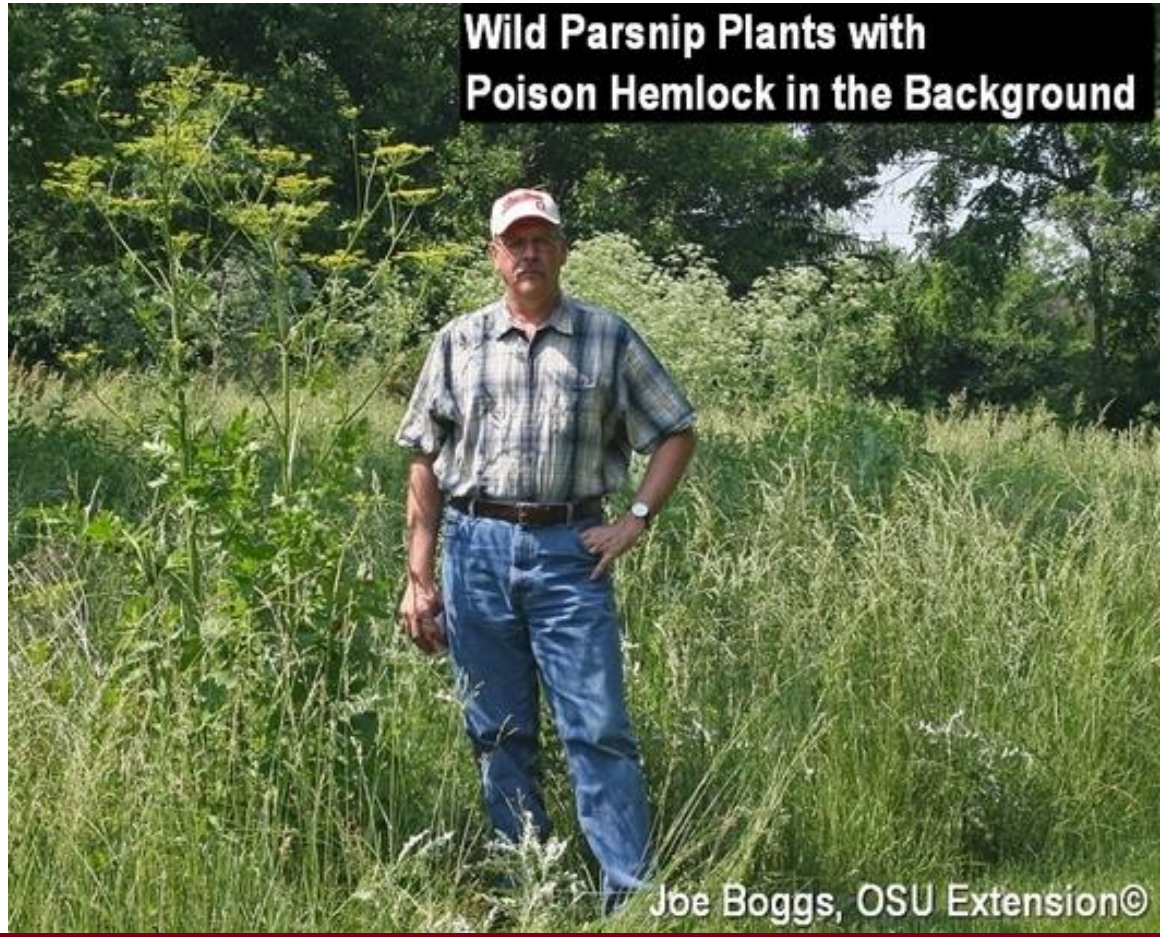
Wear gloves,
long sleeves,
and long pants.

Photo by Ellen Snyder, Ibis Wildlife Consulting

Wild parsnip

Pastinaca sativa

Wild parsnip is taller than a common look-alike, golden alexanders.



Wild parsnip

Pastinaca sativa

Leaves are arranged alternately.

Leaves are pinnately compound.

Illustration via Minn Dept of Ag

Wild parsnip

Pastinaca sativa

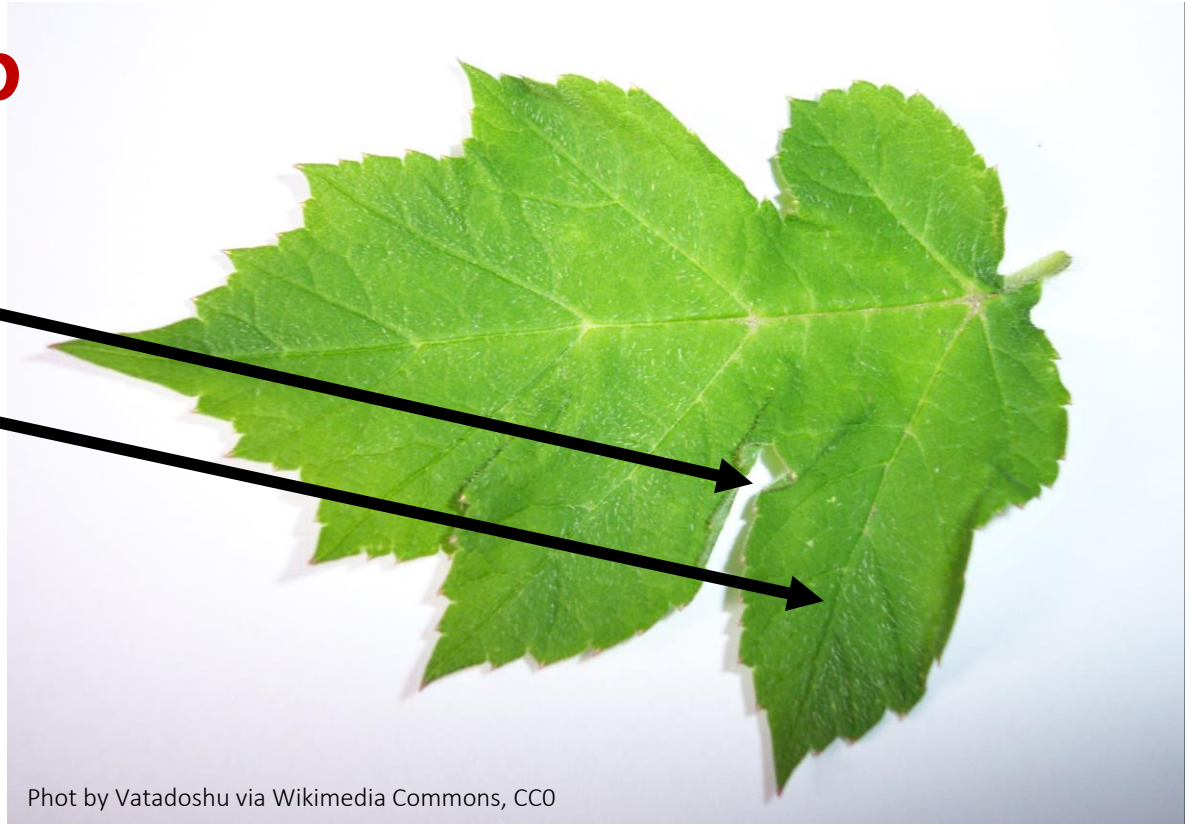
Pictured right: 1 leaf with 11 leaflets
Typically 5 to 15 leaflets per leaf.
Leaf margins are coarsely toothed.

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Wild parsnip

Pastinaca sativa

Irregular sinuses and lobes



Phot by Vatadoshu via Wikimedia Commons, CC0

Golden alexanders

Zizia aurea

Leaves occur in groups of 3.

Leaf margins have a finer tooth pattern than wild parsnip.

Leaves do not feature irregular lobes and sinuses as seen in wild parsnip.

Photo by Derek Ramsey (Ram-Man) via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5

Golden alexanders

Zizia aurea

Leaves are often doubly or even triply compound.

(Source: Minnesotawildflowers.info)

Photo copyright Katy Chayka via minnesotawildflowers.info

Golden alexanders

Zizia aurea

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Golden alexanders

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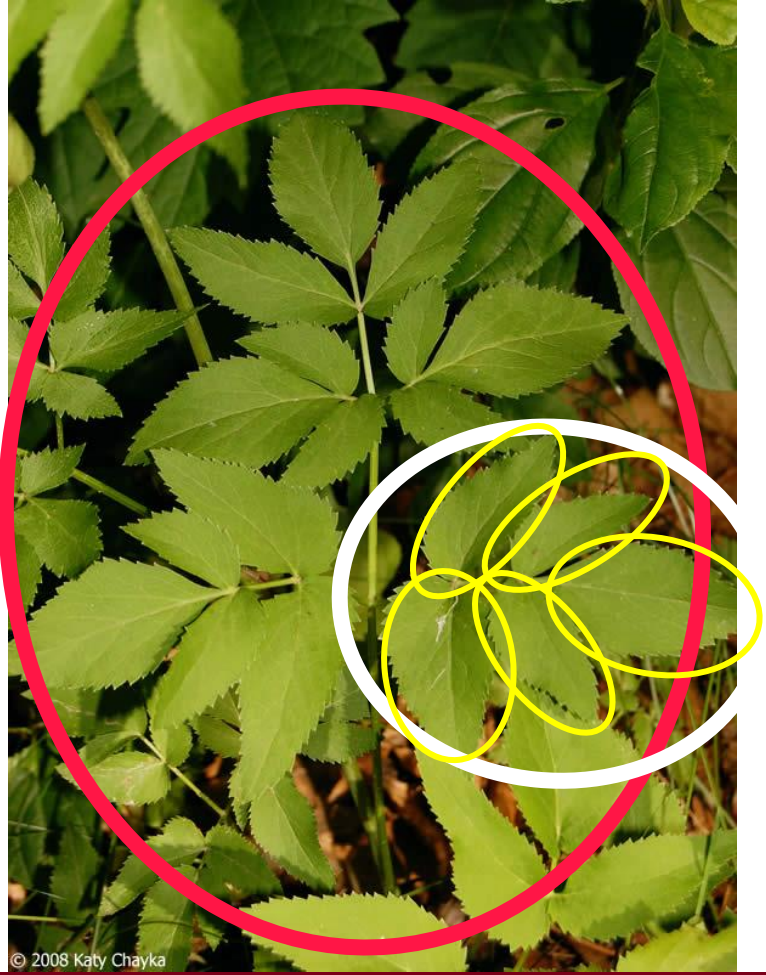

Photo copyright Katy Chayka via minnesotawildflowers.info

Goutweed

Aegopodium podagraria

Not native, but not a MN Noxious Weed.

Common in landscaping.

Variegated cultivar seen here, ornamental effect.

Photo by Jerzy Opioła via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

Goutweed

Aegopodium podagraria

Leaves near top of stem are often either compound with only three leaflets (pictured right), or simple and three-lobed.

Leaves become smaller and stalks shorter as they ascend the stem.

Photo by Elizabeth Heeren

Goutweed

Aegopodium podagraria

Fewer leaflets per leaf

Look for “mitten-shaped” leaflets

Photo by Hans Erren via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0

Wild parsnip: Leaves, leaves, leaves!

Basal rosette leaves can be 6 inches in height and are pinnately compound with **5-15 leaflets**.

Flowering stalk leaves are alternate, **2-5 leaflets** that become smaller near the top of the stem.

Leaflets are **coarsely toothed**, **sinuses** cut to varying depths creating **lobes of various sizes**.

The base of the leaf stalks wrap or clasp the grooved stem.

Source: Minnesota Noxious Weeds by MNDot

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photo by Byju Govindan

Photo by Byju Govindan

Golden alexanders

Photo by Derek Ramsey (Ram-Man) via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5

Practice:

Golden alexanders (left) or wild parsnip (right)?

Wild parsnip

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Wild parsnip? Or not?

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Golden alexanders

Photo by Derek Ramsey (Ram-Man) via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5

Wild parsnip

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photo copyright Katy Chayka via minnesotawildflowers.info

This is the only photo I have with both golden alexanders and wild parsnip.

Photo copyright Katy Chayka via minnesotawildflowers.info

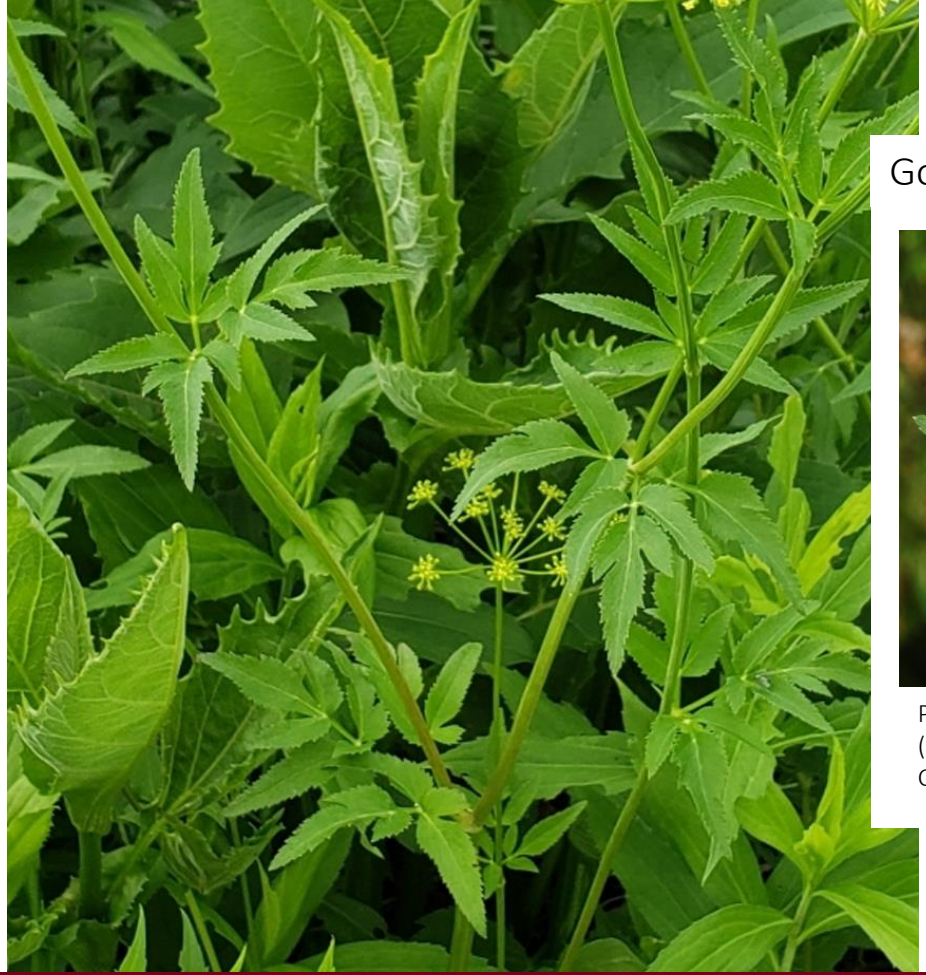
Photo by Susan Nelson via
EDDMapS, record #8493298

Wild parsnip

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photo by Susan Nelson via EDDMapS, record #8493298

Photo by Eric Olson, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via EDDMapS, record #8766946



Golden alexanders

Photo by Derek Ramsey (Ram-Man) via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5

Photo by Eric Olson, some rights reserved (CC BY-NC) via EDDMapS, record #8766946

Photos by Abbie Anderson

Golden alexanders

Photo by Derek Ramsey (Ram-Man) via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5

Photos by Abbie Anderson

Photo by Jeanette Siddons

Neither
wild parsnip
nor golden
alexanders

Photo by Jeanette Siddons

Photo by Abbie Anderson

Neither wild parsnip *nor* golden alexanders
This is goutweed.
Photo by Abbie Anderson

Photo by Abbie Anderson

Neither wild parsnip *nor* golden alexanders.

This is prairie smoke.

Photo by Abbie Anderson

Photo by Abbie Anderson

Golden alexanders

Photo by Derek Ramsey (Ram-Man) via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5

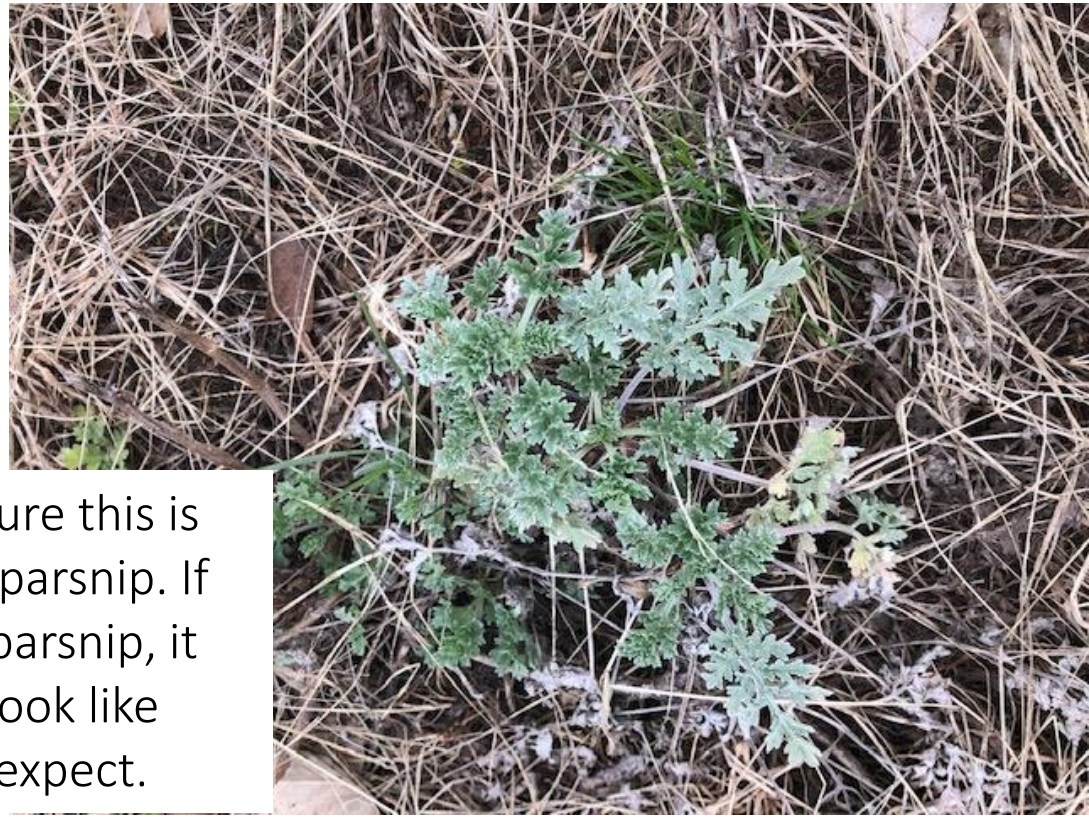
Photo by Byju Govindan

Wild parsnip

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photo by Byju Govindan

Photos by K Nelson



Almost sure this is not wild parsnip. If it's wild parsnip, it doesn't look like what I'd expect.

Photos by K Nelson

Photo by Byju Govindan

Wild parsnip

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photo by Byju Govindan

Photo by Sue Fehr via iNaturalist

Wild parsnip

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Photos by Elizabeth Heeren

Wild parsnip

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Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photo by Darrick Wotachek via
EDDMapS record 8167628

Wild parsnip

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photo by Darrick Wotachek via EDDMapS record 8167628

Photo by Susan Nelson via EDDMapS, Record #8172038

Photo by Susan Nelson via EDDMapS, Record #8172038

Wild parsnip

Photo by albina_gabdullina via iNaturalist

Photos by Abbie Anderson at Schaper Park, 2020

Photos by Abbie Anderson at Schaper Park, 2020

Golden alexanders

Photo by Derek Ramsey (Ram-Man) via Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5

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