

As Plant Growth Begins, Residents Look Out for Invasives

By Paul Gingras

Early summer concerns that a massive plant called giant hogweed, which can cause a painful and lasting skin rash, has sprung up near Pte. Aux Chenes has been identified as a benign look-alike called cow parsnip.

Linda Swartz, a botanist for the East Unit of the Hiawatha National Forest, investigated reports from residents living on Maple Drive, near Pte. Aux Chenes Road in Moran Township, and identified the cow parsnip, possibly saving it from being uprooted by alarmed citizens.

She is on the lookout for all invasive plants, painful ones like Giant hogweed and pretty ones like purple loosestrife, and is involved in several area eradication programs this summer.

While the patch at Pte. Aux Chenes turned out to be the native cow parsnip, giant hogweed could still be growing in the area, Ms. Swartz said, because people plant it in their gardens. It is an attractive plant with enormous, lush, green leaves and flowers that bear a striking resemblance to the blooms of Queen Anne's lace. It can grow up to 12 feet tall in Michigan and up to 20 feet tall in southern regions.

Hogweed produces a watery sap that causes a serious skin reaction called "photodermatitis" if touched. Once skin is exposed to this sap, it sensitive to sunlight. The combination of sap and sun can cause blisters and red blotches that may become dark scars. These scars may persist for several years. Further, if the sap touches a person's eyes, it can cause blindness, according to MSU Extension.

Cow parsnip, like giant hogweed, also bears enormous, lush,

green leaves and large flowers that resemble the umbrella-like Queen Anne's lace. It can also grow to be very large, up to eight feet in height.

Both plants have white hairs on their stems, but the hairs of giant hogweed are coarse, and the hairs of cow parsnip are soft. Further,

giant hogweed bears noticeable purple blotches on its stem, while cow parsnip stems are green and sometimes have a slight purple tinge.

The Michigan State University (MSU) Extension office in St. Ignace provides pamphlets describing the threat of giant hog-

weed and common look-alikes, such as cow parsnip.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is tracking infestations of hogweed throughout Michigan and is seeking public help locating sites where the plant is growing. Anyone who has discovered this invasive plant can call

the Michigan Department of Agriculture at (800) 292-3939, or Ms. Swartz at the St. Ignace District of the U.S. Forest Service at 643-7900.

As of July, 2005, the closest sightings of giant hogweed to Mackinac County were confirmed in Gogebic County, at the western

end of the Upper Peninsula, and Manistee County, on the northwestern edge of the Lower Peninsula.

Other similar plans include the safe angelica plant, wild parsnip, which can also harm skin, or the deadly poison hemlock plant.

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Giant hogweed can grow up to 12 feet tall in Michigan and causes serious skin irritation if touched. The United States Department of Agriculture is requesting that anyone who encounters this plant report it. Here, Mike Zeller of the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service-Plant Protection Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ) poses next to an example of giant hogweed in Pennsylvania. (Photograph courtesy of the United States Department of Agriculture)



Above, left: Garlic mustard, an invasive species, is being removed from the Cut River area this summer by Linda Swartz of the U.S. Forest Service with help from an Engadine 4-H volunteer group calling themselves "The Hardcore."

Above, right: This summer, an invasive species called purple loosestrife is being targeted by members of the Brevort Lake Association with help from the U.S. Forest Service. Purple loosestrife is capable of devastating wetlands. Retail sales of this plant are banned in Michigan, with the exception of cultivars bred to be sterile. Violations result in fines of \$25 to \$100 per offense. Sterile varieties must be approved by the director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture. (Photograph courtesy of Linda Swartz, botanist for the East Unit of the Hiawatha National Forest)

Veterans To Be Focus of Curtis Parade July 2

Veterans will be honored as the theme for the Independence Day parade this year in Curtis, which will host the "Biggest Little Town Parade in Michigan" Sunday, July 2, at 12:30 p.m. This will be the 31st year for the parade, which draws about 15,000 people to the town of 650 residents.

All veterans and veterans organizations are invited to attend and participate by riding on a float, sitting in the reviewing stand, or taking part in the color guard.

Sammi Norman Jr., a fourth-generation serviceman from the Upper Peninsula who is serving in Iraq, is asking spectators to bring new or good-condition used children's shoes to the parade, where they will be collected and shipped overseas for the children of Iraq. The campaign is called "Walk a Mile Barefoot."

For more information about the Curtis parade or to take part, call organizer Captain Bill Kelly at (906) 586-9433, or the Curtis Chamber of Commerce at (906) 586-3700.

Brush, Yard Waste No Longer Taken at Dock 3 in City

St. Ignace residents with brush to dispose of now need to secure a key to the old city dump site on Cheeseman Road. Brush and yard waste is no longer being accepted at Dock 3.

The key is available at the city clerk's office between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Chris Nathan Now Heads Post Office on Temporary Basis

A staffing vacancy at the Cheboygan Post Office has led to a temporary new assignment for St. Ignace Postmaster Billy Norton, who is serving as officer in charge at the Cheboygan office for the next few months, said Chris Nathan of the St. Ignace Post Office. Mr. Nathan, ordinarily the postmaster at Carp Lake, is serving as officer in charge at the St. Ignace office for the same period of time.

Law: Child Support Payments Now Deposited on Debit Cards

The Department of Human Services Office of Child Support in coordination with the Friends of the Court in 32 northern countries, including Mackinac County, will begin disbursing some child support payments through a debit card beginning May 25, in accordance with state law. This new law requires all child support payments to be electronically disbursed via direct deposit into a personal checking/savings account or to a debit card, unless recipients meet hardship exception criteria.

Customers who currently receive paper checks in these counties have received information in the mail, and were given the choice of direct deposit to their checking/savings account or to

Stu Hobbs To Lead Engadine School District

Stu Hobbs has been hired as superintendent of Engadine Consolidated Schools and will continue as high school and middle school principal, a position he has held for seven years. Mr. Hobbs will replace Jim Wilcoxon, who will retire June 30.

Mr. Hobbs has a degree in special education and began teaching in 1980.

Engadine Consolidated Schools is involved in a major restructuring effort, Mr. Wilcoxon said. By taking over superintendent duties, Mr. Hobbs will save the district \$60,000 per year. A host of duties will have to be reassigned, however. For example, Mr. Wilcoxon served as elementary school principal, handled busing, and directed the school's Title I program. Now, the district is likely to establish a "lead teacher" for the elementary school instead of having a principal. A lead teacher adds the duties of a principal to a selected teacher's regular classroom duties. A similar program has been in operation at Moran Township School.

Other responsibilities will have to be absorbed by Mr. Hobbs or reassigned, Mr. Wilcoxon said.

debit card. Paper child support checks will no longer be sent out to customers, unless they meet the hardships exceptions described in the law.

Before implementation of the law, about 30 percent of child support recipients in the state had their payments directly deposited into their personal checking or savings accounts. Customers currently participating in direct deposit are not required to switch to the debit card.

The new VISA debit cards, which will be issued at no cost to the customer, can be used like any other bank or credit union card at millions of locations that accept VISA debit cards without incurring any fees.

In states with electric disbursement already in place, about two-thirds choose direct deposit to checking/savings and one-third choose direct deposit to debit cards.

Tyrone Vaughn of Engadine entered a plea of guilty to attempted criminal sexual conduct, third degree, Friday, June 9, before Judge Charles Stark in 11th Circuit Court in St. Ignace.

The charge carries a maximum possible penalty of five years in prison.

Mr. Vaughn was a girls basket-

ball coach and substitute teacher at Engadine Consolidated Schools at the time of the offense. The victim was a 16-year-old female student and basketball player at the school, reported Mackinac County Prosecuting Attorney Clayton Graham.

Sentencing will be July 21 at 11th Circuit Court.

Former Coach, Teacher Pleads Guilty



Downtown Yard Sale Brings Buyers, Sellers Together
Jean Bentley (left) and Cheryl Matelski browse through the table full of items for sale from the Therrian family in front of the Colonial House Inn during the Community Yard Sale in downtown St. Ignace Saturday, June 10. Rachel Therrian, at right, awaits her next customer. The event, which featured 16 stations, was sponsored by St. Ignace's Chamber of Commerce and Business Association.

At left: Summer has residents on the lookout for a dangerous plant called giant hogweed, which bears enormous leaves, flowers similar to the blooms of Queen Anne's lace, and purple spotted stalks that can reach 12 feet in height. Here, Barbara Heuer of Moran Township poses next to a common look-alike called cow parsnip.

Chamber Rolls Out Mackinac Money...

New Wooden Nickels Are Merchant Tool

By Ellen Paquin

"Mackinac Money" will be the name of a new St. Ignace promotion to be introduced this month, in which visitors and local residents may purchase a keepsake pouch filled with wooden coins, each to be redeemed at a local business for a discount or prize. The pouch full of 20 or 30 coins may be purchased for \$10 and will contain discounts worth between \$150 and \$250.

The idea is similar in concept to a coupon book, said its designer, Darryl Brown, but has some distinct advantages. The wooden coins will be offered in a keepsake velveteen pouch stamped with an image of the Mackinac Bridge, making them appealing to visitors, and the coins will have "no shelf life."

"We know that 60 percent of the people who come to the U.P. are from Michigan, and they may make as many as three or four trips per year," Mr. Brown said. He is working as an advertising liaison with the Chamber of Commerce to launch the program. "With Mackinac Money, they can save the wooden nickels they didn't use this trip and bring them back next time, or give them to a friend who is coming north. The whole idea is to get people from downstate talking about St. Ignace."

"By having fun with it, visitors are more apt to drop in on individual businesses, and we may keep them in town a day, or half a day, longer," Mr. Brown said. "They may say, we have a discount coin for that shop, let's stop and buy our fudge there."

"Instant Winner" coins will be included in many of the pouches at random, Mr. Brown said, and he expects this to be a popular feature of the program for shoppers.

"Businesses have been very generous with prizes for the instant winners," he said, mentioning donated prizes from restaurants, Mackinac Island ferry services, and local attractions and shops. Free ferry rides, free pizzas, duffel bags, and store gift baskets have been donated so far.

When the wooden coins are dropped into cash registers this summer, businesses will be able to use them to track customer sales, said Janet Peterson of the Chamber of Commerce.

"Will they keep track and say, this coin generated a \$25 sale, or just report at year's end that 500 tokens were turned in - that's up to them," she said.

The coins and velveteen pouches are being printed now and will be available in the next couple of weeks at the Chamber of Commerce office, and soon after at participating businesses. Businesses must be Chamber members to use the coin promotion and will buy advertising through the program to participate.

Mackinac Money is the first step in a strategic marketing plan that will develop a funding source for the Chamber of Commerce, which collects operating money only through membership fees. Funds generated by ad sales on the coins will be funneled into a marketing fund that will be used in the next three to five years to develop

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