Wild carrot & parsley dropwort

Wild carrot.

Parsley dropwort.

WALK OR DRIVE around the countryside and you'll often notice white flowers clustered at the top of tall, green stems.

Parsley dropwort (*Oenanthe pimpinelloides*) and wild carrot (*Daucus carota*, carrot weed) are common and can be hard to tell apart. Adding to the confusion, there are other, similar-looking plants like hemlock and burdock.

The carrots we enjoy eating are a sub-species of wild carrot; if you leave your garden varieties to mature, they'll flower and set seed in a similar manner.

Both these species invade pasture, replacing grass and clover.

It's possible wild carrot can taint milk, although cattle don't tend to graze it.

Parsley dropwort is suspected to be toxic; it belongs to a plant family that includes some highly toxic members.

Why is it a weed?

Both grow readily in pastures and downgrade hay value

Where is it found?

Parsley dropwort – mostly Upper North Island
Wild carrot – nationwide

Is it toxic?

Wild carrot – edible and can be used as a herb or diuretic
Parsley dropwort – possibly toxic

How to control these plants

If there are not too many, hand-pulling is a good strategy.

You can control wild carrot by topping or mowing it before it flowers (because it is an annual), but parsley dropwort may regrow.

Spraying with a 2,4-D (eg, Baton) provides good control of seedlings, but is not effective as the plant gets bigger.

WARNING

Many 2,4-D formulations don't have a withholding period for grazing. However, it is recommended that stock do not re-enter a sprayed area until ALL poisonous weeds are dead and have dried off. Many plants increase in sugar content as they wilt and die, becoming more palatable to livestock.

The differences between wild carrot and parsley dropwort

Wild carrot
- annual
- flowers August to May
- often eaten by livestock, especially sheep, even when flowering

Parsley dropwort
- perennial
- re-grows from a fibrous root system with black tubers each year
- flowers from October to April
- less palatable to livestock when close to flowering

About Gary

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