



EDUCATE

DESIGN

CONSULT

Hemlock

Conium maculatum

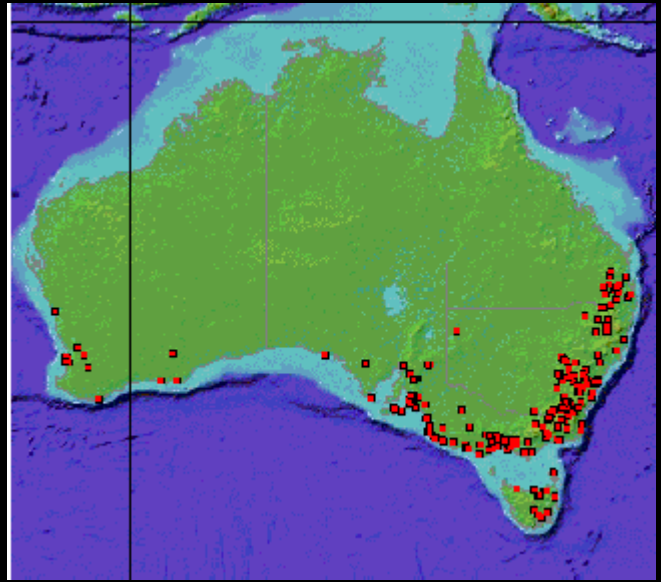


Photo Courtesy Brisbane City Council

Courtesy of Australian virtual herbarium

Description: A many branched, robust, biennial or annual herb, usually 1.5 metres tall with twice divided leaves, many white flowers in spring in umbrella like arrangements at the top and with an unpleasant mousy or parsnip like smell when crushed. The stems are hollow and usually have distinctive purplish blotches.

As A Soil Indicator: Low Calcium, High Potassium, Very high Magnesium, Very high Manganese, Very high Iron, High Sulphur, Very high Copper, Very high Zinc, Very high Boron, Very high Chloride, High Selenium Very little organic matter, Anaerobic bacteria, Prefers damp soils.

Life cycle: Biennial or annual. Seedlings germinate in autumn and sometimes in spring, producing a coarse rosette initially and a deep taproot. Some plants flower in their first spring or summer and die. Others remain vegetative and flower in their second spring and summer then die. It may become perennial in regularly cut situations like Lucerne.

Detrimental: Very toxic. Weed of moist areas, especially along roadsides, ditches, creeks, lucerne, gardens, alluvial flats, rubbish dumps, disturbed areas and in pasture. May cause dermatitis after handling in some people. Hosts carrot fly and celery yellow spot..

Toxicity: Very toxic plant. Contains a number of toxic alkaloids. Eating leaves, roots and seeds mistakenly have caused human deaths. Leaves may be mistaken for parsley, roots for parsnip and seed for aniseed. Most toxic when green and varies with climatic conditions. Livestock usually don't eat the plant but contaminated fodder can cause problems. Many cases of poisoning in cattle, pigs, horses and poultry are reported. Sheep and goats appear to be more tolerant. Young stock are more susceptible than old stock. Taints milk. Secondary poisoning may occur.