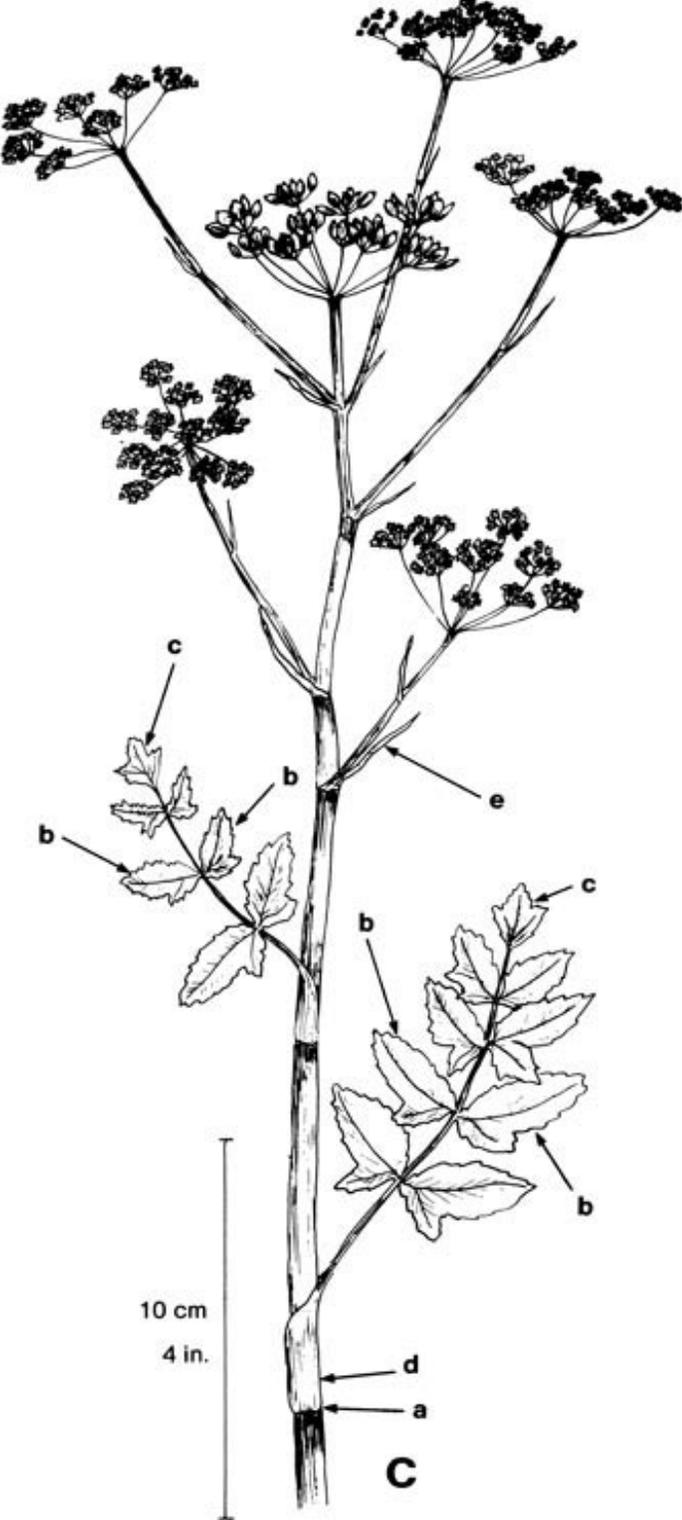


WILD PARSNIP



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Wild Parsnip - Life Cycle Biennial.

Propagation

Reproducing only by seed.

Stems

Stems erect, 50-150 cm high, branched, hollow except at nodes (Fig 6).

Leaves

(a) seedlings with small ovate leaves on long stalks, later rosette leaves pinnately compound with broad leaflets; plants remaining as a rosette during the first season. Stem leaves alternate (1 per node), pinnately compound with usually 2 to 5 pairs of opposite (2 at a place), sharply toothed, relatively broad leaflets (b) that may be somewhat mitten-shaped, and 1 somewhat diamond-shaped leaflet (c) at the tip; all leafstalks broad (d) and completely encircle the stem; uppermost leaves reduced to narrow bracts (e) with flowering branches from their axils.

Flowers and Fruit

Flowers yellow (Fig 4), small, clustered in compound umbels 10-20cm across; seeds round in outline, flat and winged. Flowers from May to late autumn.

Roots and Underground Structures

Thick white to yellowish taproot (Fig 9).

Habitat

Wild parsnip occurs throughout Ontario in abandoned yards, waste places, meadows, old fields, roadsides and railway embankments. It is very similar to the cultivated parsnip and some stands may merely be the cultivated parsnip which escaped or persisted from earlier plantings.

Distinguishing Features

It is distinguished from other members of the Carrot Family by its pinnately compound stem leaves with broad, sometimes coarsely-lobed leaflets, yellow flowers (Fig 4) and distinctive odour.

Human Health Issues

After handling the fruit, flowers or leaves of Wild parsnip, humans can develop dermatitis. Aided by sunlight, chemicals in the plant cause inflammation of the skin. Mild cases cause burning sensations and reddening of the skin. Severe cases can lead to blistering and extreme burning sensations. Wild parsnip reactions often present as long spots or streaks on the skin and are commonly confused with the effects of poison-ivy.

Edibility

The root of this plant is edible.