

## Poison hemlock *Conium maculatum* L.

**Family:** Apiaceae (Parsley family)

**Life cycle:** Biennial

**Habitat:** Pastures, roadsides, no-till fields

**General description:** Basal rosette during first year and then erect flower stalk up to 6 ft high. Leaves are triangular, finely divided and glabrous. Umbels up to 4 in wide with white flowers.

**Key ID traits:** Hairless stem with purple spots, often covered with a waxy bloom. Glossy, dark green, fern-like triangular leaves up to 18 in long.

**Similar species:** Wild carrot is found in similar habitats, but leaves of wild carrot are hairy, smaller and much more finely divided than poison hemlock. Water hemlock has a spotted stem like poison hemlock, but is a perennial that produces a cluster of fleshy tubers at crown, and the leaflets are not finely divided like poison hemlock.

**Miscellaneous:** Poison hemlock contains the toxin coniine which disrupts the central nervous system. It has a structure similar to nicotine, and is believed to be the poison used to kill Socrates. It was commonly used to poison condemned prisoners in ancient Greece.

