



POISON HEMLOCK IN NEW JERSEY – HAZARDS & BEST PRACTICES

According to [Ohio State University](#), poison hemlock is one of the most deadly plants in North America. All plant parts are poisonous: leaves, stems, seeds, and roots. The primary route of entry for the toxin is ingestion. The plant should not be handled because sap on the skin can be rubbed into the eyes or accidentally ingested while handling food. Workers can also get sick by inhaling the dust as they work among plants.

ASK: Who remembers early civilization history; what Greek philosopher committed suicide by ingesting hemlock?

Answer: Socrates

Poison hemlock is a member of the carrot and parsnip family. Poison hemlock stems have reddish or purple spots and streaks, are hollow, and not hairy. Leaves are bright green, fern-like, finely divided, toothed on edges, and have a strong, musty odor when crushed. Flowers are tiny, white, and arranged in small, umbrella-shaped clusters on the ends of branched stems.

The plant can be found in [every county in New Jersey](#) and is expanding rapidly. It thrives near bodies of water and other wet environments but does well in meadows and other open fields. Workers should protect themselves by following these best practices:

- Learn to identify poison hemlock on sight. Do not handle plants until the proper precautions are in place.
- Wear disposable gloves, protective eyewear, and N95 respirators when handling plants. Only clean-shaven workers should wear respirators.
- Dispose of plants in plastic bags.
- Wash your hands and face with soap and water immediately after handling plants.
- Consider if the [control and removal](#) of plants should be done by a qualified vendor.
- The hemlock toxin is a nervous system inhibitor. Learn to recognize the [signs and symptoms of over-exposure](#)
 - Nervous trembling
 - Salivation
 - Lack of coordination
 - Left untreated, it can cause respiratory distress and eventual paralysis of the respiratory system.

Poison hemlock is also extremely poisonous to pets. Death to dogs, cats, and livestock can occur in hours. Be on the lookout for the plant around your property.



Has anyone seen poison hemlock in the area?