

Safety fears as giant hogweed spreads from golf course

Complainer says he has been told to throw plants back

NAINA BHARDWAJ

EDINBURGH Leisure has told a 76-year-old man to fling the poisonous giant hogweed growing in his garden back into the adjoining golf course, he claimed yesterday.

Jimmy MacLeod has been in a constant battle to have the plants growing into his garden from the neighbouring Craigen-tinny Golf Course removed entirely.

He said: "I'm obviously really afraid of how much it's going to grow, especially considering there are people with young children and grandchildren who live in the neighbourhood."

"I've been on the phone with Edinburgh Leisure back and

forth but everyone just seems to pass the buck. They never get back to you but this is really dangerous stuff."

All that Mr MacLeod has been told to do is to fling it back onto the golf course despite the danger of third degree burns and even blindness from the plant's sap.

"I've been on the phone with Edinburgh Leisure back and forth.. everyone just seems to pass the buck" JIMMY MACLEOD

He has instead bought an array of weed killers for him and his son-in-law to use from afar in order to reduce the risks.

Giant hogweed, sometimes known as cartwheel-flower, was first introduced into the

UK in the 1980s as an ornamental plant but its invasive nature has meant that it has spread rapidly since.

Often referred to as 'Britain's deadliest plant,' it can grow 14ft tall with leaves 5ft wide and stems 2-4 inches in diameter.

Children as young as six and even babies across the country have already suffered from the severe consequences of playing in areas with a large amount of giant hogweed.

Mr MacLeod added: "You can't just throw it back onto the golf course because it's so dangerous, it doesn't make any sense. They need to get rid of them all together."

Recent flooding along with a bright summer and mild winter has created the optimum conditions for the plant to thrive in and the covid-19 outbreak has also led to a decrease in the plant's maintenance.

Chief Royal Horticulturist at



DANGEROUS: Giant hogweed can cause serious burns or even blindness

the Royal Horticultural Society, Guy Barter said: "Giant hogweed can cause injury due to its sap on skin trapping sunlight, causing severe burns as well as damaging the ecosystems by its invasive spread."

"It is highly unsuitable for growing in gardens and indeed should be removed from the landscape. This can be tricky as it is already widespread in all UK regions and sheds many seeds, which are typically spread along watercourses."

"Also, it can be hazardous to remove or cut back in bright weather and sap must never be allowed to contaminate bare skin in sunny weather."

Mr Barter continued: "Giant hogweed waste is a controlled waste that can only be disposed of in certain landfill sites and people who allow the weed in their gardens and do not prevent its spread into neighbours' gardens can be subject to an ASBO."

Councillor John McLellan,

who represents the Craigen-tinny/Duddingston ward, said: "It's good practice for Edinburgh Leisure to take responsibility for these pests and see to it that they are removed as soon as possible."

Fellow ward councillor Alex Staniforth said: "Giant hogweed is a very serious, invasive weed and therefore this is a very important issue."

Edinburgh Leisure was contacted for comment.

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