

California Phenology Project: species profile for Common Cowparsnip (*Heracleum maximum*)



CPP site(s) where this species is monitored: Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Redwood National Park



Photo credit: Jerry Oldenettel (Flickr)

What does this species look like?

Common cow parsnip is a perennial, herbaceous plant growing 3 to 10 feet tall. The large broad leaves are lobed and it has thick, hairy stems. On an individual plant, the small white flowers either have both male and female parts or have only male parts. Flowers are grouped into small clusters that are assembled into larger, showier, flat-topped clusters that resemble umbrellas. This is a type of compound inflorescence called an "umbel".

*When monitoring this species, use the USA-NPN **forbs** datasheet.*

Species facts!

- The CPP for letter code for this species is **HELA** (this species was formerly named *Heracleum lanatum*).
- In the carrot family, Apiaceae.
- This species is phototoxic; meaning when compounds are exposed to photons and come into contact with skin they react to cause a rash.
- Common cowparsnip was used by Native Americans for food and medicine; the toxic effects were reduced avoided by peeling the stalks, and selecting the youngest growth.



Photo credit: Jerry Oldenettel (Flickr)



Photo credit: James Gaither (Flickr)

Where is this species found?

- In moist to semi-wet, well-drained soils.
- Prefers loam and sandy loam soils and clay and gravelly substrates.
- Found in woodlands, forest openings, grasslands, and riparian areas.
- Found at elevations less than 2900 meters (Note: according to the Jepson manual).

For more information about phenology and the California Phenology Project (CPP), please visit the CPP website (www.usanpn.org/cpp) and the USA-NPN website (www.usanpn.org)

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Initial growth

Brian Haggerty



Leaves

Miguel Viera



Flowers or flower buds

When monitoring **flower or flower bud abundance** for this species, count each inflorescence as a single flowering structure! For example, if there are two inflorescences with many flowers or buds each, then abundance should be recorded as <3.

Brian Haggerty



Open flowers

Each small flower typically has both male and female parts; many small flowers make up each cluster.

Proportion of open flowers should be recorded at the scale of individual flowers, not inflorescences (i.e. count individual flowers)!

Brian Haggerty

Note: flower phenophases are nested; if you record **Y** for "open flowers" you should also record **Y** for "flowers or flower buds"



Fruits

The fruit is a tiny flattened capsule that changes from green to light-green, white, tan, or brown and displaying four conspicuous vertical purple lines.

Steven Krause



Ripe fruits

The fruit is ripe when it is dry and light-green, white, tan, or brown, and displaying four conspicuous vertical purple lines. **Note:** fruit phenophases are nested; if you record **Y** for "ripe fruits" you should also record **Y** to "fruits"

Brian Haggerty

Phenophases not pictured: **Recent fruit or seed drop**