



# Spotted Water Hemlock

*Cicuta maculata*

Spotted water hemlock is a stout perennial herb, 2 to 6 feet tall, arising from a tuberous base bearing fleshy or fleshy-tuberous roots.

Its short rootstocks have air cavities or chambers separated by cross-partitions containing a yellowish liquid that turns reddish brown when exposed to air. The stems are hollow except at the nodes and may be purple striped or mottled.

The two to three palm-shaped leaves are alternate, with stems wrapping around the main stem; they grow up to 15 inches long and 10 inches wide. The lance-shaped leaflets are 1 to 5 inches long and have saw-like margins.

Small white or greenish flowers are arranged at the ends of the stems in umbrella-shaped clusters.

## Distribution and habitat

Spotted water hemlock is found in east, central and north Texas. Because it requires ample water, it is found only near streams, marshes, wet meadows and permanent springs. Regions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8.

## Toxic agent

The lower stalk and chambered rootstock of this plant contain

most of its toxic alcohol, but hazardous concentrations can also occur in very young leaves. Mature and dried leaves are not toxic.

This fast-acting toxin can cause death between 1 and 8 hours after consumption in all animals, including humans.

## Livestock signs

The toxic alcohol is a convulsant, and the clinical signs are the result of its action on the central nervous system. They include:

- Muscle tremors
- Salivation
- Grinding of the teeth
- Convulsions
- Death

## Integrated management strategies

Water hemlock poisoning is not a significant livestock problem in Texas. Animals will die if they are forced to consume the young plant.

Do not pull plants for animals to consume, as this will make the highest concentration of toxin available (in the chambered rootstock) and can easily cause fatal poisoning.

