

Hemlock Water-dropwort

Oenanthe crocata

Plants · In flower Jun-Jul



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A robust waterside perennial with hollow grooved stems, glossy bright green celery-like leaves and broad flat umbels of small white flowers. The roots are pale, swollen and finger-like. Hemlock water-dropwort grows along ditches, burn sides, marshes and river margins throughout the wetter ground around Dumfries, and is common on the Solway coast.

BEHAVIOUR

Every part is extremely poisonous, and the roots most of all — they contain oenanthotoxin, and a small quantity has proved fatal. Deaths have followed the roots being mistaken for parsnip or the leaves for celery or watercress, and livestock are poisoned where bank clearance exposes the roots. It should be treated with real caution and never foraged near.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Carrots (Apiaceae)
HEIGHT	50–150 cm
STATUS	Native; common — and among Britain's most poisonous plants

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