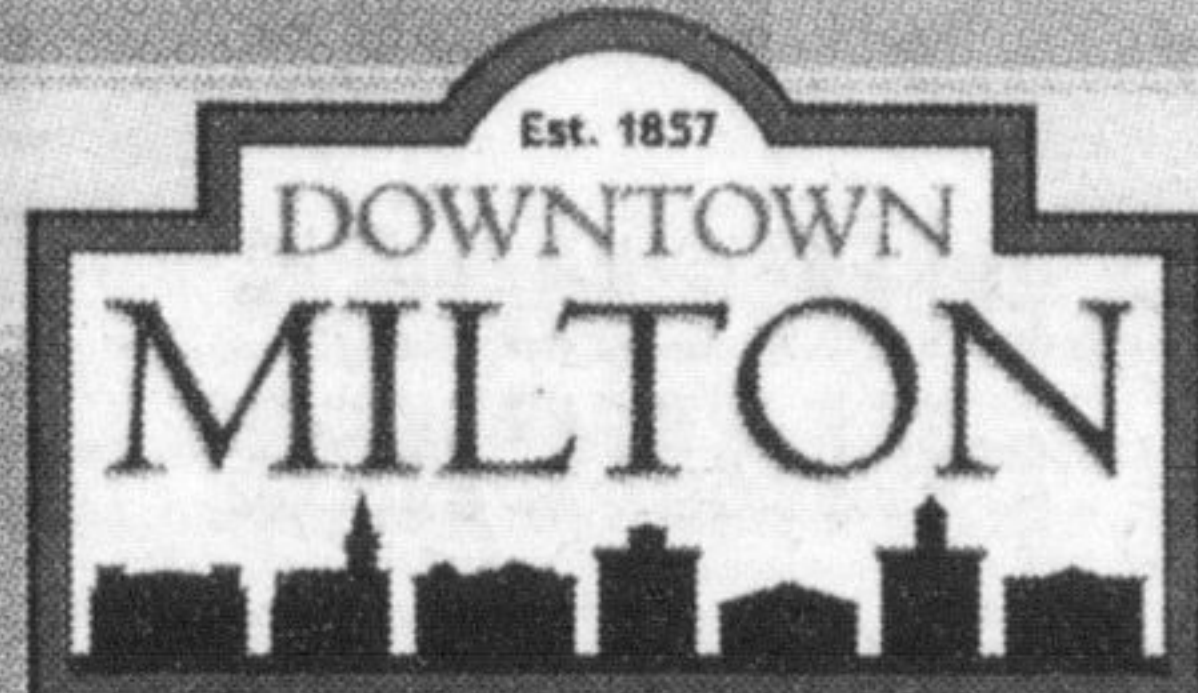


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JON CURRIE / METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

NO SHORTAGE OF HORSEPOWER: Neil McPhail of the recently-established Halton 4-H Pullers — sponsored by Halton Turf and Tractor — pulls 'The Anchor' during the recent All-Colour Antique Tractor and Toy Show at Country Heritage Park.

Plant's toxic sap can even cause blindness

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The danger lies in the clear, watery, toxic sap that, if touched, sensitizes skin to UV rays and the sun and can cause everything from minor spots to severe blisters, burns and even blindness.

"It's important to avoid any contact with it," Basit said. "The effects of this can be quite devastating."

Residents who find giant hogweed on their properties — most often rural land — should contact an expert to get rid of it, Basit said.

The weed thrives in damp areas, which explains its presence along the Sixteen Mile Creek. This summer's cool, wet weather is to blame for it flourishing this year, Basit said.

It's invasive, which means it grows and spreads very quickly; locally, seeds travel along the Sixteen Mile Creek and can cover quite a distance.

Basit recommends that residents who see the plant report it to CH, which is mapping the locations and hopes to come up with a control plan.

The Province's Ontario Weeds website (www.ontarioweeds.com) lists five Milton locations where the presence of giant hogweed has been verified, most of which is private land. Spots include along the

Sixteen Mile Creek, behind the Grand Chalet banquet centre on Steeles Avenue, near Steeles Avenue and Martin Street, along Derry Road west of Ontario Street, and at Britannia Road and Regional Road 25.

Readers also reported it along the east side of Peru Road and in the overgrown area beside the Milton Sports Centre.

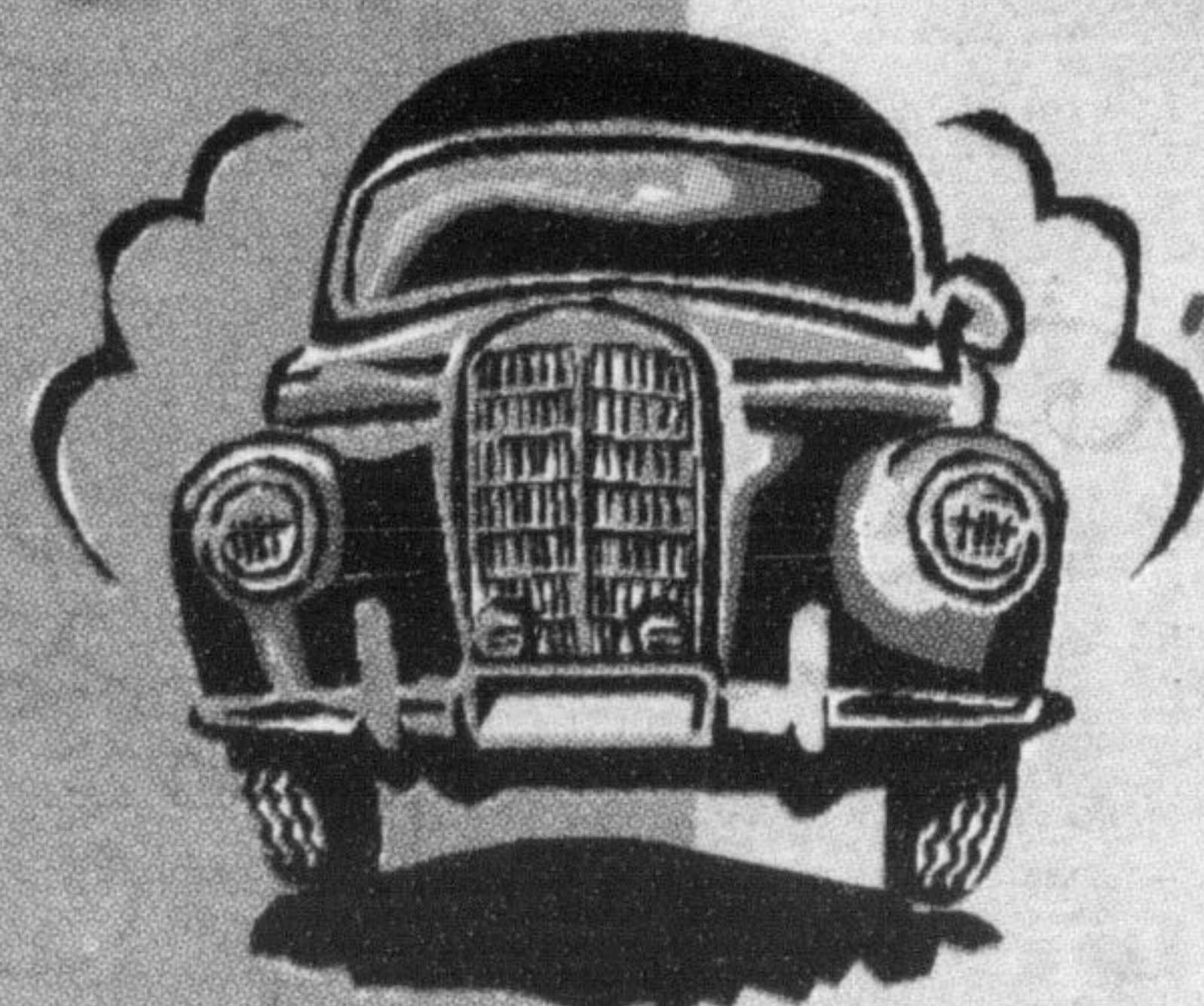
In addition, it was found — and quickly removed — by CH staff at Mountsberg Conservation Area in front of the Discovery Centre a few weeks ago, Basit said.

Paul Cripps, the Town's director of engineering services, said one plant was discovered this summer in Melanie Park and removed.

Since the majority of giant hogweed is on private property and not on the Province's list of noxious weeds under the Weed Control Act of Ontario, the Town can't force landowners to get rid of it, Cripps said.

Mike Cowbrough, a weed specialist with the Province, explained giant hogweed isn't on the noxious weeds list because the list focuses on plants that pose a danger to agriculture.

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