

On Tuesday, October 7th, 2008 hundreds of people living and working in the Markham area will be taking part in the Heroes Challenge in support of Markhaven Home for Seniors. **Join in a unique experience** that will help raise support for seniors and an awareness of the challenges faced by grandmas and grandpas and other seniors who have contributed so much to our community.

Register online heroeschallenge.ca or at Foundation office
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PHOTO COURTESY PHIL BANNON

A possible hogweed sighting as photographed at Musselman's Lake this summer. There were multiple reports.

HOGWEED?

Sightings of dangerous plant rare, York Region forester says

BY ALYSHIA HIGGINS

A large weed has sparked huge concerns at Musselman's Lake.

A giant hogweed was allegedly spotted growing on Churchill Beach property by a resident, who had seen a story about the weed on television.

The resident e-mailed the president of the Musselman's Lake Residents Association, who contacted Councillor Phil Bannon.

Mr. Bannon said within hours, town staff were on site removing the potentially dangerous plant.

The area was also sprayed for any roots that were missed.

The next day, a similar looking plant was spotted on Churchill Beach Road, just east of Ninth Line. Town staff returned to the area, dug up and removed the weed, and sprayed the area once again.

So far, no other sightings of the giant weed have been reported, although there were sightings on the Whitchurch-Stouffville/Uxbridge border last month.

Regional health officials, noting hogweed is rarely found in York Region, can't confirm if it was the plant. The weed was removed before they could take a look and photos were inconclusive.

James Lane, a forester with York Region, said the weed is often mistaken for another similar looking but less dangerous plant called cow parsnip.

"Cow parsnip is commonly found in same areas

► Go to townofws.com for more information.

similar to giant hogweed,' he said. 'Of all the calls I've ever received (regarding potential hogweed), they've all turned out to be cow parsnip. I haven't come across it yet.'

The giant hogweed originated in Asia, and made its way to Ontario more than two decades ago.

The weed, which can grow up to five metres high, is most easily identified by its purple stalk and white flowers.

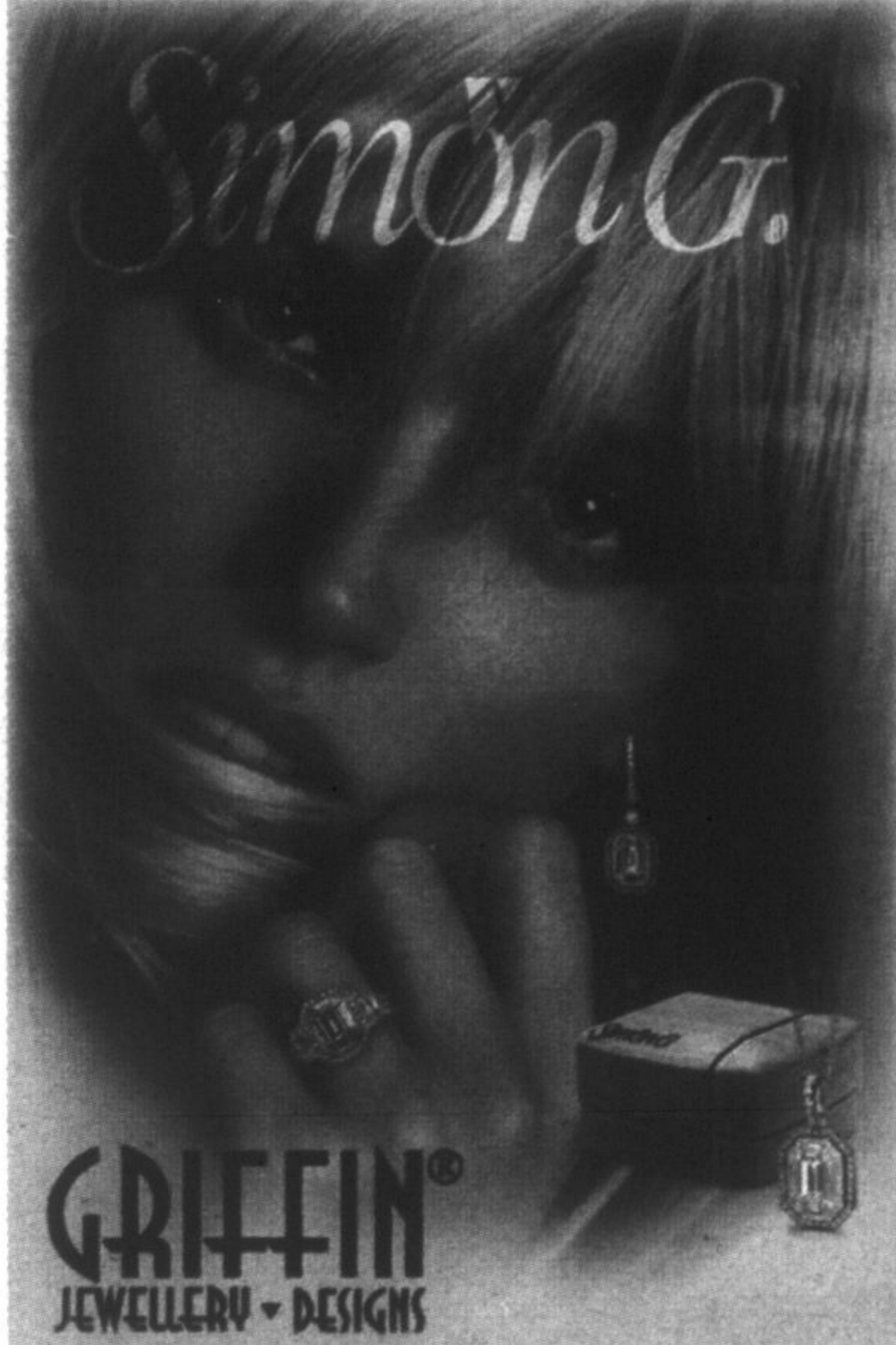
While it may look harmless, the sap from the leaves and stem of the plant causes skin to be photosensitive.

After contact with the giant weed, exposure to sunlight can cause severe blisters, burns and lesions. Contact with the eyes can result in temporary or permanent blindness.

"I think it's great we have this level of communication," Mr. Bannon said. "In this case here, it shows how well we can work together and address the concerns of the community and I certainly like to thank the residents for doing that."

Mr. Bannon also encourages residents to educate themselves on the plant and keep an eye out.

"When walking through the woods and the beach area, if they do see one of these, be very careful and keep their children away from the plant," he said, adding residents should call the town if they think they found one.



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