

## Garlic Mustard

### What Is Garlic Mustard?

Garlic mustard, or *Alliaria petiolata*, is a biennial or winter annual weed that is distinguished by its broad leaves with rounded or coarse-toothed edges, its small white flowers, and its distinctive garlic odour. It can grow up to a metre high and will have simple branches with maybe a few hairs on it.

When young, garlic mustard is often confused with the weed creeping Charlie, or ground ivy, because of their similar leaves, but once matured, the garlic mustard will be taller and have white flowers.

### Where Did It Come From?

Garlic mustard was brought to North America from Europe; most likely, it was a medicinal herb or green vegetable. It was first documented in the US on Long Island, New York, in 1868.

Since then, it has been found in more than 30 states and four provinces. Garlic mustard is found mostly in moist woods, along forest edges, in swamps, along roadsides and railway embankments, and in nearby cultivated areas throughout southern Ontario.

### Why Is It Important?

Garlic mustard is an invasive foreign species that is invading our natural lands and pushing out native plants. This invasion is causing our natural balance to be disturbed and is harmful to our native ecosystem.

Garlic mustard's prolific dominance here is believed to be caused by the plant's ability to disrupt the balance between native species and the mycorrhizal, a beneficial fungus found in the soil, allowing it to grow more easily and to beat out the native species.

Along with garlic mustard's ability to out compete native plants, human intervention has little effect; chemical and physical controls are too inefficient to deal with the plant's spread. Although it is not a severe threat and may never be, it is still an invasive weed and should be controlled as much as possible.

### How Can It Be Dealt With?

To deal with garlic mustard on a small scale such as around a house or in a garden, the best method is removal by hand; simply pulling the weed out of the ground will take care of it. Should there be a small infestation, cutting is an option. The lower you cut, the less the chances of survival are; a lawn mower or string trimmer works best.

Your main focus when finding garlic mustard should be to remove it as soon as possible, so the plant does not have time to develop seeds and begin to reproduce. Garlic mustard is a pain once established, so if it is taken care of quickly, then you won't have to worry about it.

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