

Beware: Garlic Mustard

This Noxious Weed is Invading Our Woods and Gardens

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In many areas of Wayzata and surrounding communities, wild flowers and other native plants are being impacted by an invasive species, *Alliaria petiolata*, better known as **garlic mustard**, but fortunately, we can all do something to help control it.

PROBLEMS: Wayzata's original habitat was deciduous forest woodland. The Big Woods and other remnants of this original habitat were once filled with trillium, bloodroot, Jack-in-the-pulpits, ferns and other wildflowers, but these are disappearing as garlic mustard crowds them out and releases a natural herbicide into the soil. Birds, butterflies and other wildlife that depend on native plants also disappear in this altered environment. Because this noxious weed spreads into high quality woodlands and other undisturbed areas, it is imperative that we stop its advance. The good news is that once the garlic mustard has been eradicated, wildflowers will return along with the birds that feed on the bugs that visit these flowers or the nectar they produce – thus, the return of our beautiful native backyard sanctuaries.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Check the spread of garlic mustard on your own property. The garlic mustard seed is viable for five to seven years. In the spring after a soaking rain and before budding begins, pull the plant out by its root. Make sure you get the entire "s" shaped taproot, which looks much like a dandelion root. If the plant has flowered, pull and place plants in a black plastic bag (do not add to your compost pile!) and leave in the sun for a month or more. Remember: Garlic mustard seeds can ripen even after the plant has been pulled.

The seedpod produces hundreds of seed that scatter when they drop and are spread by animals, people, streams, and wild animals traveling through the area. **Brush the mud off your shoes or dog's fur to avoid transporting seeds to new areas.**

For large infestations, cutting the plants low to the ground will prevent flowering and seed production. Mulching with two to four inches of leaves or grass clippings is another eradication method. Plants can be burned or placed in black plastic bags tied tightly and left in the sun. For photos and more information on eradication methods go to www.ipaw.org/invaders/garlic_mustard/gm.htm

DESCRIPTION: Garlic mustard is a biennial, non-native herb that grows in moist or dry, shaded areas on roadsides, gardens, or at edges of woods in non-acidic soils. It prefers shade but will sometimes be found in sunny areas. First year plants look similar to our native violets and can stay green all winter, photosynthesizing under the snow. Its leaves are rough, wrinkled and kidney shaped with scalloped edges. The leaves and stems when crushed have a garlic odor. The second year plant grows from 12- 48 inches tall and has triangular-shaped, sharp-toothed leaves that move up the stem. The clusters of white four-petal flowers mature at the top.

HISTORY: Garlic mustard, a European native, was introduced in New England in the mid-1800s for its herbal and medicinal purposes and now has invaded 28 Midwestern and Northeastern states and southern Canada. Young garlic mustard leaves are added to salads and are used in sauces by some European cooks. Large taproots taste like horseradish. It is also referred to as Jack-by-the-hedge and sauce-alone and has no known natural predator here as it does in Europe where small weevils feed on the plant during several stages of growth.