



# Star-of-Bethlehem

*Ornithogalum umbellatum* L.

### Native Origin:

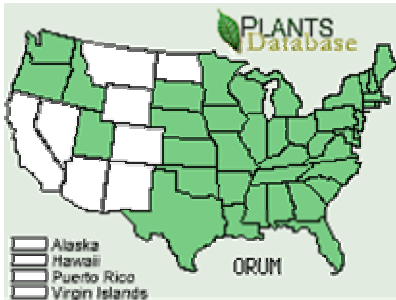
North Africa; European: Portugal, Spain, Italy, France; Western Asia: Turkey.

### Description:

Star-of-Bethlehem is an herbaceous plant in the lily family (Liliaceae) that grows from bulbs with annual renewal. The bulbs are ovoid in shape and measure 0.5-1.5 inches in length. The coat of the bulb is membranous. Shiny, dark green leaves are narrow and linear with distinct white midrib. Leaves are approximately 4-12 inches long and 0.1-0.2 inch wide and are hollow in cross section. Flowers consist of 6 white petals, 0.5-0.75 inches in diameter, which collectively resemble a star. Flowers occur at the ends of leafless flowering stems (scapes) and can grow up to 1 foot in height but are usually shorter. The umbel-like raceme contains 3-10 flowers that appear from May to June. The fruit is a 3-lobed capsule that contains several oval black seed. Emerging star-of-Bethlehem shoots resemble wild garlic or wild onion but lack the characteristic odor of these species.



**Habitat:** This plant prefers moist to wet habitats. It can be found along the banks of rivers and streams, in disturbed situations, in early succession forest, forest edge, floodplain forest, wet meadows, yards and gardens.



**Distribution:** See shaded states on the Plant Database map

**Ecological Impacts:** Star-of-Bethlehem causes potential threats to native vegetation. It has been sold as an ornamental and has escaped to become a weed of landscapes, pastures, hayfields, turf grass, and lawns.

**Poisonous potential:** Flowers and bulbs contain glycosides similar to digitalis. In some countries children have been poisoned after ingesting the flowers or bulbs. Ingesting two bulbs can cause shortness of breath in adults. Symptoms of toxicosis include nausea, salivation, vomiting, diarrhea, and shortness of breath, pain, burning, and swelling of lips, tongue, and throat, skin irritation following prolonged contact.



**Control and Management:** Do not plant this species and eliminate the plant if possible.

**Chemical-** Star-of Bethlehem is non-responsive to several herbicides. Research studies at Purdue University found that paraquat provided 70 to 78% control.

### References:

<http://plants.usda.gov>, [www.ag.uiuc.edu/cespubs/pest/articles/200305e.html](http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/cespubs/pest/articles/200305e.html)  
 Invasive Plant Atlas of New England-<http://webapps.lib.uconn.edu/ipane>  
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[www.btny.purdue.edu/weedscience/2005/starofbeth05.pdf](http://www.btny.purdue.edu/weedscience/2005/starofbeth05.pdf)  
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