

# INVASIVE EXOTICS

## Garlic Mustard

*Alliaria petiolata*

Mustard Family (Brassicaceae)

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**What does it look like?** Garlic mustard, native to Europe is a biennial herb, with basal leaves that are dark green and kidney-shaped. Stem leaves are alternate, toothed and triangular. In the spring and early summer, leaves and stems produce a distinctive garlic odor when crushed. Flowers consist of four white petals that narrow abruptly at the base. Seeds, black and oblong, are contained within siliques, which are narrow, four-sided, linear capsules from 1 in. to 4 ½ in. long. Plants usually produce a single unbranched or few branched flower stalk, and can range in height from 5 to 46 in. tall.

**What habitats are threatened by this plant?** Garlic mustard thrives in shady habitats and spreads along stream corridors. This plant invades moist forest, wooded stream banks, roadsides and trail edges. It is intolerant of extremely acidic soils.

**How does this plant spread?** Seeds germinate in early April through May and produce only leaves during the first year. Garlic mustard remains green throughout the year. In the second year, plants bolt and bloom from May through early July, and produce fruit in July through August. The plants die after producing seed.

**Where is this plant found in the United States?** It is believed that early settlers brought garlic mustard to North America by early settlers. Garlic mustard poses a severe threat to natural areas because of its ability to quickly dominate the herbaceous layer to the exclusion of native plants. In North America, garlic mustard is widely distributed throughout the east, from North Carolina to the southern Ontario and Quebec, and as far west as North Dakota, Kansas, Colorado and Utah.

**How can it be controlled?** Successful control methods include hand-pulling, cutting flower stems, preventing it from going to seed or prescribed burning. Hand-pulling followed by tamping the disturbed soil is recommended for light infestations. This method is recommended before seed is set. If seed has set, be careful to remove most/all of the viable seed from the area. Garlic mustard spreads only by seed. Because the seed bank is short-lived (2 to 5 years), control methods should be considered for a maximum period of 5 years to deplete the seed bank. Native plants such as creeping phlox *Phlox stolonifera*, lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), wood fern (*Dryopteris spp.*) and New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*) can be planted to re-establish native plants area where garlic mustard occurs.

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