

# Garlic Mustard

*Alliaria petiolata*

Mustard Family

## Class A Noxious Weed: Eradication Required

### Identification Tips

- Grows to 4 feet tall
- Typically produces one flowering stalk with small, four-petal white flowers clustered at the end of the stems
- In spring the roots and new leaves smell like garlic
- The root usually has a distinct 'S' or 'L' shape just below the stem
- Mature leaves are triangular with longer teeth edges, becoming smaller toward the top of the plant
- Rosettes have kidney-shaped leaves



*Flowers are small, white with four petals.*

### Biology

- Non-native biennial herb
- Spreads by seed
- Flowers in early April to May
- Seedlings develop into basal rosettes by mid-summer; they overwinter to bolt the following spring



*Garlic mustard carpet the forest floor by mid-summer and over the winter.*

### Impacts

- Produces chemicals that inhibits the growth of other plants, fungi and butterfly larvae
- Displaces native plants due its aggressive, mat-like growth pattern

### Distribution

- Only known sites are in Seattle, in and near parks, Longfellow Creek, Burke Gilman Trail, the Arboretum and neighboring residential areas
- Seeds fall close to the parent plant where they are moved by people, animals and vehicles
- Known to quickly spread from paths and trails to wooded areas
- Thought to have been spread through the wood chip piles used by Seattle Parks
- Can grow in dense shade or sunny sites



*Dense patch of garlic mustard along Longfellow Creek crowds out native plants.*

### Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control  
Program Line: 206-296-0290  
[www.kingcounty.gov/weeds](http://www.kingcounty.gov/weeds)

## What You Can Do

Since distribution of this noxious weed is limited to a relatively small area in King County, eradication is possible. The key is preventing its spread and removing plants from all known sites. Help us by familiarizing yourself with this plant and the habitat where it grows. Monitor sites regularly and whenever possible remove plants prior to seed set. Contact the Noxious Weed Control Program if you see garlic mustard on public lands or neighboring properties.

## Control Methods

Most control methods need to be applied over a number of years to be successful. Choose one or a combination of these.

**Prevention:** Monitor areas with wood chips, fill dirt, landscaping bark, gravel from outside your area; clean vehicles and equipment regularly. Check for rosettes (young plants) in the spring.

**Manual:** *Mature plants*—hand pulling in the early spring is effective, or cut the flowering stalk to the ground. Remove the stems and flowers from the site. *Rosettes*—hand pulling is NOT recommended. Rosettes tend to snap off at the root, allowing the plant to re-sprout.

**Mechanical:** Tillage may be effective for large areas but may initially expose more seeds for germination. Mowing can stimulate crown growth and side roots. **Take note: Plants will flower again after mowing. Any cut or pulled garlic mustard plants must be removed from the site, even if only in bud. They can still form viable seeds.**

**Chemical:** Follow labels exactly as written and only use herbicides appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides are effective on rosettes. Spraying in spring or autumn with glyphosate (such as Round-up) has shown to be the most effective chemical control. Products containing 2,4-D (such as Weed-B-Gone and Crossbow) do not significantly control garlic mustard.



*Prevention is within your grasp: Hand pull mature plants whenever possible.*



*Garlic mustard on the left; money plant on the right.*

**Don't be Fooled:** In its rosette stage, garlic mustard is sometimes confused with several native plants and some common weeds. Those include wild violets (*Viola* spp.), fringedcup (*Tellima grandiflora*) and piggy-back plant (*Tolmiea menziesii*). Nipplewort plants (*Lapsana communis*) also resemble garlic mustard, but the flowers are yellow instead of white. Money plant (*Lunaria annua*) is similar but has round, flattened seed pods.



**King County**

Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
Water and Land Resources Division  
**Noxious Weed Control Program**  
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