TOWN OF NORWICH, VERMONT

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Garlic Mustard (Alliaria petiolata)

Garlic mustard can be nondescript and difficult to identify in its first year, but second year plants have distinctive triangular leaves with white flowers on 2-4 foot tall stalks.

While the plant has few natural predators, garlic mustard is safe for human consumption and young plants can be used in salads, soups, dry rubs and marinades, and pesto sauce. Older plants are still edible but have a more bitter taste.

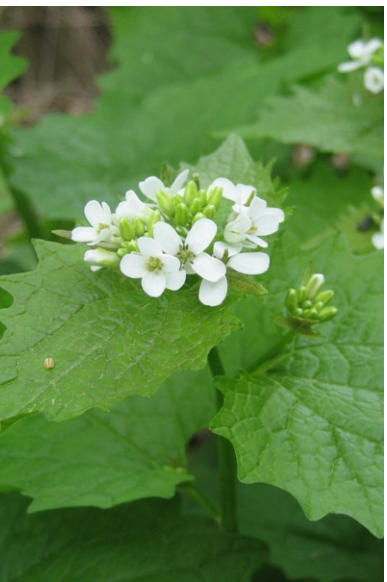
Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is a biennial herb originally native to Europe. It was brought to the United States in the late 1800s with the intention of using it for medicinal and herbal purposes, but it quickly escaped into the wild. Today it can be found in most of the United States and Canada.

DISPERSAL & REPRODUCTION

Garlic mustard seeds usually fall beneath the parent plant, but nonetheless the species has demonstrated an ability to spread mechanically over longer distances by hitching rides on humans or wildlife. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for as long as 5 years.

Garlic mustard is a site generalist that can colonize nearly every habitat common to Vermont, though it grows best in moist, shaded areas. It can be found in disturbed environments like old fields, vacant lots, trails and roadsides, as well as interior forest. Garlic mustard is a fast-growing species that is not preferred browse for deer and other wildlife, and left unchecked it will dominate the groundstory and outcompete native vegetation, including toothwort species that serve as hosts to butterflies.

Garlic mustard is an allelopathic species that releases chemicals into its surroundings that inhibit the growth of competitors, including mycorrhizal fungi that aid the growth of northern hardwood trees. This effectively gives it the ability to compete successfully with woody seedlings. Garlic mustard's chemical makeup also makes it toxic to butterfly larvae.



IDENTIFICATION: first year plants are low-lying with a basal rosette of evergreen kidney-shaped leaves; second year plants have triangular, toothed leaves on 2 to 4 foot tall stalks; white flowers with 4 petals bloom in late April to mid-June; seeds are shiny, black, and cylindrical and are found in pods (siliques) 1-2 inches long.

CONTROL: hand-pulling of the stem and root is best done in the spring before seeds have formed; chemical control is also effective, though much less selective than targeted hand-pulling; preventive measures like limiting soil disturbance/erosion and vigilant monitoring are the most efficient methods of control.