

What Plant Threatens Beloved Spring Wildflowers and Butterflies?

The Culprit: Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)



Crush the leaves and stems to smell the plant's strong garlic odor.

Garlic mustard was brought to North America by European settlers for medicinal purposes and to use as a culinary herb.

Now we know =>

Garlic mustard displaces native spring wildflowers like spring beauty, wild ginger, and trillium in forests. Butterflies and forest trees are at risk when this invasive plant is present.

Why It's a Problem

- Grows fast in the spring and displaces beloved spring wildflowers
- Takes over the forest floor within 10 years of introduction
- Kills soil fungi needed for forest tree growth
- Poses a serious threat to native butterflies
- Not a food source for deer, insects, or other animals



What Does It Look Like?



Garlic mustard is a biennial meaning it lives for two years. The first year, the plant hugs the forest floor as a rosette with kidney-shaped leaves.



During the plant's second year, it produces flowering stalks with triangular shaped leaves. This is called bolting. The leaves are strongly toothed.



Each flower has four white petals arranged in a cross. The flower forms a slender seed pod or silique. The unripened pod is green.



As the seeds ripen they turn black and are very small. The pods dry and split in the summer. They hang around for a few months and are easy to see against the green foliage of the forest in summer.

How Do I Control It?

- Plants at all stages can be pulled by hand. However, if the plant is flowering, it is important to bag the plant and dispose in the trash.
- Foliar herbicide treatment is best in late winter or early spring while the plant is still in the rosette stage.



When hand pulling garlic mustard make sure to remove the taproot. Grasp the base of the plant and gently pull. This is done best when the soil is moist. Remember to bag and dispose of plants that have started to flower.

Additional Information

Blue Ridge PRISM

-- [Garlic Mustard Fact Sheet](#)

-- [Resources on Invasive Plants](#)



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