

# MOST (UN)WANTED PLANT:



## Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)



First-year garlic mustard leaves



2nd-year flowers and leaves

## WANTED: DEAD OR REMOVED

### Guilty of Illegal Ecologic Invasion!

Have you seen this plant on your property? It tastes like garlic and was brought to New England by early settlers for food and medicinal uses. Garlic mustard has turned into an aggressive, invasive plant that forms dense stands, especially in shade, choking out rare native woodland and wetland plants and altering the soil microbiota needed by trees to grow.

Garlic mustard spreads by seeds carried on people's shoes, animal feet, and car and mower tires.

### If Seen: Pull Immediately!

Garlic mustard is a biennial plant, living and dying in 2 years. In its 1st year, the plant grows a low mound of rounded or heart-shaped leaves, then in the 2nd year, shoots up flower stems which bloom in the spring. Flowers form seeds and the plant dies.

To control garlic mustard's spread, you need to prevent plants from going to seed. Pull plants out by their roots, and if flowers or seeds are present, throw them out in your trash to prevent seeds from dispersing..



**Common Ground  
Land Trust INC.**

for Leicester & Spencer, MA

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# Garlic Mustard Fact Sheet

## ***Are you growing this invasive plant?***

It may have already shown up! Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is an herb in the Mustard family, native to Europe and parts of Asia, that was brought here by early settlers for culinary and medicinal uses. It has spread throughout Massachusetts and is now an invasive weed that threatens the health of our native forests. It loves to grow in shady areas near water, but will grow just about anywhere, including gardens, roadsides, and areas with soil disturbance.



## ***Why is it such a bad plant?***

Garlic mustard spreads aggressively by seed, choking out rare native plants and reducing plant and animal diversity. Its alleopathic roots contain toxins that interfere with the microscopic soil fungi essential to the growth of tree roots, so it is especially damaging to forest plant communities. Even though garlic mustard only lives for 2 years, just a few plants on your property that go to seed can explode into a serious infestation over time. Each new plant produces up to 6,000 seeds, allowing it to cover an area in just a few years if left unchecked.

*Garlic mustard is a biennial plant which flowers and goes to seed in its second year, then dies. Control its spread by pulling out plants or repeatedly cutting down flower stalks before the flowers go to seed.*

## ***Controlling garlic mustard:***

Control of garlic mustard means preventing plants from going to seed in their second year. Pull out 1st-year plants by the roots as soon as you see them in early spring, and be sure to pull out the entire root, or the plant will re-sprout. Kill plants by laying them on the ground in the sun to dry out, but do not pile them up, because the roots will continue to grow in the presence of moisture.

For 2nd year garlic mustard plants, pull plants by the roots, or cut/mow the flowering stems to the ground repeatedly to prevent flowers from forming. You will need to repeat this several times because plants will try to re-flower again and again. **If plants have flowers or seed pods on them, do not compost them, but bag them up and dispose of in your household trash to prevent any seeds from spreading.**