



Garlic Mustard



Garlic mustard has triangular leaves and white flowers. Photo: Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org



Garlic mustard can grow quickly over an entire area. Photo: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

What Is It?

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is a single-stalked plant, which typically grows to about three feet tall. It has small white flowers near the top and is found in forested areas. Garlic mustard is shade tolerant and can establish easily in Washington. This noxious weed is difficult to control once it has reached a site. It is native to northern Europe.

Is It Here Yet?

Yes. Garlic mustard was first identified in Seattle in 1999 and since has been found in several locations throughout Washington.

Why Should I Care?

Garlic mustard outcompetes native plants, changing the structure of forest plant communities and reducing food sources and habitat for wildlife. It produces chemicals that can stop the growth of other plants and fungi. Garlic mustard also has been shown to kill larvae of certain butterfly species who lay eggs on the plant.

What Are Its Characteristics?

- Typically grows to about 3 feet tall.
- Small, white, 4-petaled flowers grow near the top and eventually die to reveal slender seedpods.
- Triangular-shaped leaves have short stalks and alternate up the main stem. They get increasingly smaller towards the top of the plant.



Garlic Mustard

- In early spring, the leaves smell like garlic if crushed.
- When immature, the plant forms a rosette or low-growing cluster of kidney-shaped leaves.

How Do I Distinguish It From Native Species?

During its rosette stage, garlic mustard resembles several native plants also found in the forest, including several plants in the Saxifrage family (e.g., *Tellima grandiflora* [fringe cup] and *Tolmiea menziesii* [piggy-back plant]). Saxifrages may be distinguished from garlic mustard by long hairs, particularly on the leaf stems. Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*) may be distinguished from garlic mustard by flowers, which are yellow instead of white. Money plant (*Lunaria annua*) is similar but has round, flattened seedpods.



Photo: David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org

How Can We Stop It?

Clean all gear and vehicles that have passed through known or potentially infested areas. Garlic mustard is listed as a Class A noxious weed in Washington, meaning eradication is required. Garlic mustard also is on Washington's Terrestrial Noxious Weed Seed and Plant Quarantine list, meaning it is prohibited to transport, buy, sell, offer for sale, or distribute garlic mustard plants, plant parts, or seeds.

What Should I Do If I Find It?

Report immediately via the WA Invasives mobile app or reporting web form at <https://invasivespecies.wa.gov/report-a-sighting/>.