



Garlic Mustard Challenge

Help keep this invasive plant from spreading in New England!

The Garlic Mustard Challenge is a collaborative effort to restore and protect natural ecosystems across the Midwest and Northeast. The goal is to encourage people to get outside on the land and care for natural areas in a fun and engaging way!

Quick Facts about Garlic Mustard:

- Introduced in late 1800s
- Aggressive invader
- 2 years to flower
- Clusters of round, kidney-shaped rosettes or stalks of heart-shaped, toothed leaves
- Strong garlic smell if crushed



Why Should We Care?

Garlic mustard is an **aggressive invader** and is difficult to control once established. If left unchecked it will quickly dominate a woodland understory; its seeds remain viable in the ground for more than 5 years. The plant is **allelopathic**, which means it emits chemicals that prevent the growth of other (native) plants.

Get Involved in the Garlic Mustard Challenge

Anyone can participate! You can hand pull small patches, or join forces with other volunteers.

1. Volunteer for a Pull

- Late April to early June.
- Anywhere in New England that garlic mustard is present.
- Find events & sign-up to volunteer at naturegroupie.org.

2. Organize a Pull

- Pull in your own backyard, in a beloved nearby conservation area, with friends, with volunteers, or with a school group.
- **Request a free packet** from the Network that includes materials on how to recognize the plant, how work with volunteers to get rid of it, and up to 30 "Pull It" stickers to share with your volunteers.

3. Report Your Bags

- Keep track of how many bags of garlic mustard you've pulled and report your bags! <http://bit.ly/ReportYourBags>

Garlic Mustard Identification

Garlic mustard is an invasive herbaceous plant that was introduced to the U.S. from Europe in the late 1800s for culinary and medicinal purposes. It is a biennial plant, which means it needs two years to complete its reproductive cycle.

First-Year Plants

- **Clusters of 3 to 8 round or kidney-shaped leaves** emerge in spring; they have scalloped edges, a wrinkled look, grow low to the ground, and remain green all winter.

Second-Year Plants

- The surviving second year plants develop a **flowering stalk 1-4 feet tall**.
- The alternate leaves are heart-shaped to triangular with coarsely toothed edges and emit a garlic smell when crushed.
- Small, 4-petaled white flowers form on the end of the main stem and on side branches and bloom from April to June.
- Seed capsules appear soon after flowering begins and quickly expand into long, narrow pods containing about 16 seeds.

Garlic Mustard Control

For small infestations or where large groups of volunteers are involved, hand pulling garlic mustard is effective. Large infestations may require other control methods. The ideal time for hand pulling garlic mustard in New England is late April to mid May after the leaves emerge and the flowering stalks are visible, but before any seeds start to form. Garlic mustard plants pull out of the ground easily unless the ground is hard. Grab the plant near its base and pull firmly to grab the whole plant including the root. Multiple years of removal and monitoring at an infested site are required because of the plant's biennial nature and long seed viability.

Garlic Mustard Disposal

The research is mixed on how best to dispose of pulled garlic mustard plants to ensure that they do not re-sprout or develop seeds. Here are several options for sites in New England:

- If garlic mustard is pulled before ANY seed formation, pile plants on site and cover with plastic to allow decomposition.
- If any chance of seed production, bag plants and dispose of at landfill or in a burn pile.
- Do not dispose of plants in yard waste, backyard compost, or other sites where it could spread.



1st year garlic mustard



2nd year garlic mustard



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Extension