

*Invasive Weed of the Month*

**Garlic Mustard – Pest or Pesto?**

*From Brodhead Watershed Association*

If you google “garlic mustard,” you’ll get some recipes — garlic mustard pesto, anyone? — and millions of pages on the invasive plant that is taking over our woodlands.

Garlic mustard is a cool-season herb. Its triangular or heart-shaped leaves smell like garlic when crushed, and it’s edible. The easiest way to use garlic mustard (*Alliaria Petiolata*) is fresh-picked, in salads (it’s high in vitamins A and C). And the more you pull up, the better!

Spring is the easiest time to root it out. When the soil is moist is best — you’ll get more of the tap-root. The first-year plants are a rosette of heart-shaped leaves, close to the ground. They stayed green through the winter, and now they are growing. With a vengeance.

By the middle of May, the stalk can reach 2 to 3 feet in height, with leaves more arrow-shaped and producing clusters of small 4-petaled white flowers. They quickly set seed in long thin, shiny black pods. By late June, the plants are dying back until all that is left by summer’s end is the buff-colored, papery remains of the seed pods, often with seeds still inside.

Each plant can produce thousands of seeds – persistent and tiny, they can survive for five years in the soil before sprouting. So after you pull up every single garlic mustard plant in your garden or woods or along your driveway or roadside, you still need to be vigilant. Next year, and for several years after, you’ll have to keep pulling plants. But even within two years, if you persist, you will see that you are winning, as fewer and fewer new rosettes appear.



*Garlic mustard out-competes native plants and changes soil chemistry so other plants can't grow. Now is the time to remove these invasive weeds, before they set seed.*

Garlic mustard threatens native plants and animals throughout the eastern and midwestern U.S. Many native wildflowers occur at the same time and in the same habitat, and are easily out-competed by the aggressive garlic mustard. This invasive weed can also change the chemistry of the soil, making it difficult for other plants to get a footing. The wildlife that depends on these overwhelmed native plants are deprived of essential food sources when garlic mustard wins the battle.

A morning spent pulling garlic mustard protects your garden — and a lot more.

**More on invasive plants can be found at**

<https://brodheadwatershed.org/common-invasive-plants-chart/>