



Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is an invasive herb that has spread throughout much of the United States over the past 150 years, becoming one of the worst invaders of forests in the American Northeast. While it is usually found in disturbed woodlots and forest edge undergrowth, recent findings have shown that garlic mustard has moved into some of the most pristine environments.

Garlic mustard roots exude a chemical that inhibits other plants from growing, and it can grow in full sun or full shade, making it a threat to a wide variety of our native plants and habitats. Each plant can produce up to 5000 seeds that remain viable in the soil for five years or more. Garlic mustard grows and spreads rapidly, choking out native plant species and negatively impacting the herbivores that depend upon them for food.

Garlic mustard has a biennial life cycle; it takes two years to fully mature and produces seeds. Seeds germinate in February to early March of the first year and grow into a short rosette by the middle of the summer. In the plant's second year, a stalk develops, flowers form, and the plant dies by June. Siliques, four-sided seedpods, develop in May, containing tiny black seeds lined up in a row. A garlic mustard plant will produce as many as 22 siliques, each containing 28 seeds. The seeds germinate within one to two years but may remain viable for five years in the seed bank. Seed dispersal is mainly by humans or wildlife.



Manual removal of plants has been shown to prevent the spread of garlic mustard. When pulling by hand, you must remove at least the upper half of the root to avoid a new stalk from forming; this is most easily accomplished in the spring when the soil is soft. Hand-pulling should be performed before seeds are formed and needs to be continued for up to five years to deplete any established seed bank. Pulled garlic mustard will still complete flowering and set seed - do not leave it on the ground! Be sure to bag and dispose of pulled plants as garbage or eat your invasives and try garlic mustard pesto! Please be sure that any plants you eat are free of pesticides. <https://food52.com/recipes/28281-garlic-mustard-pesto>



Join the Town and Nature Groupie to help pull garlic mustard in Durham on Tuesday, May 10th! Please see the below link for more information and to sign-up!  
<https://naturegroupie.org/experiences/durham-garlic-mustard-pulling-party-0>