

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

What does garlic mustard look like?

Garlic mustard is a biennial, cool-season plant that grows 2 to 3.5 feet tall and produces clusters of small white flowers with four petals in spring and summer. Leaves are triangular to heart-shaped, coarsely-toothed and smell like garlic when crushed. Seed production begins in May, and seeds occur in long, slender pods.

Where does garlic mustard grow?

Garlic mustard frequently occurs in moist, shaded soil of river floodplains, forests, roadsides, edges of woods and trails edges and forest openings. This species prefers calcareous soils, but grows almost anywhere, especially recently disturbed areas. In Kentucky, garlic mustard can be observed throughout the state in a variety of habitats.



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How did garlic mustard arrive here?

Garlic mustard was first introduced to the U.S. as a culinary herb in the 1860s on Long Island, New York. It was likely introduced by settlers for food or medicinal purposes.

How does garlic mustard spread?

Garlic mustard produces thousands of tiny seeds that can spread many several feet away from the mother plant. However, garlic mustard is most commonly spread by wildlife and humans.

Why is garlic mustard a problem?

Garlic mustard is an aggressive competitor for light, space, water, and nutrients, and will exclude native plants from their habitats.

How can you prevent the spread of garlic mustard?

- Remove any visible plants and seeds from transportation sources, equipment, dogs, and clothing before leaving any area.
- Rinse transportation sources and equipment thoroughly with hard spray or HOT (105 °F) water, like that found at a do-it-yourself carwash. Wash your dog with clean water and brush its coat.
- Ensure plants purchased from garden centers are native.
- Learn to identify garlic mustard; pull young and small plants wherever found.
- Teach others about garlic mustard and its threat to native plants.