



LEFT: SECOND YEAR FLOWERING GARLIC MUSTARD
RIGHT: FIRST YEAR SEEDLINGS

INVASIVE ALIEN ALERT

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is an invasive plant from Europe that flowers in April and May. This noxious invader releases toxins that interfere with the germination and growth of native species. This deadly neighbour is a threat to natural areas and has no predators. Garlic mustard has devastated forests in Eastern Canada and is a new invader to British Columbia.

A single garlic mustard plant can produce thousands of seeds from May to July. Because it is self-pollinating, a single seed can start a new invasion. City Parks staff are removing garlic mustard from public lands and are asking Victoria residents to help remove this nasty alien invader should they see it in their garden.

What It Looks Like

Garlic mustard grows as a mass of dark green, 2.5-centimetre leaves when it first comes up. (SEE ABOVE RIGHT PHOTO.)

It produces a rosette of leaves the first year that stay green through the winter.

The second year, it will grow a stalk 15 to 75 centimetres in height with tiny white flowers on top. (SEE ABOVE LEFT PHOTO.)

The stalk will produce seed pods that will shoot seeds several metres into the air. Even after this biennial dies, the seeds can lie dormant in the soil for up to five years before they germinate.

When To Remove It?

The time to remove garlic mustard is in April and May once the plant has flowered, but before it goes to seed.

How To Remove and Dispose

Pulling individual garlic mustard plants by hand is the easiest and most effective way to remove it from your yard or property.

- When pulling plants, make sure to remove the upper portion of the roots as well as the stem, since buds in the root crown can produce new stems.
- Place pulled plants in garbage bags, as the seeds can ripen even after they have been pulled.
- Label garbage bags as "Garlic Mustard."
- Drop off marked bags at the City's Public Works Yard at 417 Garbally Road, on Saturdays from 7 a.m. – 2 p.m., free of charge. Proof of residency is required in the form of a valid driver's licence.

CAUTION:

If you see a patch of dried out garlic mustard plants, avoid the area. The seeds are light and can stick to dirt on your shoes or hide in your pants cuff. You'll be spreading the seeds around more than you will be helping.

Place a garbage bag over the entire plant and tie it around the stem before pulling brown, dried out garlic mustard from the ground.

To date, four sites in Victoria have been identified as having garlic mustard, and there are several others in Saanich. Victoria is working with other municipalities and the Coastal Invasive Plant Council to stop the spread of this invasive species to other areas of Vancouver Island. Garlic mustard was first reported on Vancouver Island in 2001.

Invasive species are one of the biggest threats to native ecosystems and biodiversity throughout the world. Invasive species can have severe ecological, economic and health impacts. Many species are inadvertently spread by humans and pets, and escape from gardens to natural areas. Controlling invasive species and their impacts requires that we work together as a community and with our neighbours.

To report garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) in Victoria, please contact:

City of Victoria, Parks Division

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