SOUTHEAST AK WEEDY WARNINGS

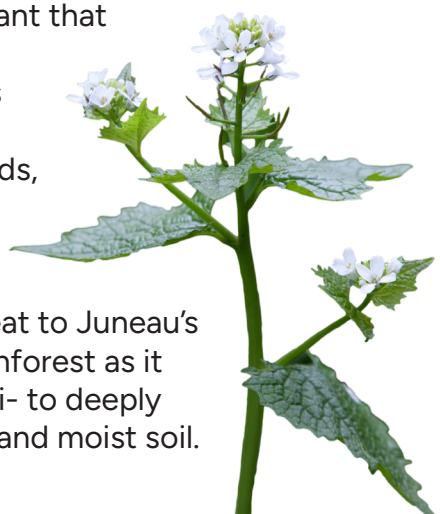
GARLIC MUSTARD

Alliaria petiolata

Garlic mustard is an herb native to Europe and western Asia. It was introduced to the United States in the 1800s, likely for use in cooking and traditional medicine. It has since spread across the northern US, where it is harmful to native species and ecosystems. It was first reported in Juneau in 2002. Juneau is the only place in Alaska with garlic mustard, **but it is spreading locally**.

WHERE DOES IT GROW?

Garlic mustard is an extremely hardy and prolific plant that grows well in many habitats including roadsides, yards, wetlands, and forests.
It poses a particular threat to Juneau's temperate rainforest as it thrives in semi- to deeply shaded areas and moist soil.



IDENTIFICATION

Garlic mustard has a two-year lifecycle.

Year 1: round, kidney-shaped leaves with scalloped edges; spreads horizontally across the ground. No flowers or seeds are produced.

Year 2: flower stalks grow up to 3 feet tall. Leaves are alternating, triangular, and sharply toothed along the edges. When crushed, leaves emit a garlicky smell.

Flowers are small, white, and have four petals. They grow in clusters at the top of the stems before fruiting into long, thin seedpods.

Garlic mustard starts growing in early spring (as early as March!), well before many native plants.

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

1) Garlic mustard outcompetes other plants, forming monocultures (large, dense patches of a single plant). This reduced biodiversity is bad for other plants and wildlife.

2) It is suspected to be *allelopathic*, releasing chemicals that inhibit the growth of native plants.

3) Its leaves contain moderately toxic levels cyanide, which can be harmful to native insect herbivores.

4) It is a host for viruses that damage common garden flowers and edible plants including petunias, cucumbers, and turnips.

FUN FACTS

• Garlic mustard is one of the oldest spices, used by Europeans over 6,000 years ago.

• A single garlic mustard plant produces between 600 - 7,500 seeds, most of which will germinate (about 70%!). Seeds can remain viable in soil for 10 years.

• Garlic mustard threatens several native butterfly species in the United States. Adults lay their eggs on the plant, but most larvae die before maturation.

MANAGEMENT

Prevent spread

Preventing further spread is critical. Clean your clothes and equipment and use a shoe brush before moving from an infested area to an un-infested one.

Pull by hand

It is easy (and satisfying!) to pull year 2 plants. Remove the entire plant including the taproot. Do not compost, especially if flowers and seed pods are present. Burn the plants or dispose of them in a garbage bag. Pull in April and May, before seed pods develop and when the soil is moist.

Treat with herbicide

Herbicides are highly effective against garlic mustard, especially first year rosettes which are hard to pull. Spray in early spring before desirable native plants have sprouted. **Always follow herbicde label instructions.** See AK DEC's Pesticide Control Program for more information.

Monitor

After control, check on infestations every few weeks and pull new growth.

Report sightings

If you see this plant, **please report it!** Email photos & location information to reed@sawcak.org or post on iNaturalist.

Need help? Reach out!

E.M. Reed
Regional Invasive Plant Coordinator
Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition
reed@sawcak.org
907-500-7171

For more information on garlic mustard and other invasive plants in Southeast Alaska, go to:

bit.ly/SEAKinvasives

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SOUTHEAST ALASKA
WATERSHED
COALITION

AlaskaWatershedCoalition.org
fb.com/AlaskaWatershedCoalition
connect@sawcak.org
(907) 500-7171

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