

# HAVE YOU SEEN ANY OF THESE INVASIVE PLANTS ON YOUR PROPERTY?



## **GARLIC MUSTARD**

### **Ecological Threat:**

- Garlic mustard spreads into high quality woodlands, upland and floodplain forests, not just into disturbed areas.
- Invaded sites undergo a decline on native herbaceous cover within 10 years.
- Garlic mustard alters habitat suitability for native insects and thereby birds and mammals.
- This European exotic occurs now in 27 mid-western and northeastern states and in Canada.
- Though garlic mustard is widespread in most yards, it is among the **easiest to control - even eradicate**. This is because it is a biennial.
- A biennial plant germinates and grows the first year, flowers the second year, sets seed, dies. Seed germinates either that summer or the following spring.

### **Control Methods:**

The first year, the plant forms a fairly low rosette of leaves and does not pull out easily (plus you have to bend almost to the ground to reach it). However, the second year when ready to flower, it sends up a knee-high flower stalk and at this stage, pulls out easily. You have a window of about 3 weeks between the rising of the flower stalk and the setting of seed.

This is the time to go forth and pull it....and bag it and give it to the garbage men. Do not attempt to compost it since the seeds will survive. Do not leave a bunch of pulled bloom stalks lying on the ground for future bagging...since they will drop their seed right there and you will have only yourself to kick. (Can you tell we did this once?)

If you follow this pull-and-bag technique for 2 years, by the third year you will have eliminated 99.9% of the garlic mustard in your yard.

Because it is easy to control by hand, spraying weed killer is unnecessarily harmful to the very environment you are trying to restore. Also, it is pointless to spray any weed when it's in bloom or about to bloom. As the plant dies, it heroically uses the last of its strength to (you guessed it) set seed.

### **Don't Buy an Invasive Unknowingly:**

Most of us know the invasives that smother trees and vegetation along parkways: multiflora rose and Asiatic bittersweet being two of the most common. What we sometimes fail to appreciate is that these were commonly sold in nurseries before they got out of hand and were banned.

Today, there are still invasives sold in nurseries! And we unknowingly buy them. We may not be able to change the past but we certainly can try to improve the future...by avoiding the plants below.

1. **Barberry** *Berberis thunbergii* - This is still one of the commonest shrubs sold in nurseries. Its berries are very attractive to birds that drop them in the woods. Most woodland plants bloom in early spring before trees leaf out and create shade. Unfortunately, barberries leaf out very, very early, cutting off sun from the wildflowers and inhibiting their reproduction.
2. **Norway maple** *Acer platanoides* - This particular maple exudes a chemical that is toxic to most other vegetation...except other Norway maples! In no time, it creates a woodland monoculture.
3. **Burning bush** *Euonymus alata* - Another top seller in nurseries. The leaves turn a flaming red in fall and make a riveting sight. Again, birds like the berries and spread them into woodlands.
4. **Japanese honeysuckle** *Lonicera japonica* - often purchased when a fast-growing screen is wanted. This is a case of being careful what you wish for as it not only screens your fence but self-sows all over your yard.
5. **Butterfly bush** *Buddleia davidii* - This is a Potential Invasive, now reproducing in the wild. More monitoring is needed before it goes from the aggressive list to the invasive list. Much as we hate to admit it, the old adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" probably applies here. . Monarchs love it but they can make do with butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) or asters.

Try the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's website at <http://www.bbg.org> for a good list of invasive and potential problem plants in the NY area.