



Department of Parks, Recreation & Forestry

FORESTRY NEWS – Garlic Mustard

Garlic Mustard has been increasing in our community and throughout southeastern Wisconsin and can be found in Brookfield's shady yards, parks, and roadsides. The plant, native to Europe, threatens our native wildflowers, forests, and wildlife habitat. Like purple loosestrife in wetlands, it overruns forest floors and other shady areas of our yards in a few short years and crowds out wild flowers like trilliums, bloodroot, and jack-in-the-pulpit, as well as young tree seedlings.

Garlic Mustard has spread here from the East Coast. It was introduced to North America by early European settlers for supposed medicinal properties and cooking. In its homeland, natural enemies keep its spread balanced, but here it spreads unchecked giving it a competitive edge over our beautiful and beneficial native plants.

Control Methods

Prevention is the best way to stop continued spread of garlic mustard. March/April is the best time to survey your yard, neighborhood roadsides, and parks for garlic mustard and April/May is the time to begin control efforts. Any control must be repeated for several years once plants have seeded because many seeds are generated and are viable for up to six years in the soil.

Hand pulling works well, especially for smaller infestations. The soil should be tamped down to limit further seed germination. Pulled plants should not be piled or composted. Garlic mustard set seed just days after flowering even after the plants have been pulled. Few compost piles create enough heat to destroy the seeds. **Pulled plants can not be brought to the city recycling yard, they will not be accepted.** Pulled plants need to be put into clear plastic bags. Bagged plants should be disposed of by burning, burying deeply in an area that will not be disturbed, or landfilling. Veolia (the city's trash contractor) will pickup the clear plastic bags if they are marked as garlic mustard. Do not mix any other organic waste (leaves, grass clippings or weeds) or they will not take the bags. The bags must only contain garlic mustard. If for some reason Veolia does not take the bags they should be contacted directly at (262) 367-6040. If they indicate they will not pick up the bags the Bureau of Endangered Resources can be contacted at

(608) 266-7012. Our experience has been that they will pick up clear plastic marked bags that solely contain garlic mustard.

Cutting

Research done to date has had conflicting results. Some sources indicate that cutting plants near the soil surface just after flower stalks have elongated but before the flowers have opened has been very effective in killing garlic mustard plants, preventing seed production and avoiding soil disturbance. Others say that the cut plants resprouted several times when they used this technique. More research is needed to establish reliable data.

Herbicides

Herbicides can be used for severe infestations. Glyphosate (Roundup) can be applied to the foliage of individual plants or dense patches in late fall or early spring. The late fall treatment should take place only after a hard freeze that has killed all other non-target plants. Garlic mustard stays green and vulnerable well after all other native plants are dormant. Roundup is a nonselective herbicide that will kill or injure all green non-target plants if it contacts them. The early spring application should occur before the native plants are green or emerging from their dormant state (usually in late March, but you never know in Wisconsin). Extreme caution should be exercised when using herbicides to prevent death of non-target plants. As with all pesticides great care should be taken when they are used. Always read and follow the label directions carefully.

Identification

Garlic mustard is easy to identify using an excellent brochure that is available from your county extension office (call the Waukesha office at 262-548-7770) or pick one up at the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry office. This brochure also outlines various control options. Excellent information can also be found on the internet at <http://www.uwex.edu> Type in "garlic mustard" in the search box on the upper right and click on search.

The Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department has implemented control efforts in some of Brookfield's parks, but due to the increasingly wide scope of the problem, citizen volunteers are needed. Please call the office at 262-796-6675 if you have time to volunteer to help keep our parks beautiful.