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Conservation Connection:

Save our Town from the Invader

By Cynthia Chapra, Weston Conservation Commission Member

Do you want to do something to help your Town and the environment? Here is something easy that you and your family can do. Go out to your yard, to the Town Green or along a Town trail with a trowel and bag and dig up some garlic mustard. Garlic mustard is an invasive herb/weed that is taking over our yards, forests and public spaces.

Garlic mustard can live in either sun or shade and where it grows it releases a chemical from its roots which hinders the growth of other plants. With its ability to live in a wide range of environments and because of the way it can kill its competition, it has taken over wide swaths of understory in the forests and on the Town Hall side of the Town Green.

It is a biennial plant, which means it takes two years to mature and form seeds. The first year the plant leaves are more rounded with a rounded tooth on the edge. The second year the leaves are more triangular and alternating on the stems. The leaves are smaller towards the top of a mature plant. At this time of year small white flower clusters are starting to open on the mature plants. Seeds will develop in May at an average of 600 per plant. So now is the time to attack these invaders.

Garlic mustard is easy to pull out of the ground. Simply grab hold of the plant at the base and slowly pull. This method should keep the root mass and plant intact. You will know if you have picked the right plant as you will smell a garlic smell from either the roots or by rubbing the leaves between your fingers. After eradicating this invader put it in the trash. Don't put it in the compost as the seeds will continue to form and the seeds will remain viable if your pile does not get hot enough.

If we all pitch in we can stop this invader from ruining our Town. If we each spend 15 minutes fighting garlic mustard on the Town Green or along the trails we might be able to save our native plants which are being overrun. Effective control can take up to five years (dormant seeds in the

soil will continue to sprout for several years). Remember to watch out for poison ivy when you are fighting this foe. For more information on Garlic Mustard pulling, check out www.tinyurl.com/GarlicMustardInfo.

Conservation Connection is a monthly article published by the Weston Conservation Commission members and staff. It will feature news and items of interest about Weston trails, open space, and natural resources. To receive up-to-date news from the Conservation Commission, please subscribe to the Conservation Commission's e-newsletter at www.weston.org/list.aspx (click on "Conservation Connection" under "Notify Me")

(attached as jpg) - below



Mature garlic mustard will grow up to 3-feet tall. Crushed leaves and stems smell like garlic.



First-year leaves are kidney-shaped with scalloped margins