

Lamb's Quarters (*Chenopodium album*)

DESCRIPTION:

Lamb's Quarters is an annual weed of uncertain origin. Many experts believe it is a weed introduced from Europe with the early settlers. However, other authorities report that Native Americans used the fresh leaves and flour ground from the nutritious seed as a food source. The variability of this plant into what appear to be several varieties further confuses the matter; some may be native and wild, some may be native and cultivated, while others may be from Europe. Though the seeds of this plant can provide food for wildlife, this aggressive annual weed grows quickly and can form dense colonies and exclude nearly all other plant life. It is extremely prolific, producing up to 50,000 seeds per plant and these seeds can persist for up to 40 years in the seed bank. Therefore this species is nearly ubiquitous in the seed bank and can sprout up almost anywhere including agricultural lands, gardens, lawns, construction sites, waste areas, stream-sides, and trail and road sides.

-2
Persistent
Weed

IDENTIFICATION:

Lamb's quarters are typically 2-4' when mature, but occasionally reaching 6' in height. The basal leaves are broad, perhaps 2" wide and 3" long and roughly triangular or diamond shaped with irregular edges. Further up the stem near the flower stalks the leaves are smaller and more elongated. Plants often have a frosty white coloration due to a mealy pubescence, particularly on the underside of leaves, on young leaves, the base of mature leaves and on the leaf stalk. The stems have ridges running along them and in mature individuals are stiff, almost woody, often with a purplish color to them. The flowers and seed pods, which develop in late summer through fall, are simply greenish-white balls arranged around short vertical stalks at the top of each stem.

There are over a dozen other species of *Chenopodium*, which are often called goosefoot, in our area and many of these are native. Though they share similarities, each species is distinctive enough that you are unlikely to confuse this weed with other more desirable species.

CONTROL METHODS:

Organic: For small infestations this plant can be hand-pulled though its stout taproot can make this difficult, causing a lot of soil disturbance as the plant is uprooted. As a result it is best to tackle these plants while they are small. Organic herbicides such as Nature's Avenger® or Phydura® can top-kill the plant.

The thick, tough stems are difficult to cut with a string trimmer "weed whip", so cutting them requires a metal bladed hand tool or brush cutter. For larger infestations the most effective control method is mowing shortly after the plant begins to flower. They will resprout after cutting, so multiple treatments will be necessary.

Chemical: A glyphosate based herbicide (Round-Up®, etc.) should kill lamb's quarters in a single application. Take care to avoid spraying and killing neighboring plants.

Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply herbicide according to the product label.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

Since this is a full-sun weed we recommend a diverse selection of prairie species to replace and compete against lamb's quarters in order to develop a more stable and productive plant community for the site. Contact us for specific recommendations.

