

Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*)

DESCRIPTION:

Also known as Bishop's Weed or snow-on-the-mountain, goutweed is a perennial species in the carrot family (Apiaceae). It typically invades woodlands and other shady areas from adjacent horticultural plantings. It primarily spreads vegetatively by a network of runners and rhizomatous roots. This species spreads aggressively in both natural areas and gardens forming dense colonies that can exclude all other vegetation. Gardeners who plant this species in their yard often regret it later.

Goutweed grows in ever-expanding colonies and its basal leaves grow to a height of up to 12". The leaves of this plant can be variegated (fringed with white) or solid green in color. These leaves are arranged alternately on the stem and divided into 3 (occasionally 5) leaflets per set and there are distinctive sheaths on the leaf stalks. In early summer flower stalks sprout and reach a height of up to 24". The pale white flowers are born on umbels and are similar in appearance to other members of the carrot family. These are followed by pale green seed pods.

CONTROL METHODS:

Organic: Digging must be done with care so as to remove all of the rhizomatous (horizontally spreading) roots of this plant. These roots are typically within the top 6" of soil. Digging more than 6" below the soil surface, and parallel to it, should allow you to uproot the entire colony along with the soil. You can then sift through the uprooted soil to remove the roots. Be sure to dispose of the stems and roots in the trash or a burn pile so they do not have the chance to resprout elsewhere. Inevitably, you will miss some root fragments, so dig out any resprouts that occur over the next month or two.

Smothering can be successful if you are able to cover the entire goutweed colony. First cut mature plants to ground level. Then lay down a tarp, old carpet or landscaping cloth over the entire plant colony. Cover this material with a thick layer of mulch (8-10") or soil, and leave this covering in place for one full growing season. Once you remove these materials the goutweed should be dead, leaving the area ready to plant.

Chemical: This species is herbicide resistant. Though the above ground vegetation will die-back, it will resprout from unaffected portions of the root. With that said, foliar application of herbicide (Round-Up®, etc.) is the most efficient method of goutweed control. It will be most sensitive early in the growing season while the leaves are still tender or shortly after they begin to flower. It may take several weeks for the plants to wilt. Repeated treatments will be necessary to kill the goutweed; expect to spray the colony 2-3 times or more.

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

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES:

Virginia waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*) is somewhat similar in appearance to goutweed and like this species, it is a fairly aggressive ground cover in a garden setting so it is best to plant it in a contained area. Virginia waterleaf has attractive lavender flowers in late spring and provides food for bees and other beneficial insects. Great waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum appendiculatum*) is similar, though rarer in the wild, less aggressive, and less commonly available for sale. Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) is another excellent native ground cover for shady areas. For partial shade to full sun try Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*) and/or wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*). Both species have attractive flowers (yellow and pink, respectively) and interesting foliage.

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Aggressive
Weed

