

GARLIC MUSTARD

(*Alliaria petiolata*)



Garlic mustard, also known as 'Jack-by-the-hedge', likes shady places, such as the edges of woods and hedgerows. It can grow to over a metre tall and has small white flowers that appear from April. It is a biennial plant, so takes two years to complete its lifecycle. It grows young leaves in its first season, which it keeps over winter, and then flowers in the spring of its second year.

The heart-shaped leaves of Garlic mustard are smooth and hairless, and rather like those of nettles; when crushed, they smell of garlic. Its small, white flowers have four petals in the shape of a cross and grow in clusters at the ends of the stems.

The leaves of Garlic mustard are regularly used in salads, or as a flavouring for fish or meat. Young, fresh leaves can be picked in September when they first appear and may be harvested until the flowers bloom the following spring.

However, Garlic mustard is a threat to biodiversity.

Garlic mustard spreads its seeds in the wind and gains a foothold in fields and forests by emerging earlier in spring than many native plants. By the time native species are ready to grow, garlic mustard has blocked their sunlight and outcompeted them for moisture and vital nutrients. It is important that we keep it under control in the Jubilee Orchard. Thin out excess growth in spring and pull up the plants **before** they set seed.