

About Garlic Mustard

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is a plant of the mustard family and is one of the most commonly found and most nutritious wild greens.

Garlic Mustard is an herbaceous biennial plant growing from a deep, thin, white taproot that is scented like horseradish. In the first year, the plants appear as a rosette of heart-shaped deeply veined basal leaves close to the ground; these rosettes remain green through the winter and develop into mature flowering plants the following spring. Second year plants grow a stalk from 30–100 cm (rarely to 130 cm) tall. In contrast to the heart-shaped first year leaves these mature leaves are triangular to arrow-shaped, 10–15 cm long and 5–9 cm broad, with a coarsely toothed margin. All leaves are deeply veined and smell like garlic when crushed.

Garlic Mustard flowers in spring, producing small cross-shaped white flowers in button-like clusters. Their buds look like miniature broccoli, which is indeed a relative. Once they open, each small flower has four small white petals, 4–8 mm long and 2–3 mm broad, arranged in a cross shape. After their bloom they elongate into a spike-like shape. These fruits release their seeds in mid-summer. At first green they matures pale grey-brown, containing two rows of small shiny black seeds, which are released when the pod splits open. A single plant can produce hundreds of seeds, which scatter as much as several meters from the parent plant.

Depending upon conditions, Garlic Mustard flowers either self-fertilize or are cross-pollinated by a variety of insects. Self-fertilized seeds are genetically identical to the parent plant, enhancing its ability to colonize an area where that genotype is suited to thrive.

Garlic Mustard primarily grows in wooded areas and is often found along the margins of hedgerows, giving rise to the old British folk name of **Jack-by-the-hedge**. Other common names include **Garlic Root**, **Hedge Garlic**, **Sauce-alone**, **Jack-in-the-bush**, **Penny Hedge** and **Poor Man's Mustard**. The genus name *Alliaria*, "resembling *Allium*", refers to the garlic-like odor of the crushed foliage.

Garlic Mustard is native to Europe, western and central Asia. It's habitat reaches to northern India and western China, northwestern Africa, the British Isles and northern Scandinavia. Garlic Mustard was introduced to North America as a culinary herb in the 1860s and has since spread all over North America. It is considered an invasive species and as of 2006, it is listed as a noxious or restricted plant in the states of Alabama, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oregon, Vermont, West Virginia and Washington. Like most invasive plants, once it has an introduction into a new location, it persists and spreads into undisturbed plant communities. In many areas of its introduction in Eastern North America, it has become the dominant under-story species in woodland and flood plain environments, where eradication is difficult.

The insects and fungi that feed on it in its native habitat are not present in North America, increasing its seed productivity and allowing it to out-compete native plants.

Additionally, because white-tailed deer rarely feed on Garlic Mustard, large deer populations may help to increase its population densities by consuming competing native plants. Trampling by browsing deer spreads seeds and encourages additional growth of Garlic Mustard. Seeds contained in the soil can germinate up to five years after being produced.

Culinary use: The leaves can be used raw in salads and sauces, such as pesto and dips, and steamed or sautéed alone or with other greens. Especially for salads the flowers and fruits may be included as well. These are best when young, and provide a mild flavor of both garlic and mustard. In French cuisine the seeds are sometimes used to season food directly.

Many plants become increasingly bitter as they mature. However, Garlic Mustard's arrowhead-shaped stem leaves are more pungent and less bitter in the spring, than the basal leaves are in the cold earlier in the year. They even carry overtones of sweetness. They are easy to strip off, so large quantities can be collected within short order, along with the terminal clusters of tiny white flowers. The basal leaves are not as pleasant in taste, as they are much more bitter throughout the year.

In Europe as many as 69 species of insects and seven species of fungi utilize Garlic Mustard as a food plant, including the larvae of the Garden Carpet Moth.

Medicinal use: Garlic Mustard was once used medicinally as a disinfectant or diuretic. Its leaves were sometimes also used to heal wounds.

Garlic Mustard Recipes

I prepared the following recipes between Monday May 13th and Wednesday June 5th. They were prepared for the daily lunch potlucks at the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale. The Garlic Mustard was collected in the near vicinity each day and was used immediately. Quantities of ingredients are estimated and should be seen as guidelines only. I usually collected a good bunch of Garlic Mustard to remove leaves at home; or a larger colander of leaves.

Day 1 (Monday May 13):

Garlic Mustard and violet salad

- remove Garlic Mustard leaves from stalks and break off any hard stalks from the violet leaves and flowers
- wash in a colander and put in a salad bowl
- marinate with lemon juice, olive oil, salt and some black pepper to taste and mix delicately
- add some sunflower seeds if desired

Day 2 (Tue May 14):

Garlic Mustard pesto on whole-wheat pasta

Preparations: cook whole-wheat pasta while preparing pesto

- remove leaves from stalks and wash them in a colander with lukewarm water
- combine first batch of leaves in blender jar with walnuts, 3 cloves and some olive oil and blend with handheld blender or in a regular blender. Add more leaves into the mix as the ingredients become blended together
- add some salt
- mix the pesto into freshly made pasta with a fork and serve fresh

Day 3 (Thurs May 16):

Garlic Mustard dumplings in Garlic Mustard broth

- remove leaves from stalks and wash them in a colander with lukewarm water

- wash and steam Garlic Mustard leaves in a steamer with water on the bottom
- keep the steaming water and add vegetable broth and/or nutritional yeast and some salt (optional)
- chop the steamed mass on a cutting board to avoid having large pieces/leaves
- in a bowl combine the mass with a couple of heaped tablespoons of fresh soft cheese (Ricotta) and shredded Parmesan cheese. Add a table spoon of olive oil and salt to taste (optional)
- fill prepared dumpling pasta wraps (homemade or Won Ton/Ravioli wraps) with a teaspoon of the mass and fold the wraps into triangles and seal the edges with water and pressing sheets together
- put into pot of boiling water and boil for about 5 minutes
- remove each dumpling carefully and place it into the broth remaining from steaming the mustard greens
- serve hot

Day 4 (Friday May 17):

Garlic Mustard-faro salad

Preparation: soak faro in water over night and boil while preparing other ingredients

- remove leaves from stalks – leaves only, no leaf-stalks and wash them in colander
- put freshly made, hot faro into salad bowl and add 1 clove of finely chopped garlic, several tablespoons of shredded Parmesan cheese, olive oil and lemon juice and some black pepper. Mix together and add some salt if necessary
- add Garlic Mustard leaves and mix into the salad. Tear large leaves into smaller pieces
- let soak for a few minutes before serving

Day 5 (Monday, May 20):

Garlic Mustard pie

Preparation: make piecrust and spread it into a pie dish

Easy piecrust with oil

- 1 cup flour
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 cup vegetable oil (not olive)
 - 2 tablespoons cold milk or water
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- Mix flour and salt with wire whisk. Stir in oil until mixed. Add water or milk and knead until mixed completely
 - Place dough into middle of 8 or 9-inch glass pie plate. Spread dough out with hands covering the bottom of the plate and up the sides
 - Preheat oven to 420 F
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- remove leaves from stalks and wash them in a colander with lukewarm water
 - tear big leaves into smaller pieces and lightly sauté the Garlic Mustard in a large saucepan with oil.
 - chop a small onion and combine it with the sautéed leaves in a bowl.
 - add 2-3 large table spoons of ricotta cheese (or a similar white soft cheese) and salt to taste
 - mix with a spoon and spread the mixture into the piecrust evenly
 - sprinkle sunflower seeds over the top (optional)
 - bake for about 15 minutes at 420 degrees
 - serve hot

Day 6 (Tuesday, May 21):

Garlic Mustard veggie burgers

Preparations:

cook 1 cup of rice with 2 cups of water

roast about 1.5 cups of sunflower seeds (or sesame seeds)

- remove leaves from stalks and wash Garlic Mustard in a colander with lukewarm water
- chop up the leaves on a cutting board
- chop up a medium sized onion (fine)

- combine cooked rice, roasted sunflower seeds, chopped Garlic Mustard in a bowl
- add ca. 2 cups of whole-wheat flour, 2 tbs of yogurt, ½ cup of strong veggie broth or miso soup. 1 egg, salt, pepper, paprika, dry basil and oregano, fresh chopped ginger (optional), flax seed meal and/or fine rolled oats. Optional: curry powder
- mix all ingredients. If resulting batter doesn't stay together / is too wet, add more flour
- form patties and fry them in a large frying pan on a low flame so they won't burn on the outside while the inside remains uncooked.

Day 7 (Wed, May 22):

Garlic Mustard –yogurt sauce (for veggie burgers)

- remove leaves from stalks and wash Garlic Mustard in a colander with lukewarm water
- chop a clove of garlic
- combine garlic and Garlic Mustard leaves in steep blending bowl, add some olive oil and salt and blend, using handheld blender
- add 2-3 tablespoons of plain yogurt and 2 tbs of cream cheese, blend again
- when leaves are chopped fine, pour the sauce into a bowl and add more yogurt by stirring it under with a spoon
- serve with Garlic Mustard veggie burgers or other kinds of veggie burgers, meat, , or as dip for raw vegetables

Day 8 (Thursday, May 23):

Steamed Garlic Mustard

- use a great quantity of leaves, as they reduce significantly when steamed
- remove leaves from stalks and wash Garlic Mustard in a colander with lukewarm water
- shake off excess water and place leaves into a saucepan or pot large enough to hold all the leaves. Tear large leaves into 2 or more pieces
- add a small amount of water (1/2 cup) and steam for about 3-5 minutes at high heat and with lid

- put hot leaves into a bowl and sprinkle with salt, black pepper, lemon juice and olive oil
- put some sunflower seeds over the top (optional)
- serve hot

Day 9 (Friday, May 24):

Garlic Mustard tofu cream cheese

- use small leaves that do not yet have a stalk or remove smaller leaves from stalk and wash in a colander with lukewarm water
- chop up 1.5 cups of soft tofu and put into blender dish with 2 tablespoons of oil (olive or other), 1-2 tablespoons of lemon juice, some salt and white pepper – blend all of these together
- add about 1 compressed cup of Garlic Mustard leaves and blend thoroughly until smooth

Day 10 (Mon, May 27):

Garlic Mustard quinoa salad

Preparations:

cook 1 cup of quinoa with 2 cups of water

- use small leaves that do not yet have a stalk or remove smaller leaves from stalk and wash in a colander with lukewarm water
- collect Garlic Mustard flowers and wash them carefully in a small colander
- put quinoa into a salad bowl and add Garlic Mustard on the top
- prepare a salad dressing from olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper in a separate bowl and sprinkle it over the salad, toss lightly
- add Garlic Mustard flowers on the top and toss them under very lightly

Day 11 (Thursday, May 30):

Garlic Mustard cheese rolls in tomato sauce

- pick a lot of Garlic Mustard leaves, take off stalks and wash them in a colander
- chop 2 medium sized onions and 2 cloves of garlic and stir-fry them lightly in a large saucepan
- add Garlic Mustard leaves into the pan slowly as they fit into the pan through reducing
- stir-fry in low heat, add some salt and freshly ground pepper
- once the greens have reduced take them off the fire and put them into a glass bowl
- add Ricotta cheese and mix
- use square Ravioli pads and fill them with the mix (about a teaspoon each) and roll them up into little tubes
- oil a backing dish and place the rolls into it
- put about ½ can of crushed tomatoes into a bowl and mix chopped garlic into it (1 clove), and salt, black pepper and oregano or an Italian spice combination. Mix with a spoon
- spread the mix onto the mustard garlic rolls
- slice a tomato and spread the slices over the top
- bake about 15-20 minutes at 400 F. Serve hot

Day 12 (Friday, May 31):

Pancakes filled with Garlic Mustard, mushrooms and onions

Preparations: make 3-4 pancakes

pancakes

put 2 eggs into mixing bowl, add approx. 2 cups of milk and whisk in enough flour to make a thick but liquid batter. Add 1 tablespoon of yogurt and some salt (to taste). Whisk well and make pancakes in a pan lined with hot oil. Keep them hot while preparing the filling

- pick a colander full of Garlic Mustard leaves and wash them
- chop a medium sized onion and some mushrooms, lightly stir-fry them in a large saucepan with salt and pepper
- add Garlic Mustard in small batches so it can reduce.

- turn off flame and put about 3-4 tablespoons of the stir fried greens/mushrooms/onion into each pancake
- add some cottage cheese or sour cream on top of the vegetable filling and roll up the pancakes
- serve hot

Day 13 (Wednesday, June 5):

Creamed Garlic Mustard

- collect a large amount of Garlic Mustard leaves and wash in colander
- bring large pot of salted water to boil and cook Garlic Mustard for about 1
- minute (so it wilts)
- drain and rinse cold, squeeze as much water out as possible and chop up the mass of leaves on a cutting board

alternative: blend the leaves in blender, add some milk for moisture; this version is advisable especially in late spring/early summer when the leaves are not as tender any longer.

- chop large onion and 3 cloves of garlic and sauté them in butter or oil until they are soft, add salt and pepper to taste
- add about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of milk and half a package of cream cheese, and stir until cream cheese melts – add more milk if necessary
- mix in the Garlic Mustard and simmer for a few minutes, add salt and pepper to taste
- serve hot