

February 2013 *Guess that Plant*



Alliaria officinalis Andr. Garlic-Mustard

The February *Guess that Plant* was one of New Jersey's most invasive plants, the Garlic-mustard. This plant is widespread, and can be found in every New Jersey County. Specifically, you can expect this herbaceous species were ever humans have disturbed native habitats. The plant, however, is capable of invading even native habitats. Only the true Pine Barrens seem to be immune from its spread.

Garlic-mustard is a biennial. Biennials need two seasons to flower. Like a suite of plants that spread widely and rapidly, garlic-mustard uses its prolific seed production with an excellent germination to quickly spread once introduced into a suitable habitat. Suitable can mean most upland soils around our cities, towns, farms, floodplains and wherever disturbance creates an opportunity. If one walks into a young upland woodland during the month of March, you will see the characteristic basal leaves shown in to the picture used for the month's guess. Within 30-days a flowering stem will sprout from this set of basal leaves eventually producing white 4-petaled mustard family flowers. Shortly after, mature siliqua (sword-like seed capsule) appear, ready to spread the plant further and wider.

JRA 2.2013