

Wild Garlic

Allium vineale L.

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Wild garlic (*Allium vineale*) was introduced from Europe where it was used as a food flavoring. It is found in pastures, lawns, ornamental beds, and several cultivated crops. It grows west of the Cascades from Vancouver Island south into northwest Oregon. When livestock eat it, the resulting poultry, meat, milk, and egg products also have a garlic taste. Bread made from infested wheat also has a garlic taste. With three modes of reproduction, wild garlic spreads rapidly to cover an area. Once established, it is difficult to control.

IDENTIFICATION

Wild garlic is a perennial member of the lily family that reproduces from underground bulb offsets, aerial bulbils, and seeds. The main bulb often grows a mass of small bulbs at



Figure 1.—Wild garlic usually has two small bulbils at the side of the main bulb.



Figure 2.—Mature wild garlic plant.

the base that produce new plants. Bulbs are covered with a thin, brittle, papery membrane. Several leaves appearing from near the base of the stem are long, pointed, hollow, and nearly round. The stem is slender, round, solid, smooth, and up to 3 feet tall. From May to June, small greenish-yellow flowers form clusters on short, slender stalks at the top of the stems. When seeds are produced, they are flattened, convex on



Figure 3.—The plants sprouting from this garlic head are aerial bulbils, not germinating seeds.

one side, and dull black. Usually, some or all of the flowers are replaced by bulbils, which are shed to form new plants or sprout in the head to form a mass of green plantlets. Bulbils are ovate, smooth, shiny, the size of a kernel of wheat, and are difficult to separate mechanically from wheat.

RELATED SPECIES

Several species of wild onion (*Allium* spp.) can be confused with wild garlic. Different onions are found locally within the region. Though wild onions resemble wild garlic, you can distinguish them with certainty as follows:

1. The obvious garlic odor of wild garlic.
2. If all of the flowers are replaced with small bulbils, it is wild garlic.
3. If flowers are present, look for the inner three stamens. On wild garlic, each of the stamens will have two prominent appendages that rise above the anthers. (See Figure 4 on the next page.)

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CONTROL

BIOLOGICAL. No known insects or organisms control these plants. The close relationship to cultivated onion and garlic makes biological control unlikely. Animals may graze it, but the products will be tainted, and the population of wild garlic will not drop.

MECHANICAL. Tilling the soil does not kill wild garlic easily. Food reserves in the bulbs reestablish the plant after tillage. Fall tillage, followed by spring tillage, prevents normal early growth. This, followed for several years by thorough cultivation as green shoots appear, is necessary for control.

Following the practice described in the previous paragraph with several years' plantings of cultivated row crops reduces the supply of bulbs in the soil. Then individual plants or clumps can be removed as they appear.

In gardens and ornamental settings, cut garlic below the soil with a hoe or shovel, or burn small patches down to the soil with a small propane torch. This does not kill the plants, but it does slow regrowth. Plastic or fiber mats prevent the emergence of garlic plants.

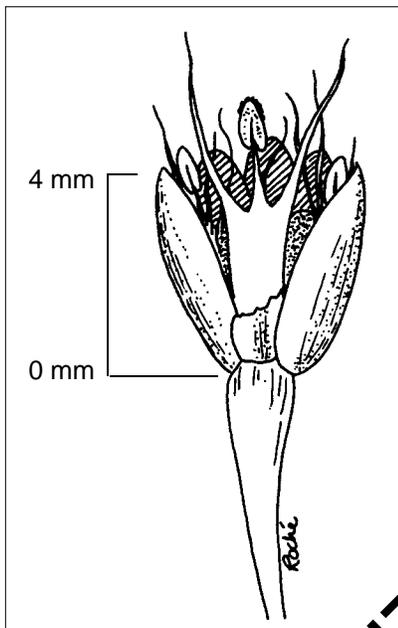


Figure 4.—Side view of wild garlic. Note that one sepal has been removed to show the stamen with filaments and anther. Wild garlic normally has six stamens.

CHEMICAL. In noncrop areas or in grass crops, several herbicides can control wild garlic selectively. Similar control in clover crops or pasture containing legumes is more difficult. Repeated applications are necessary. Planting grass or a grain crop in infested land helps offset the cost of control since you can spray these and then harvest a crop.

Herbicide registrations change frequently; therefore, this publication does not contain specific herbicide use instructions. Registered uses are summarized each year in the *Pacific Northwest Weed Control Handbook*.

In addition, detailed instructions for herbicide use are provided on herbicide container labels and in other literature provided by herbicide manufacturers.

USE PESTICIDES SAFELY

- Wear protective clothing and safety devices as recommended on the label. Bathe or shower after each use.
 - Read the pesticide label—even if you've used the pesticide before. Follow closely the instructions on the label (and any other directions you have).
 - Be cautious when you apply pesticides. Know your legal responsibility as a pesticide applicator. You may be liable for injury or damage resulting from pesticide use.
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Figure 4 was drawn and provided by Cindy Roche, graduate student, Department of Crop and Soil Science, University of Idaho.

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