

# Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

## Goutweed

*Aegopodium podagraria*



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[www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

### Background:

Goutweed was brought to North America as an ornamental by early European settlers. By 1863, it was well established in the United States. It is utilized as a low-maintenance ground cover.

### Range:

Native to most of Europe and northern Asia, goutweed can now be found in the Northwest, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States.

### Description:

Goutweed is an herbaceous perennial with branching white rhizomes and compound basal leaves, the latter which can be green or variegated in color. In mid-summer, tall leafy stems produce flat-topped clusters of white flowers.



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### Habitat:

A species of deciduous and coniferous forests in its native Eurasia, goutweed invades similar habitats in North America. It does best in moist soil and light shade, but is versatile and shade-tolerant. It is often found in disturbed habitats such as logged forests and abandoned fields.

### Biology and Spread:

Goutweed spreads vigorously by vegetative means, extending its rhizome system to form large colonies. Establishment by seed requires recently disturbed soil and rather bright light conditions.

### Ecological Threat:

Goutweed is aggressive, forming dense, impenetrable patches that displace native plants and greatly reduce ground-layer species diversity. Its colonies also inhibit the establishment of native tree seedlings. Highly shade-tolerant, it is capable of invading closed-canopy forests.



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## How to Control this Species:

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### Physical

Small patches can be eliminated through persistent hand-pulling, careful to remove underground rhizomes. Rhizomes should be bagged and disposed of to prevent reestablishment.

Frequent mowing at short heights can control or slow the spread of goutweed. Doing this early in the year just after the plant has fully leafed out, and covering the entire colony with black plastic sheeting afterwards, is a great way to exhaust its energy reserves.

### References:

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*Plant Conservation Alliance's Alien Plant Working Group:*  
<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/aepo1.htm>

*USDA Forest Service:*  
<http://www.invasive.org/weedcd/pdfs/wow/goutweed.pdf>



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### Chemical

Systemic herbicides, such as glyphosate, are most effective for goutweed control because they are translocated to the roots, killing the entire plant. Contact herbicides are ineffective because goutweed readily leafs out after defoliation.

Be careful not to damage or kill nearby native plants when using herbicides and always follow the instructions on the label.

## Native Alternatives:

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Many versatile native ground covers are available.



Canadian Anemone

W.D. Bransford  
[www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)



Wild Sarsaparilla

Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest Service  
[www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)



Dwarf Crested Iris

W.D. Bransford  
[www.wildflower.org](http://www.wildflower.org)

## For More Information:

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DCNR Invasive Species Site: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/conservationscience/invasivespecies/index.htm>

