

## Garlic Mustard Threatens Rare Butterfly

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) poses a major threat to populations of the rare West Virginia White butterfly. The non-native, highly invasive plant invades northeastern Ohio woodlands and chokes out native wildflowers, such as toothwort, the host plant for the caterpillar of the West Virginia White butterfly.

Caterpillars of the butterfly feed on native toothwort, especially two-leaved toothwort. In addition to choking out native toothworts, garlic mustard kills the caterpillars of West Virginia Whites. West Virginia Whites mistake garlic mustard for toothwort and lay their eggs on it. It is believed the strong mustard oils kill the caterpillars.

Garlic mustard is threatening West Virginia Whites within their entire range, from northeastern Ohio east to the central and southern Appalachians. Even before the garlic mustard threat, West Virginia Whites were local throughout their range and absent from many woodlands.

West Virginia Whites look very similar to Cabbage White butterflies, except West Virginia Whites lack the black markings on their forewing.



Above: West Virginia White caterpillar



Left: West Virginia White butterfly

by Jay Cossey

## Controlling Garlic Mustard

Stewardship of our region's biodiversity is a major responsibility of the Museum's Natural Areas Division. Stewardship includes restoring rare natural communities, removing alien plants, monitoring and mapping rare species or natural communities and restoring important habitat for local or declining species. Much of this work is accomplished by conservation interns, who are hired each summer by the Division.



Garlic Mustard Rosettes  
Museum slide collection

Garlic mustard is a biennial plant, which means the plant normally requires two seasons to complete its life cycle, growing usually as a rosette in the first season and producing flowers and fruits and then dying in the second season.

To impede the spread of garlic mustard yourself, you can either hand pull or spray the plant with herbicide before it flowers in early Spring. If flowering has begun, the flower head must be cut off and burned to stop seeds from forming.



Garlic Mustard  
by Greg Petusky

