

Off Balance!

Invasive Species and Biodiversity



Service Learning

Garlic Mustard Pull at a State or National Park

State and national parks struggle to contain the spread of invasive species and often lead groups of volunteers to remove them. Garlic mustard is [classified as a noxious weed or prohibited in eight US states](#), affecting woodlands from Vermont to Washington. Although pretty and non-poisonous, it takes over forest floors, replacing saplings and native flowers.

Pulling garlic mustard is a good volunteer activity for youth because the weed is not sharp or otherwise hazardous to handle. It is easily removed in Minnesota and surrounding states during the months of April and May, before it sets seed. This edible herb can be used in salads and on pasta, such as in the accompanying recipe, Spaghetti & Weeds. (Just be sure you get a clean patch of weeds with no herbicides or road runoff.)



To volunteer for a garlic mustard pull, contact the closest state or national park and ask for the volunteer-in-parks manager, usually a ranger. The ranger or volunteer leader will educate participants about this and other invasives and how they affect the park. Be sure to contact the ranger— it is against the law to remove plants from publicly owned parks without permission.

- If you don't live near a forest where garlic mustard grows, you can still learn about invasives and help eradicate them, possibly in your own neighborhood. A Park Ranger may suggest other invasives you could remove.
- Ask your nearest park ranger whether they need any help removing invasive species. Many of them welcome help from volunteer groups throughout the year.
- Pull dandelions instead of garlic mustard. They are everywhere in the early summer. Young dandelion greens are also good to eat – just be sure you have found a clean patch.