

Turn a Forest Pest into Tasty Pesto

Garlic mustard, *Alliaria petiolata*, was brought from Europe in the 1800s for culinary and medicinal purposes. In the wild, this invasive species can quickly dominate a forest floor, choking out wildflowers, ferns and tree seedlings. High in vitamins A and C, the plant smells like garlic and resembles mustard plant or creeping charlie.

While most animals dislike the taste, cooks are rediscovering its culinary roots and are biting back. For reclaiming the woods, the best control method is to pull and dispose of the plants prior to seed production. Recently, discriminating connoisseurs are also weeding and eating this plant, once known as poor man's mustard.

Garlic mustard leaves can be eaten fresh in salads or used in any recipe calling for mustard greens. Ensure the plants are clean and free of any chemical treatments. Plants may be dried or sautéed to add spice to any favorite recipes. Do not replant this invasive into your herb gardens. There is plenty to go around and many opportunities in Iowa for volunteer pulling. Bon appétit!

GARLIC MUSTARD PESTO AND PASTA

MAKES 4 CUPS

- 4 cloves garlic
- 3 tablespoons garlic mustard taproots
- ¾ cup parsley
- 1 cup garlic mustard leaves
- 1 ½ cups basil leaves
- 1 ½ cups olives
- 2 cups walnuts or ¾ cup pine nuts
- 1 ¼ cups olive oil (or as needed)
- 2 cups grated parmesan or pecorino cheese

In food processor:

1. Chop garlic and garlic mustard roots.
2. Add parsley, garlic, garlic mustard leaves and basil and chop.
3. Add nuts and chop coarsely.
4. Add olive oil and process until you've created a coarse paste. Add to cooked pasta and toss well.

Get Involved

Help control this invasive plant. Call your area state parks, county conservation boards and city parks to volunteer to remove this plant. Learn more about the Quad Cities pull Sat., May 8, 9 a.m.-noon by calling 563-344-4084 or www.extension.iastate.edu/scott



First year plants grow low to the ground. Second year growth stands 1 to 4 feet tall.

COLLECTING TIPS:

April through June, pull the plant and its entire roots. Search semi-shaded forests, especially along trails. Plant parts have a garlic like odor when crushed. Discard uneaten portions in the garbage to help prevent the plant from spreading. As one plant can produce hundreds of seeds that remain viable up to five years, once seeds start shedding, stay away from the plant to help minimize spreading.

The Iowa Outdoors cookbook features fish, game and camping recipes from Iowa chefs. From Dutch oven pheasant pot pie, venison lasagna, pecan-encrusted catfish, walleye fingers, hunter's pizza, wild sumac lemonade and dozens more, stay satisfied with 42 pages of color photos and recipe ideas. Five x 8 inches. Order at www.iowanaturestore.com or 1-866-410-0230. Cost \$5 plus S&H.

