



## Goutweed



*Aegopodium podagraria* L.

**DESCRIPTION:** Goutweed, also known as bishop's-weed and snow-on-the-mountain, is an herbaceous perennial plant in the carrot family. Most **leaves** are basal, with the leafstalk attached to an underground stem, or rhizome. The leaves are divided into three groups of three leaflets. The leaflets are toothed and sometimes irregularly lobed. Foliage is medium green in color or variegated bluish-green leaves with creamy white edges. Small, white, five-petal **flowers** are produced in mid-summer. Flowers are arranged in flat-topped clusters (called compound umbels) and are held above the ground on a leafy stem up to about 3 feet tall. The **seeds** are small and elongate, similar to carrot seeds, and ripen in late summer. The **rhizomes** are long, white, and

branching. Patches of this herbaceous perennial grow 16"-40" H and form a dense canopy that can exclude most other herbaceous vegetation. It is used as a low-maintenance ground cover.

**ECOLOGICAL THREAT:** An aggressive invasive plant that forms dense patches, displaces native species, and greatly reduces species diversity in the ground layer. Goutweed inhibits the establishment of conifers and other native tree species.

**DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES:** Goutweed is currently known to occur in twenty-nine states in the mid-Atlantic, Northeast and Northwest and is reported to be invasive in natural areas in Connecticut, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin.



**HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES:** It is found in old gardens and flowerbeds, around shrubs and other plantings, and in a variety of other disturbed habitats such as felled forests, abandoned fields, and pastures. In Eurasia, goutweed is primarily a species of deciduous and southern boreal forests, and it expands aggressively in similar habitats in North America. Goutweed appears to do best on moist soil and in light to moderate shade, but is highly shade-tolerant and capable of invading closed-canopy forests.

### CURRENT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES:

- **Biological.** There are no biological control organisms currently available.
- **Chemical.** Systemic herbicides such as glyphosate (Roundup) that are trans-located to the roots and kill the entire plant are most effective for goutweed control. However, glyphosate is non-specific and can damage or kill desirable native plants that are accidentally sprayed in the course of treating the goutweed. Contact herbicides are usually ineffective because goutweed readily leafs out again after defoliation.
- **Manual.** Small patches of goutweed can be eliminated by careful and persistent hand-pulling or digging up of entire plants along with underground stems (rhizomes). Be careful to pick up all rhizomes which can root again and sprout new plants.
- **Mechanical.** Where appropriate, frequent short mowing may control or slow the spread of goutweed in lawns, along roadsides, and other areas.
- **Physical.** Preventing goutweed from photosynthesizing in early **spring** (at the time of leaf-out) can control the plant by depleting its carbohydrate reserves. This can be accomplished by covering the patch with black plastic sheeting when the leaves start to emerge from the ground in the spring, and leaving it in place through the summer. A more effective option is to cut all plants once they've fully leafed out, using a mower, scythe, or weed-whacker type machine, and then cover the area with plastic

**Reference:** <http://plants.usda.gov> and New England Wild Flower Society Field Manual of Invasive Plants for the Northeast