

# Saanich Seeks Public Assistance with New Invader

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**For Immediate release**

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The District of Saanich is asking the public to be on the look-out for a particularly nasty new invader. Garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), an invasive plant from Europe, has devastated forests in eastern Canada. Some call it the new purple loosestrife. It has so far only been found on Vancouver Island in Victoria and Saanich. Since the District of Saanich received a report in 2004 for Mt. Douglas Park, there are now 10 sites identified in Saanich and about 6 in Victoria. Officials are asking for public assistance to respond rapidly to avoid widespread infestation such as has happened in Ontario, where it is out-competing plants in natural areas and completely taking over the understorey.

Saanich Parks and Saanich Environmental Services are coordinating an "Early Detection Rapid Response" to garlic mustard. This involves responding to reports on public lands with trained staff to properly remove the plant, and notifying private landowners to remove the garlic mustard before it sets seed. They are requesting the assistance of the public to report any new sites and for volunteer efforts to help control and monitor current sites.

Saanich would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of volunteers in Mt. Douglas Park, the first identified and most impacted site in Saanich. Volunteers are now needed to continue this work and are urgently needed at three sites in Gordon Head, Layritz, Prospect Lake and Cordova Bay.

Garlic mustard flowers in April and May, and a single plant produces hundreds of seeds in June and July. Because it is self-pollinating; a single seed can start a new invasion. This noxious invader also produces a toxin around its roots that kills soil fungi that are vital to the growth of other plants, making it a deadly neighbour.

Saanich is working with other jurisdictions and the Coastal Invasive Plant Council to stop the spread of this species to other areas on Vancouver Island. Invasive species are one of the biggest threats to native ecosystems and biodiversity throughout the world. Invasive species can have severe ecological, economic and health impacts. Many species are inadvertently spread by humans and pets as well as escaping from gardens to natural areas. Controlling invasive species and their impacts requires partnerships throughout the community and neighbouring jurisdictions.

If you would like to find out more about garlic mustard and other new or particularly invasive species, visit Saanich's website at [www.saanich.ca](http://www.saanich.ca).

To report garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) in Saanich, or to volunteer please contact:  
Saanich Environmental Services at 250-475-5471

To report garlic mustard in the City of Victoria, please contact:  
Victoria Parks at 250-361-0600.

## **For further information:**

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