



6-2007

W157 Wild Garlic

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Recommended Citation

"W157 Wild Garlic," The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, W157-6/07 07-0280, http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_agexcrop/67

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Wild Garlic

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Wild garlic *Allium vineale* L

Also known as: wild onion, crow garlic, field onion, Jamestown-grass, Stag's garlic, scallion, ramsons and rush-leek.

Classification and Description:

Wild garlic is a member of the Liliaceae, or lily, family. It is an erect perennial native to Eurasia that has a winter growth habit. Plants can range from 12 to 40 inches in height. This weed thrives in the eastern U.S. It emits a strong garlic odor when bruised or crushed. Wild garlic has little value, though it is similar to cultivated garlic. Seedlings resemble grasses but have hollow, rounded leaves arising from a bulb. Bulbs are round to egg-shaped; have a thin, papery covering; and may have smaller bulblets around them. Leaves are linear, hollow and oval to crescent-shaped in cross section (with a sheathing base). Flowering stems are solid, waxy and do not branch. Flowers are on short stems on the aerial bulblets and are small, greenish-white or pinkish. Aerial bulblets are ovoid and about the size of a wheat grain. Wild garlic produces four types of

bulbs: aerial, central, soft offset and hard-shelled. This weed also produces seeds and reproduction can occur by seeds or bulbs. The aerial bulblets are the most common form of reproduction and spread of wild garlic. Roots are mostly unbranched, fibrous and white and sometimes coarse. All leaves, bulbs and flowers have a strong garlic-like odor.

Weed Status and Injury:

Wild garlic grows in agronomic fields, pastures, turfgrass, along railroads and roadsides. It is a common pest in wheat fields. Small grains can be contaminated by wild garlic aerial bulblets during harvest of the grain, resulting in a reduction in quality and dock at the granary. Wild garlic can be troublesome to dairy farmers because consumption of this weed pest by cattle can cause a garlic-like flavor or odor to be passed to the milk. Wild garlic is commonly mistaken for wild onion, but wild onion has leaves that are solid and flatter in cross section compared to the hollow, more oval leaves of wild garlic.



Aerial bulblets



Wild garlic in turf

Interesting Facts:

The genus *Allium* consists of about 690 species of mostly perennial herbs that all emit a strong odor when crushed. Wild garlic flowers are pollinated by bumble bees. Native Americans of the Cherokee nation used wild garlic for medicinal purposes, including as an expectorant and as a treatment for asthma and scurvy. The Rappahannock chewed raw bulbs for high blood pressure and shortness of breath. The Hopi used wild garlic for food. *Allium* species contain volatile oils and sulfur glycosides that can help rid the intestinal tract of gas and aid digestion.

Management Considerations:

Wild garlic is not very competitive to row crops and does not cause yield reduction. However, it can become a problem in wheat production and contamination causes dockage at the market. Please refer to the *Weed Control Manual for Tennessee Row Crops* (Extension PB 1580) for management recommendations.

DeFelice, M. S. 2003. Wild Garlic, *Allium vineale* L. – Little to Crow About. *Weed Tech.* 17:4:890-895.

Horn, D. and Cathcart, T. 2005. *Wild Flowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians*. Lone Pine Publishing. 1808 B St NW., Suite 140, Auburn, WA 98001, USA 496 p.

Moerman, D. E. 1998. *Native American Ethnobotany*. Timber Press, Inc. The Haseltine Bldg., 133 S.W. Second Ave., Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204, USA 927 p.

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W157-6/07 07-0280

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