

# Vermont Invasive Exotic Plant Fact Sheet

Goutweed, Bishopweed or Bishopswort  
*Aegopodium podagraria* L.  
Parsley Family  
Vermont Class B Noxious Weed

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**Description:** Goutweed is a stout, erect perennial herb, that is 1 1/2 to 2 feet (.5 meters) tall, sometimes more. The stem is round, furrowed and hollow. It has a creeping root-stock and by this means it spreads rapidly and soon establishes itself, smothering all vegetation in its vicinity.

It has large, shiny, alternate, twice compound leaves. The umbels of flowers are rather large (resembling Queen Anne's lace), with numerous, small white flowers, which are in bloom from June to August and are followed by flattened seed-vessels which when ripe are detached and blown some distance by the wind

Cultivated goutweed is a variegated form of the plant. Occasionally self-seeded plants will revert to the green form, and it is this form that becomes so tenacious.

**Habitat:** Goutweed (the variegated cultivar) is commonly planted as a ground cover in shaded areas. The green form spreads easily in shaded areas near homes where the variegated form was originally planted. It also escapes to natural forest areas where it can spread rapidly and become the dominant plant of the forest floor.

**Threats:** Goutweed is an aggressive invader that threatens forested and open areas. Goutweed has been noted in the floodplain forests of Vermont, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Goutweed has been seen in upland hardwood forests as well, where soils are somewhat enriched. In some forests it has been observed expanding rapidly, covering up to 90% of the ground in some areas. Goutweed may endanger native vegetation in floodplain forests. As these forests are already uncommon, the potential threat to the integrity of just a few



(Gleason, Henry A. 1952. *New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, Hofner Press, New York. Vol. 2.)

**Threats continued:** floodplain forests in the state could lead to a serious loss of Vermont's natural heritage.

**Distribution:** Goutweed is native to Europe, but has naturalized throughout the northeastern United States.

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**Control:** Goutweed is difficult to eradicate once established. Mechanical removal and herbicides have been tried with varying success. Glyphosate (the active ingredient found in Round-up) has been used successfully in the control of goutweed, however a higher concentration (10% or greater active ingredient) of herbicide must be used.

## References

- Denise K. Quick. 1998. *Aegopodium podagraria: A new invasion?* Field Naturalist Program, Department of Botany, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont. Unpublished document.
- Gleason, H. A. and A. Cronquist. 1991. *Manual of vascular plants of the northeastern United States and adjacent Canada, Second edition.* The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York.



For more information about Vermont's invasive exotic plant species or if you would like to know how you can help, please contact:

The Nature Conservancy of Vermont, 27 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602  
Tel: 802-229-4425

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, 103 S. Main St., Bldg. 10 North, Waterbury, VT 05671-0408 Tel. 802-241-3777

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