

Goutweed

Identification:

The Goutweed is a vivacious plant imported from Europe. It can be seen anywhere from the forest floor to the middle of enlighten gardens. Its serrated leaves, often in groups of three, are about 5 to 10 cm long and can be variegated: the edges are then white. The stem is green and hollow. It can produce small white flowers in umbels at the end of each stem. The root system is very developed: the rhizomes can extend over 2 m in the first 20 cm of the soil. This is spectacular, especially considering that the fully grown plant rarely reach height of 60 cm (2 feet).

Similar species:

When the leaves are variegated, they are easily recognizable, and are only similar to the yellow archangel. The main difference is that the white parts that resemble two half circle in the middle of the leaf while the goutweed's white parts are the edges. When the leaves are not variegated, it is harder to differenced from other small plants. The solid and hollow stem and the double separation in three, from the stem and every leaf itself, serves as the most noticeable traits to identify it.



Yellow Archangel



Nuisance

While if its leaves and flowers may look appealing for small patches of your gardens, choosing it would be a grave mistake. If it considered cute in a small patch, it is far less appealing when it covers everything. Because it multiplies fast, it is often called a garden invader, sometime even the gardener's bane in Europe and recently in America. It can completely cover the undergrowth or the perimeter of decorative plants and shrubs, smothering them in a few years thanks to its early leaves and dense root system. When a property is overgrown, it may be impossible to plant anything else, reducing the potential value of the property to plant enthusiasts.

Why is an invasive species a problem?

All invasive species reproduce quickly, have no local predators, pose a threat to local plants living in similar conditions, and their elimination is almost impossible. Therefore, we must do everything in our power to prevent their spread. Report them on Sentinelle, the provincial website.



Prepared by
Le Canton de Stanstead

What to do?

If you considered buying one, instead choose regional options such as daisies, local ferns or one of the many *Heuchera* spp. If you see a colony of Goutweed on your property or in a public place and want to stop its spread or remove it, contact the municipality by email at stagiaire@cantonstanstead.ca, or phone at (819) 876-2948, ext. 227. If you want to remove them, total excavation with fill of healthy soil is the best way and can be done with moderated effort but a lot of patience. Cutting off the stems from the ground often for years can also be done and comes with an advantage: the leaves can be cooked like spinach and taste like a mixt of spinach and mint. This will weaken the plant and eventually kill it. To speed up the process, apply a weighted black tarp to prevent regrowth and check around for sprouts. When you have cut pieces, put them in a sturdy plastic bag and place it in your black or green garbage bin. Do not put it in the brown compost bin as the seeds and roots may survive the trip and disperse into the compost.

