

Goutweed

Aegopodium podagraria L.

Alternate Common Names: Goutwort; Herb-Gerard; Wild or English Masterwort; Ax-ash- or Aise-weed; Dwarf- or Bishop's-weed; White-ash-herb; Garden-plague; Dog- or Ground-elder; Snow-on-the-mountain; Jack-jump-about; Bishop's Goutweed

- **herbaceous perennial; 1 1/2'-2 1/2' tall; spreads by creeping underground stems (rhizomes)**
- **leaves alternate; each divided in three parts; lower leaves long-stalked**
- **lower leaves divided again**, totalling 9 leaflets if fully divided (often not fully divided)
- **upper leaves short-stalked**; smaller than lower leaves; **frequently with only 3 leaflets**
- **leaflets toothed**; 1 1/2" to 3" long; **horticultural varieties edged with a band of white**
- **flowers tiny; white; clustered in compound umbels** (see glossary) **2 1/2" to 5" wide**
- each flower makes a **tiny woody fruit that divides into 2 parts**, each about 1/8" long

Goutweed is in the Carrot family and in June-August has a long-stalked, compound umbel of white flowers similar to Queen Anne's Lace (the Wild Carrot of roadsides). **The presence of rhizomes** (creeping underground stems) instead of a carrot-like root **and the leaves divided into three parts distinguish Goutweed from Queen Anne's Lace**. Goutweed rhizomes are fragile and never produce sweet potato-like thickenings. New plants grow from broken fragments of rhizome carried to new places in transported soil or floodwaters.

Goutweed is an ornamental well-recognized as invasive in gardens, roadsides, churchyards, and riverbanks in Europe. Although it is frequently described as inhabiting waste places in North America, it also has been found to crowd out native species in floodplains, woodlands, and open areas that would normally develop into forest. Once established, it is very difficult to eradicate.



Text and photos by: Charlotte Pyle, October 2002
Helpful review provided by: Lillian Willis