

Pamela Zevit



INVASIVE PLANT PROFILE

Goutweed, Bishop's Weed

Aegopodium podagraria

Family: Apiaceae Zone 4-9



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Why is *Aegopodium podagraria* a problem?

A. podagraria is commonly grown as an ornamental, used as a ground cover, and best known for its foliage. It is typically green, though there is also a variegated form that has bluish-green leaves and white edges. Mature plants can tolerate full sun to part shade, and a wide range of moisture conditions from dry to medium wet, well-drained soils. Through either intentional plantings or inappropriately discarded yard waste, it has become invasive in various Lower Mainland habitats, particularly in places adjacent to residential developments. To date, its invasiveness is limited and localized, which makes it a good candidate for early control and management. It can invade closed-canopy forests, inhibiting the establishment of conifers and other native tree species, and is often found in disturbed habitats such as pastures and logged areas. It forms dense patches that displace native species, and reduces species diversity in the ground layer. It is most common in moist forests adjacent to older residential neighbourhoods

Patch sizes increase through the rhizome system. It is rare for seedlings to establish in the shade, however, once a plant becomes established, rhizomes easily and aggressively spread in both the sun and shade. Even rhizome fragments can re-root and spread new plants.

For more information see www.invasive.org/browse/subimages.cfm?sub=11534

How is *Aegopodium podagraria* controlled once a site is invaded?

While there are no known biological control organisms for *A. podagraria*, a range of manual, mechanical and physical control methods exist. However, these are time intensive and thus costly to implement. They include:

- Persistent hand-pulling or digging up of entire plants, including new shoots, along with underground rhizomes (stems). This is effective for small patches only. Removed plants should be piled up and dried for several days before bagging and disposing of them as garbage.
- Replanting areas cleared of *A. podagraria* with native or non-invasive ornamental plants. This is especially important to prevent soil erosion and the colonization of the site by other invasive species.
- Frequent short mowing may control or slow the spread of *A. podagraria* along roadsides and other areas.
- Controlling growth by preventing photosynthesis of *A. podagraria* in early spring (at the time of leaf-out), which results in depleting its carbohydrate reserves. Use black plastic sheeting to cover a patch of *A. podagraria* when leaves start to emerge from the ground in early spring, and leave it in place throughout the summer. Another option is to cut all plants once they've fully leafed out with a mower, scythe or weed-wacker.

Environment Canada, BC Ministry of Forests, and the Canadian Botanical Conservation Network list *A. podagraria* as invasive in upland habitats and in nine provinces across Canada. Various sources indicate that in BC, it is invasive primarily in the Lower Mainland.



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Plant description

Aegopodium podagraria is a herbaceous perennial vine native to Europe and northern Asia, including Siberia. The leaves are basal, divided into three groups of three leaflets, with the leaf-stalk attached to an underground stem.

A. podagraria has tiny, five-petaled white flowers that bloom May to June, appearing 1m above the foliage. It produces seeds which germinate the year after ripening, and do not form long-lived seedbanks. Seedlings require recently disturbed soil and bright light to survive. It spreads up to 70cm per year by underground rhizomes (stems). Seeds do not appear to increase plant dispersal.

Market Alternatives

There are other plants which provide the benefits of *A. podagraria*, including being shade tolerant and a leafy groundcover.

- 1 **Redwood sorrel** *Oxalis oregona* This shamrock-like groundcover spreads quickly to form a soft carpet in moist shady areas. It has small white to pink flowers in spring and dies back in the winter. It spreads well under conifer trees, and is recommended for woodland gardens, shady borders and to fill in areas between plants.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, MOIST 5-15CM TALL X 1.5M SPREAD



- 2 **Foamflower** *Tiarella trifoliata* This evergreen perennial spreads to form a carpet of green hairy leaves that turn a nice bronze in the winter. In the spring it provides an airy show of tiny white flowers on a tall stem. This is also a woodland plant, native to coastal BC and thrives in light to deep shade.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, MOIST 15-60CM TALL



- 3 **Fringecup** *Tellima grandiflora* When planted in groups this perennial provides a carpet of lush green leaves with a show of tiny white flowers floating above the foliage. This plant is suitable for woodland gardens, shady rock gardens, and under trees.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY/MOIST, 40-80CM TALL X 20-40CM WIDE



- 4 **Bishop's wort** *Epimedium spp.* A deciduous mounding groundcover with heartshaped foliage and delicate spring flowers. The colours of the leaves and flowers vary with cultivars. Suitable for woodland planting, under deciduous trees and in the perennial border.

PART SHADE, MOIST, SIZE VARIES WITH SPECIES



- 5 **Sweet woodruff** *Galium odoratum* This is a deciduous groundcover with whorled leaves that spread into a delicate carpet. In late spring, white star-like flowers cover the plant. It is ideal for under trees and in woodland gardens. It can look a bit tired in late summer so consider inter-planting with ferns and other woodland plants.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY/MOIST, 4-6CM TALL X 1M SPREAD



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