

Weed Information Sheet:

lily-of-the-valley

Convallaria majalis

Identification:

Asparagaceae (Asparagus family)

Common Perennial forb

Height:

Width:

Leaf Arrangement:

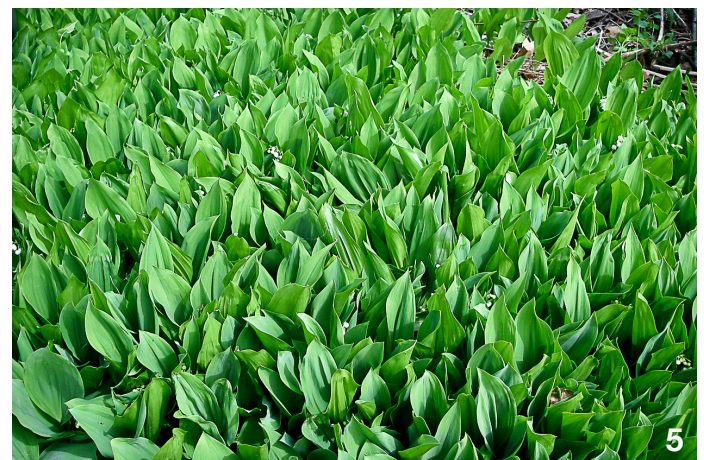
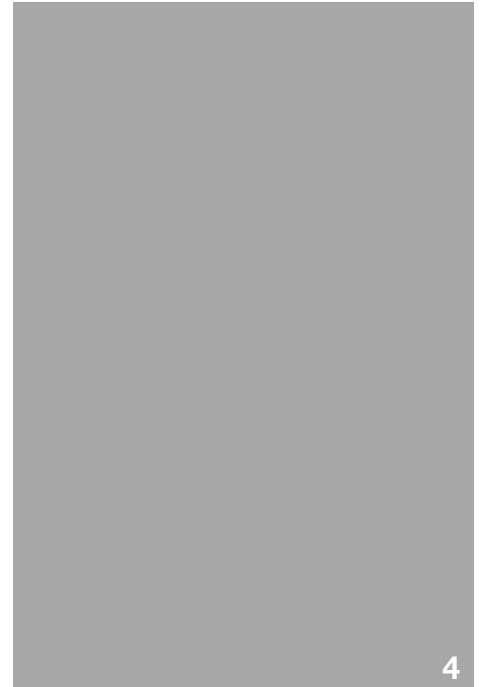
Flower: White, Cream

Blooms:

Fruit:

Fall Color:

This Eurasian member of the Asparagus family (formerly placed in the Lily family) is a perennial which is often planted as a ground cover in shade to semi-shade areas. The erect, paired basal leaves have smooth margins and parallel veins typical of lilies, growing up to 10" in height in dense colonies. In spring a nodding flower spike develops up to 6" in height, holding six to twelve downward pointing flowers. Later in the growing season these flowers will develop into red berries up to 1/3" across.



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Convallaria majalis

AKA:



Description & Impact:

It spreads by underground rhizomes, forming dense monocultures which will spread and displace other plants. Due to its aggressive nature, many gardeners eventually regret planting lily-of-the-valley. If it escapes into natural areas it can slowly but steadily eradicate native species. Furthermore, all parts of the plants are poisonous if ingested, posing a risk to children and pets. Though this species has practical uses as a heart medicine, and many people find the fragrance of its flowers alluring, its invasive nature makes it inappropriate for landscaping.

Control Methods:

Digging: Grubbing, digging up a whole area then sifting out and removing the roots is the most effective manual control method, and this is best done when the soil is moist. This may be done most easily by running a flat bladed shovel through the soil below the root level and then sifting through the uprooted mass to remove the entire plant. The plants should then be disposed of properly. Repeated treatments will be needed as it will re-sprout from any root fragments that might remain.

Smothering offers a less labor intensive control method. This can be done in early spring as the plants begin to sprout, or during the flowering period. Start by cutting or weed whipping plants to ground level before smothering. Lay down sheets of cardboard 2-3 layers of red rosin paper, or 8 to 10 layers of damp newspapers over the entire lily-of-the-valley colony. Then cover this material with 4-6" of mulch, and leave this covering in place for one full growing season.

Herbicide: Application of a glyphosate-based herbicide (RoundUp®, etc.) will control lily of the valley, although several applications may be necessary. The best times to spray the plants are early in the spring when the leaves are still tender and while the plants are flowering. Otherwise, mow the colony first, then spray the tender, new foliage as soon as it is nearly fully leafed-out. Always read herbicide labels carefully before use and always apply according to the instruction on the product label.

Revegetation Recommendations: Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*) is a native with similar appearance, in fact it is sometimes called Wild Lily-of-the-Valley. It is less aggressive than Lily-of-the-Valley and though it will spread, the colony will not be as dense. This species prefers rich, shaded sites. Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) and False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum* and *M. stellatum*) are not ground covers but are instead taller (1-3 feet), shade tolerant members of the lily family that also have parallel veined leaves, and creamy white flowers followed by berries which provide food for wildlife. Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*) is a native groundcover which can be fairly aggressive in a garden setting, so it is best to plant it in an area where it can be contained. Great Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum appendiculatum*) is similar, though rarer in the wild, less aggressive, and less commonly available for sale. Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*) is another excellent native ground cover for shady areas.

Citations: