

Watch Out for Leafy Strangers!

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Invasive Plants at Pictured Rocks

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore is continually threatened by non-native, invasive plants that cause ecological damage to the park's many diverse habitats and can even harm human health. Learn to recognize some of the more common invasive plants in the national lakeshore and discover what you can do to help prevent their spread.



Ordinary garden Forget-Me-Nots can be aggressive forest invaders.

What are alien and invasive species?



Spotted Knapweed

Over 120 plant species in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore are “unwelcome” strangers: non-native, alien plants that don't belong in this ecosystem. These are species that have been accidentally or intentionally transported from other parts of the world. Alien plants often include garden and landscaping varieties that have escaped into the wild.

Most non-native plants do not negatively impact the environment, but others, known as **invasive species**, can cause significant ecological damage. Invasive species such as garlic mustard, forget-me-not, and spotted knapweed can crowd out native species and alter forest and dune communities.

Why are invasive plants harmful?

Invasive plants, which can grow quickly, spread aggressively and produce abundant seeds, often outcompete native species. Since they do not “belong” in ecosystems here in the United States, there are few if any natural predators or diseases to limit their spread. They absorb more than their fair share of nutrients and light, and suppress other species—thus limiting healthy forest diversity.



Garlic Mustard

What is the park doing about invasive plants?



Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore actively removes and treats infestations of several invasive plant species, including garlic mustard, forget-me-not, spotted knapweed, goutweed, sweet clover, and wild parsnip. Invasive plants are either hand-pulled or sprayed with herbicide. If you see posted information about invasive species management in the park, please read and heed the directions!

The park also works to educate visitors and nearby communities about invasive species and their impact on the environment, collaborates with community partners on habitat restoration projects, and supports efforts to promote native species for home gardens and landscaping.

Here are some of the **highly invasive** “leafy strangers” you may encounter in the park:

Goutweed

(*Aegopodium podagraria*)
A carrot family perennial also called Snow-on-the-mountain. The variety in the park has non-variegated leaves. Forms dense patches, crowds out native plants.



Spotted Knapweed

(*Centaurea maculosa*)
Biennial/perennial 2-4 feet tall. Found in dry sunny fields, roads, pastures and driveways. Invades pristine dune habitats.



Sweet Clovers

(*Melilotus* spp.)
Biennial legumes that grow to 6 feet, spread quickly, and shade native sun-loving plants. Both white and yellow varieties are found in the park.



Garlic Mustard

(*Alliaria petiolata*)
Biennial up to 3 feet tall, found in open areas and in woods. The plant smells strongly of garlic and has small white flowers with four petals. Crowds out native forest wildflowers.

Forget-Me-Not

(*Myosotis* spp.)
Escaped garden plant with small, five-petaled blue flowers. Grows well in shade. Velcro-like seeds stick to hikers and animals.



Wild Parsnip

(*Pastinaca sativa*)
Biennial up to 5 feet tall with pale yellow flowers. This plant can cause severe and dangerous blisters! Tell park staff if you see this plant, but do not touch it!

For information on how to eradicate these and other invasive plants in your area, contact your county conservation district or local university extension office.

What can you do to help ?



Stop the Spread!

The best way to help stop the spread of invasive plants into protected natural areas is to avoid spreading the seeds. **Please:**

- Use boot brush stations before and after hiking to remove seeds and burs from your shoes so that you do not move them between trails.
- In the absence of boot stations, clean your hiking shoes by hand with a scrub brush. Make sure no seeds are sticking to your laces as well.
- Check for and remove all seeds and soil from recreational equipment such as tents and walking sticks. Shake out your tent, camp chairs, sleeping bags, and other items before leaving the campsite.
- Remove seeds from pet fur before taking your pet into new places.

For more information visit: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/biology/invasivespecies>