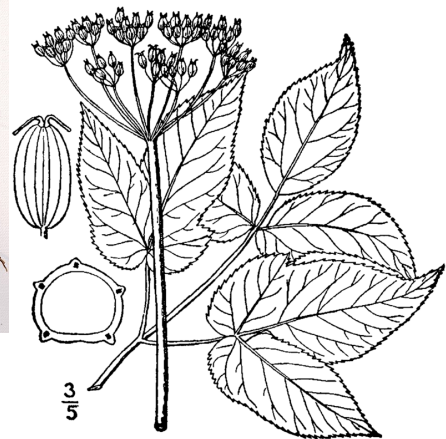


Goutweed is a familiar problem to many gardeners. It is an edible and medicinal groundcover that thrives in any light conditions and most soils. It quickly integrates itself into gardens and crowds out any other plant, impacting the health of shrubs and creating boring looking monocultures that are difficult to remove. Goutweed can travel underneath concrete or stone pavers for up to 6 feet or more with its creeping rhizomes. Goutweed comes back from root fragments, and relies on you to give up in despair. A really overgrown suburban backyard can take around \$1'000 to treat.

The only really effective way to get rid of it is to dig. I give a "first-pass", removing all plants and roots. In a well-established patch I'll clear about 1 square meter an hour, but I don't leave much behind. I use a shovel to chop through really tangled roots, then a hand claw tool. Then for the rest of the season, I return every week or two. Conveniently, the plants indicate where I let roots behind by sprouting up a leaf, and they can't hide forever. Subsequent passes only take an hour or so. By the end of the season most of it will be gone, though it pays to keep an eye out for at least three years, especially if you know you haven't been able to reach an "original" piece of root.

If you know you don't want to grow anything else where the goutweed was, such as cracks in a foundation that you can't otherwise reach, I pour salt into it. If I can't get to a whole patch at once, or part belongs to a neighbour who won't work on their goutweed problem, I dig in a vertical barrier at least 6-8" into the ground.



This will slow it down greatly, though you should still check on it from time to time. I have seen good results from people who combine edging with a lightproof barrier. Laying something on top and mulching it will not help at all, though it does encourage people who should be to mulch anyway. If someone else has laid landscaping fabric and mulch years before you, it is easy to shake the roots from the rotted mulch, and the roots under the cloth will have migrated to the surface, where they should be removed. Then keep checking for a few years as above.

Mowing will also slow the spread, especially if you can attend to it every week.

Here in Halifax, city compost gets hot enough to kill goutweed. Other ways are to use anaerobic digestion or burning.