



Invasive Species of the Month for February 2018

Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*)

Origin: Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East

Interesting Fact: Star-of-Bethlehem resembles some edible species such as Wild Garlic and other *Allium* species, but do not eat Star of Bethlehem as it is poisonous.

Description: Star-of-Bethlehem is a small perennial herbaceous plant in the Lily Family that grows from bulbs. Star of Bethlehem has small, linear, grass-like leaves and showy, six-petaled white flowers.

Defining characteristics:

- Small, linear leaves with white midribs
- Clusters of white six-petaled flowers that resemble stars
- Lots of small bulbs growing closely together
- Three-celled seed capsules that develop from the flowers



(Left image) The white flowers and leaves with white midrib

(Center image) The bulbs of Star-of-Bethlehem and leaves beginning to emerge in early February.

(Right image) Patches of Star-of-Bethlehem in the spring (Mark Frey, The Presidio Trust, Bugwood.org)



Knox County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area

Habitat: Found in moist to wet habitats such as floodplains, riparian areas, mesic woods, disturbed woods, forest edges, gardens and yards.



(Right Image) Star-of-Bethlehem invading a woodland edge at Fox Ridge Nature Park.

Ecological threat: Star-of-Bethlehem reproduces mainly by new bulb offsets, and it can form dense ground cover and outcompete native plants. Damage to the bulbs does not prevent reproduction either. The waxy foliage of Star-of-Bethlehem can be resistant to several common herbicides, making management of this species quite difficult. In addition, the foliage and leaves are poisonous to livestock and other grazing animals.

Control Methods:

- **Manual:** Bulbs can be dug up and disposed of properly; however, some of them can be fairly deep in the ground.
- **Chemical:** Chemical control is difficult because Star-of-Bethlehem is resistant to several herbicides. One of the only herbicide demonstrated to be effective is bromoxynil, which could be applied with a foliar application in late spring.*

*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

References

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- Main, Christopher L. et al. "Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*) Control with Postemergence Herbicides in Dormant Bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*) Turf." *Weed Technology*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2004, pp. 1117-1119.
- Pennsylvania DCNR. "Invasive Plants of Pennsylvania: Star-of-Bethlehem." *Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*. http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_010226.pdf. Accessed 8 Feb. 2018.
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