

Three-Cornered Leek

(*Allium triquetrum*)



Family name: Amaryllidaceae (Amaryllis family)

Common name/s: Three-Cornered Leek, Three-Cornered Garlic, Triangular-Stalked Garlic



Three-Cornered Leek (*Allium triquetrum*) is a bulbous perennial plant. In Ireland, it is considered an invasive species in some areas, particularly in woodlands and along roadsides, where it can form dense carpets that outcompete native vegetation.

The plant spreads mainly through bulb multiplication, making management challenging. Control strategies include mechanical removal, herbicide use, and proper disposal of garden waste to prevent its spread. If left unmanaged, Three-Cornered Leek can significantly impact local biodiversity and habitat dynamics.

Description - Three-Cornered Leek is noted for its garlic-like scent, triangular stems, and nodding white flowers. It has been introduced to Ireland, where it has become naturalised and can be invasive in some areas.

The plant's rapid spread and dense growth can outcompete native flora, especially in woodland and shaded habitats.

Key characteristics include:

Height: Grows to a height of 20-50 cm, with stems that are distinctly triangular in cross-section.



Leaves: The leaves are long, narrow, and linear, measuring 10-30 cm in length and 1-2 cm in width.

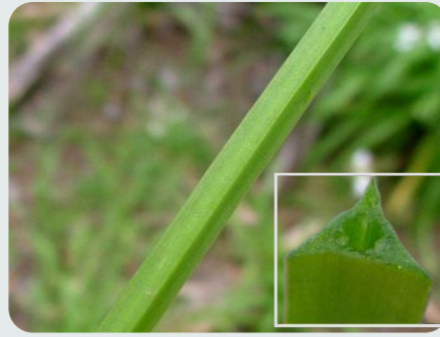
The leaves are often slightly drooping, bright green and alternately arranged, but clustered towards the base of the stems. They have a garlic-like smell when crushed.

Flowers: Produces white, bell-shaped flowers with green stripes, arranged in loose, nodding clusters of 3-15 flowers per stem.



Each flower is about 1-2 cm long. Flowering occurs from March to June.

Fruit: Forms capsules containing small, seeds, although spread by seed is less common than vegetative propagation.



Stem: The stem is triangular in cross-section, giving the plant its common name. It is smooth and green, often arching under the weight of the flowers.



Root: Grows from an underground bulb, which can multiply over time, leading to the formation of dense clumps.

Habitat - Three-Cornered Leek is native to the Mediterranean region, including southern Europe and North Africa. In its introduced range, it can thrive in various habitats:



- **Woodlands and Woodland Edges:** Frequently found in shaded or semi-shaded areas, such as the edges of woodlands or along hedgerows.
- **Roadsides and Disturbed Areas:** Can establish in disturbed soils, such as along roadsides, verges, and urban green spaces.

- **Gardens and Waste Ground:** Often found in gardens, parklands, and waste ground, where it can escape cultivation and spread into the wild.



The plant prefers moist, well-drained soils and can grow in full sun to partial shade.

Status in Ireland - In Ireland, Three-Cornered Leek is considered an invasive species in some areas, particularly in woodlands, hedgerows, and along roadsides, where it can form dense carpets that displace native species.

Its ability to spread quickly from gardens and disturbed sites has facilitated its naturalisation in many regions.

Reproduction and Spread - Three-Cornered Leek reproduces through both seed production and vegetative propagation:

- **Bulb Division:** The primary method of spread is through bulb multiplication, where new bulbs form around the parent bulb, leading to the formation of dense clumps.

Bulbs can also be transported in soil, contributing to its spread.

- **Seed Dispersal:** While the plant can produce seeds, seed-based reproduction is less common compared to vegetative propagation. Seeds may be dispersed by water or animals, but this plays a minor role in its spread.

- **Human Activity:** The movement of soil or garden waste containing bulbs is a significant factor in its dispersal.

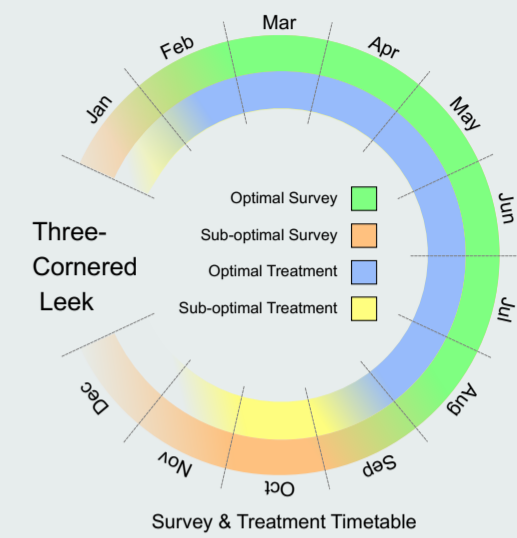
Management and Control - Managing Three-Cornered Leek requires consistent efforts to reduce its spread and remove established clumps:

- **Mechanical Control:** Digging up the bulbs can be effective for small infestations, but care must be taken to remove all bulb fragments, as even small pieces can regrow.

Repeated cutting or mowing may help weaken the plant over time.

- **Chemical Control:** Herbicide treatments, particularly with products containing glyphosate, can be used to manage larger infestations, especially when applied to actively growing plants.

- **Preventative Measures:** Avoid planting Three-Cornered Leek near natural habitats where it could spread, and ensure that garden waste is disposed of properly to prevent accidental introduction into the wild.



Ecological Impact - Three-Cornered Leek can have significant ecological impacts, particularly where it becomes invasive:

- **Competition with Native Species:** Forms dense carpets that suppress native ground flora, reducing biodiversity, especially in woodlands and shaded areas.
- **Alteration of Habitat Structure:** Its growth can change the structure of plant communities, affecting species that rely on native vegetation for habitat.
- **Potential Hybridisation Risk:** While hybridisation is not a primary concern with Three-Cornered Leek, its presence in natural areas can lead to the decline of more sensitive native species.



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