



Ground Ivy, Creeping Charlie

Glechoma hederacea

Creeping Charlie gets little respect from those who prefer to keep a neat lawn and do not know of its many benefits. Although it is invasive, it may serve as a ground cover in places where the grass does not grow well, or at tree bases that are difficult to mow.

Also known as Ground ivy, a mass of small scallop-shaped evergreen leaves lays low on the ground for most of the year. At the flowering time in spring, it grows erect up to 6 inches to show off its dainty purple flowers nestled in the axils of its paired leaves, then returns to its ground-hugging habit.

The leaves and flowers of Creeping Charlie can be dried for tea, made into a tincture, and used externally in a salve or liniment. An infusion of the above-ground plant is said by Lee Peterson, of Peterson's Guides, "to make a fine tea." It is supposed to be helpful for colds and lung ailments. Snuffing the fresh juice up the nose often helps nasal congestion and headache.

Ground Ivy has been used internally and externally for sciatica, hip gout, arthritic hands, and knees. Ground Ivy is also said to hasten early recovery of new wounds when applied as a poultice.

Herbalist Henriette Kress of Finland says of Ground Ivy "It's one of the few herbs that can touch noise-induced tinnitus.... I know because quite a few told me. It's 2-3 cups of tea for weeks or months on end, or until the noise stops. (... what a relief!)"

Ground Ivy is used in Italian spas as a bath soak for back pain, as well as its emollient and mild sedative properties. A 1986 study found that Ground Ivy's ursolic and oleanolic acids protected mouse skin from induced tumor growth. It can also be used to lighten skin and fade age spots.

Before lead paint was banned, it was said that painters who drank Ground Ivy tea were not bothered with lead poisoning.

Like most plants with edible leaves, it can be used as a flavoring, a spring green, or addition to soups and stews. In the Middle Ages, Creeping Charlie was known as Ale-Hoof and was added to beer for flavor, to clarify, and add shelf life.

