

Henbit or Ground Ivy — How to Tell the Difference

Infestations of henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) and ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) can result in the patches of purple we see in the spring. These plants are not always welcome in our yards. Identification can sometimes be tricky. They both are members of the mint family (*Lamiaceae*) and have the characteristic square stems. However, they differ in their life cycles.

Henbit is a winter annual (completes its life cycle in the spring), but ground ivy is a perennial (life cycle lasting more than one year). These plants can bloom as early as

April and ground ivy can continue to bloom into June. The flowers are tiny, tubular, pink to purple and can be found in the upper leaf axils of both plants.

Ground ivy's stems generally lie along the ground, rooting at the nodes and the leaves are round to kidney shaped. However the reproductive stems are more ascending and can sometimes be confused for henbit. When looking at the reproductive stems, ground ivy leaves are bore on petioles. Whereas, the henbit has sessile (leaf is attached directly to the stem) leaves. (MJF)



Henbit



Ground ivy

Lee Davis @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

Garden Guide

Things to do this month

- Consider planting flowers which may be dried for winter arrangements. Some of the best are strawflower, statice, celosia and globe amaranth.
- Do not restrict yourself to buying plants in bloom. Petunias that bloom in the pack are often rootbound or overgrown and after planting will actually be set back and cease to bloom for about a month. Plants without blossoms will actually bloom sooner and will grow better as well.
- To extend the blooming period of gladiolus, plant early, middle and late-season selections each week until the middle of June. Choose a sunny location and plant the corms four to six inches deep and six to eight inches apart.
- Scatter annual poppy seeds in flower borders. The fine seeds need not be covered. The plants grow rapidly and provide colorful flowers in early summer.
- In a sunny location with poor soil, plant nasturtiums for a colorful show. They require warm soil to sprout and start blooming in about 50 days. Too much water and fertilizer produces excess leaves and few flowers.
- When chrysanthemums show signs of life, dig up and divide large plants. Discard woody portions and replant divisions 12 to 15 inches apart.
- Cut flower stalks back to the ground on daffodils, hyacinths and other spring flowering bulbs as the flowers fade. Do not cut the foliage until it dies naturally. The leaves are necessary to produce strong bulbs capable of reflowering next year.
- Do not add organic matter to the soil when planting trees. It does not help the plant become established and it may create conditions that encourage the roots to stay inside the planting hole instead of spreading to surrounding soil. Do dig a large planting hole, but fill it with the original soil removed from it.
- The last Friday in April is National Arbor Day. Plant a tree or support an organization which does.
- Prune spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia and spirea after they have completed flowering.
- Remove sticks, rocks and other debris from your lawn to prevent damaging your lawnmower or injuring yourself when mowing. Check your lawnmower and other lawn-care equipment in preparation for the coming season.
- Put a birdhouse in the garden to attract insect eating friends.
- Measure the rainfall with a rain gauge posted near the garden so you can tell when to water. The garden needs about one inch of rain per week from April to September. (MJF)

Night-Blooming Flowers

During the day, most people are hard at work and don't have time to enjoy their gardens. Evenings may be the only time you get a chance to sit back and relax. What could be more relaxing at the end of a long day than a fragrant, luminous garden?

Gardens designed for evening enjoyment are called moon gardens. Plants used in moon gardens have one or more of the following characteristics: evening bloom time, fragrance and white flowers or foliage.

Plants that bloom in the late afternoon or night allow for evening enjoyment. Fragrant flowers provide aromatherapy at the end of a hard day. Illuminated only by moonlight, white or pale flowers and foliage add a celestial quality to a garden.

Several night-blooming flowers that are ideal for a moon garden are listed below. Night-blooming flowers rely on a strong fragrance, rather than bright colors, to attract pollinators. Other plant possibilities for a moon garden include **artemisia, lamb's ear, fragrant roses, dusty miller and white flowered annuals and perennials.**



Moonflower

Moonflower (*Ipomeea alba*) — This fragrant flowering vine has large heart shaped leaves.

Showy flowers open in the evening and last until the next morning. Moonflowers have a sweet fragrance and can be up to 5 to 6 inches across. Closely related to morning glory, this quick-growing annual may climb up to 15 feet. Although it takes longer and warmer soil conditions to become established, it is every bit as vigorous as the morning glory.



Four o'clocks

Four o'clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*) — This flower is appropriately named. Its blossoms open in late afternoon, scenting the air with a sweet fragrance before closing the next morning. Plants grow up to 3-feet tall with a bushy habit and blossom continuously from late spring through fall. The 1-inch trumpet-shaped flowers come in shades of red, yellow, white or rose.

Yucca (*Yucca filamentosa*) — Flowers of this spiky perennial are open all day but at night the droopy blossoms lift and release a soapy smell. Yucca is a broad leaved evergreen that forms a low cluster of long, pointed leaves. During the growing season, a long stalk will grow up to 6 feet tall and



Yucca

produce large numbers of white bell shaped flowers. Once established it may be difficult to remove from the landscape. Yucca is hardy in zones 4 to 9.

Flowering tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*) — *Nicotiana glauca* is an annual plant that produces fragrant, tubular flowers that open in evening. Flowers are borne on draping branches and come in pink, purple, red, white and yellow. Plants grow in any garden soil and prefer full sun to partial shade. (MJF)



Flowering tobacco

Growing Parsley

Parsley, (*Petroselinum crispum*) a member of the carrot family, is a lot more than a decorative green leaf on the side of a restaurant plate. In fact, it is one of the most nutritious of all herbs. An excellent source of vitamins A and C.

Parsley leaves are comprised of three leaflets on short stems, that branch in threes at the tips of eight inch long bare stalks. Leaves of common parsley are dark green with divided tips which curl tightly. Those of Italian parsley are a lighter green and more deeply divided and feathery, resembling celery foliage. A common parsley plant typically grows 9 to 18 inches tall and spreads about 6 to 9 inches.

Although parsley is a biennial, it is usually treated as an annual and is pulled up at the end of the first season. That is why its flowers, which appear in early summer of its second year,



Parsley

are seldom seen. They are flat clusters composed of tiny, greenish yellow florets, and resemble Queen Anne's lace. As with most herbs, flowering tends to make the foliage bitter and less useful for cooking.

Parsley grows best in full sun. The ideal soil is moderately rich, moist and well drained. To direct sow seeds in rows, trace a shallow indentation in the soil with a stick or pencil to guide planting. Then sow the seeds by dribbling them through your thumb and forefinger into the indented rows. Plant seeds a half inch deep. Parsley is very slow to germinate. After 3 or 4

weeks, when sprouts are a few inches tall and show their first true leaves, thin them to allow 8 to 10 inches of space between the remaining ones so they can grow freely.

Young parsley plants need regular watering until they become estab-

lished. Spread one to two inches of mulch, such as grass clippings or chopped leaves on the soil around parsley plants when they are about 6 inches tall. This mulch helps the soil retain moisture and discourages weeds.

Begin harvesting parsley when it produces leaf stems with three segments. Harvest the larger leaves at the outside of the plant first, leaving the new, interior shoots to mature. Store freshly picked leaves in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for 2 weeks. Parsley also dries well. Store dried parsley in an air-tight jar for up to a year. (MJF)

Southwest Missouri State University Herbarium

Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M University

Baker University