

~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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Ground Ivy

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Yesterday some new friends (like-minded fellow Earth travelers) Dan and Angela, stopped by for a visit. As we toured my herb garden, Angela asked, "What's this pretty little thing?" I told her that it has several common names; Creeping Charlie, Alehoof, Gill-go-over the Ground, or Ground Ivy are a few. Of course she immediately remembered that it was a common, nuisance weed in her garden, which kept coming back weed after week. It's yet another one of those "weeds" that just won't quit.

Ground Ivy: *Glechoma hederacea*- is one of the most common plants (weeds) in this area. The root is perennial, throwing out long, trailing square stems with kidney-shaped dark green leaves, which have rounded indentations on the margins and grow opposite each other. The flowers have a purplish/blue tint and are two-lipped, blooming all summer and into autumn.

The whole plant, gathered when the flowers are in bloom, is used medicinally. It is diuretic, astringent, a gentle stimulant and a tonic, which is useful in kidney diseases liver ailments, and for indigestion. Ground ivy is also a good remedy for chronic coughs and nervous headaches. John

Gerard, English herbalist (1597), stated in his book The Herbal, that Ground Ivy is a remedy for tinnitus (ringing in the ears): "It is recommended against the humming noise and ringing sound of the ears, being put into them, and for them that are hard of hearing." One can only assume that he meant dropping a little of the infusion into the ears.

Ground Ivy's action for healing is due to its ability to dissolve mucous from the ear, nose, throat and digestive system. It is well tolerated in cases of lingering congestion and chronic conditions such as sinusitis. It is a valuable treatment for gastritis, acid indigestion, diarrhea and kidney and liver disorders.

Nicholas Culpeper, in his book The English Physitian (1652) stated, "Ground Ivy is a singular herb for all inward wounds, ulcerated lungs and other parts, either by itself or boiled with other like herbs; and being drunk, in a short time easeth all griping pains, windy and choleric humours in the stomach, spleen, etc., helps yellow jaundice by opening the stoppings of the gall and liver; melancholy by opening the stoppings of the spleen. The decoction of it drank for some time procureth ease in sciatica or hip, hand, knee and feet gout. The juice of it boiled with honey cleanse fistulas, ulcers, and stops the spreading of cancers." In his book, The Herb Book, John Lust tells us that Ground Ivy is useful in cases of *Neuro-asthenia*- Neuro, pertaining to the nerves and Asthenia, lack of dynamic force in the personality and a condition of depleted vitality and liver ailments. A vinegar of the flowers and berries is said to have been used successfully during the London Plague.

More recently, a 1986 laboratory experiment showed that ursolic and oleanolic acids from Ground Ivy, inhibited the Epstein-Barr virus and protected mouse skin from induced tumor growth.

Last spring when I helped my daughter in her greenhouse, I gathered some young Ground Ivy plants from the field and put them into pots. In a few weeks they were lovely trailing plants with little blue flowers. Several customers bought them- just because they were so pretty. This is a just another case of a pesky weed finally being recognized for its beauty.

First we love it for its beauty, and then we come to recognize it for its healing power. We may never look at "weeds" with the same disgust again! Use those weeds! The Creator of the Universe put them here for a good purpose.