



## Invasive Species of the Month for May 2018

### Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*)

**Origin:** Europe

**Interesting Fact:** Ground Ivy was actually used to flavor beer before hops (*Humulus lupulus*) were discovered. However, it is important to note that Ground Ivy does contain dangerous chemicals (terpenes) when consumed in excess.

**Description:** Ground Ivy is a perennial herbaceous plant in the Mint family that grows as dense groundcover via stolons. It has opposite leaves and noticeable purple axillary flowers that bloom through spring and summer.

#### Botanical Terminology:

*Axillary* – occurring in where the leaf meets the stem

*Herbaceous* – not woody

*Pubescent* – hairy

*Stolons* – creeping horizontal root-like structures

#### Defining characteristics:

- Opposite, pubescent round leaves with shallow toothed margins
- Leaves can have a reddish/purple ting in the spring
- Leaves have faint mint odor when crushed
- A row of long hairs at the nodes
- Square stems that are slightly rough
- Two-lipped, trumpet-shaped, purple axillary flowers in clusters of 1-3



Left Image: Foliage in the spring.

Above Image: Ground Ivy in flower. Note how the flowers are clustered underneath the leaves. Also note the two lips of each flower (circled in inset) and the two upper and three lower lobes of those lips (numbered in inset).

**Habitat:** Lowland woods, woodland edges, ditches, lawns, and other disturbed places



Above Image: A dense patch of Ground Ivy at Fox Ridge Nature Park.

**Ecological threat:** Ground Ivy does not spread much by way of seed. However, it does vigorously spread via stolons, which can grow up to 10 ft. long and enable it to form dense groundcover. In addition, Ground Ivy is toxic to most domesticated livestock.

**Control Methods:**

- Manual: Pulling can be effective on small young patches, but care must be taken to get all of the roots and stolons. Pulling is not recommended on large dense patches.
- Chemical: Herbicide control of Ground Ivy is recommended; however, it can be tricky. Foliar application\* of 2,4-D, triclopyr, or a combination of the two have been shown to be effective when applied in late Fall, if possible. Addition of a surfactant can improve control.

\*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

**References**

- Adams, Ryan. " 'Creeping Charlie' (Glechoma hederacea) control." *Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Turf Blog*. 22 Oct. 2013. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/turfgrass/blog/creeping-charlie-glechoma-hederacea-control>. Accessed 9 May 2018.
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