

Illinois Grazing Manual Fact Sheet

SPECIES • POISONOUS PLANTS



Ground Ivy or Creeping Charlie



Ground Ivy
Photo by: G. A. Cooper
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PLANTS Database



Ground Ivy
Photo by: Elaine Haug
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Plants found in hay and grain.

Description

Glechoma hederacea L.: Ground ivy is a creeping perennial herb with slender, square stems that root at the joints. The oppositely arranged leaves are round or kidney-shaped and have scalloped teeth on their margins. The small bluish flowers are found in the axils of the leaves, usually 3 per axil, and appear from April to June and sometimes into July.

Occurrence

A native of Eurasia, ground ivy has become thoroughly naturalized in North America as a plant of moist woods and as a troublesome weed of moist gardens and lawns. Ground ivy ranges from Newfoundland to Ontario, Minnesota, and North Dakota, south to Georgia, Alabama, Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado. It also occurs from Alaska to California.

Conditions of Poisoning

Ground-ivy poisoning is rare, probably because most animals do not like the bitter taste of the plant. Horses, the animal most often affected, are poisoned only after eating large quantities of the plant, either green or dried in hay.

Control

Animals should not be grazed in areas that are heavily infested with ground ivy, particularly when other herbage is dry or scarce, and hay should not be made in meadows where the plant is abundant. Ground ivy should be eradicated in all places where it is a danger to animals. It is easily destroyed by cultivation.

Toxic Principles

Like other members of the mint family, ground ivy contains a volatile, aromatic oil. It also contains a bitter substance of unknown chemical constitution. It is collected as a drug plant and is used medicinally in small amounts as a stimulant and tonic.

Clinical Signs

After eating large amounts of ground ivy, poisoned animals, especially horses, slobber and sweat, and the pupils of their eyes become dilated. They pant for breath as if from over-stimulation. Poisoning from ground ivy is rarely fatal.

Treatment

Affected animals should be given feed that does not contain ground ivy. A veterinarian may administer other indicated treatment.

References

Evers, Robert A., and Roger P. Link. Poisonous Plants of the Midwest and Their Effects on Livestock, 1972. Special Publication 24, College of Agriculture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



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