

2013
May Plant of the Month



Gill-over-the Ground or Ground-Ivy
***Glechoma hederacea* L.**

May flowers brought by April showers are all around us. The new spring brings new life and our perennial and annual herbs follow this yearly awakening. Our plant of the month is a naturalized non-native that I am sure everyone has in their yard. Gill-over-the-ground is a harbinger of the upcoming summer and bursts into flower when temperatures reach the 60's F. This year's somewhat cooler spring has delayed the flowers by a few days, but like clockwork, they are emerging and have proceeded right into flowering.

Glechoma is a member of the mint family. Like all mints it has a bi-labiate flower (symmetrical when cut lengthwise) and square stems. This species is a weak stemmed plant and does not produce woody upright stems so characteristic of other members of this family. Like all mints, it is infused with aromatic oils that provide a characteristic odor when crushed or cut. This odor is produced from a volatile oil. The plant was once used by the Saxon's to clarify beer. In fact the name "Gill" is from *guiller* in French which means to ferment beer (botanica.com). Medicinal uses include as a diuretic and as snuff to treat headaches. Other uses include a remedy for ringing ears and sciatica.

So that little creeping weed that never seems to go away may be a unique additive to those that brew their own beer, or it may just be that strongly smell weed that you mow every week. One way or another, *Glechoma* will be in your future this summer.