

April 2015 Plant of the Month



Veronica chamaedrys L. Germander speedwell

The April *Plant of the Month* is germander speedwell. This is an alien plant. It native to northern Europe and is an example of how not all non-native species are obnoxious invasive plants. The genus *Veronica*, once grouped with figworts, and once a member of the Scrophulariaceae, no longer fits that taxonomic description. Today's taxonomy separates the former figwort family into many new families. Today the APG15 identifies the genus *Veronica* within the order Lamiales (Mints), and in the family Plantaginaceae, what everyone knows as the plantains. Critical examination of floral anatomy and microscopic analysis identifies a common ancestor for the veronica's group and plantain's family. This is quite a difference from the older lines of plant taxonomy. They grouped many divergent species into a catchall family, the figworts.

The germander speedwell is a lovely little plant that is restricted to lawns and maintained landscapes. It no doubt made it to the North American shores by old world cargo importation. The diminutive size and need of open sunny habitats does not allow this plant to invade forests unless they are open and regularly maintained. Germander has the largest flower of the New Jersey speedwells. The plant does not pose a serious threat to native species due to its habitat requirements that are usually associated with residential lawns, mowed roadsides or other maintained habitat.

Germander will be visible as soon as the never-ending winter of 2014-2015 comes to a close. This and other members of the genus *Veronica* will awaken in your lawn to provide some of our early blue spring flowers that are sorely needed.