DEALING WITH GROUND IVY 
(CREEPING CHARLIE)

Ground ivy is a common invader of lawns. It is often regarded as the most common and most difficult-to-control weed problem in a home lawn. It is an aggressive, low-growing perennial that favors shaded, moist areas but will also grow in full sun. It is a member of the mint family and has square stems and is mildly aromatic. Ground Ivy has very distinctive coin-shaped leaves with round-toothed edges. It is competitive in lawns because it creeps along the ground and can establish roots at each node. This feature allows it to attach to the ground like Velcro and makes hand weeding frustrating, if not impossible.

As with many lawn problems, the long-term approach to managing ground ivy begins with a critical evaluation of the growing conditions for the desirable turf. In most cases, the conditions favorable for ground ivy are not favorable for robust turf growth. Combinations of shade, wet soils and poor fertility stack things against the turf and in favor of the ground ivy. Correcting these conditions will allow the turf to compete better with the ground ivy. In addition, make sure your mowing height is 3 inches or higher. This will give lawn grass a competitive edge.

Hand weeding is an option for removing ground ivy, but it is a tedious task because of the many roots along the stem. Most often the will of the ground ivy to invade outlasts the will of the gardener to weed. Chemical strategies are also effective if the timing of application is correct. In general, fall is the best time to apply post-emergence herbicides for broadleaf weed control.

A research study by Dr. Frank Rossi examined several herbicide products and timings and identified another effective time for ground ivy control. Herbicide treatments were effective not only in the fall but also in the spring when the ground ivy was in flower. Using 2,4-D alone provided adequate control when applied at each of these timings. Combination products of 2,4-D, dicamba and MCP/P/MCPA provided better control than 2,4-D alone. All the products in these studies provided less effective control when applied during the summer. Plants are often more difficult to control in the summer because of slow uptake and metabolism associated with high temperatures. Products containing triclopyr (Confront, Chaser, Battleship, Momentum, Weed-B-Gon purple label) have proven to be highly effective in spring and fall and more effective than 2,4-D-based products during the difficult summer period. Triclopyr is available to homeowners and has activity on weeds that are traditionally labeled hard-to-control (i.e. 2,4-D didn't work). For this reason, triclopyr is probably the first alternative to try when a 2,4-D mixture has failed to provide acceptable control. Because of their complementary activity, combinations of triclopyr + 2,4-D can be very effective.

Researchers at Iowa State University reported control of ground ivy using 20-Mule Team Borax. That's right - the laundry product on the shelf at your favorite mar-
SPRINGTAILS

I have had a few calls and photos sent of tiny insects in groups the size of a golf ball found on or near a carport or deck this spring. These little critters are called Springtails. Springtails are tiny insects belonging to the order Collembola. They are wingless and have limited vision. Springtails are only about 1 to 2 mm long but can rapidly move 3 to 4 inches in a single motion. It has been estimated that as many as 50,000 springtails can inhabit 1 cubic foot of organic topsoil. The soil contains sufficient moisture and food for springtails to survive. Their food includes decaying vegetation, fungi, bacteria, pollen, algae, lichens and insect feces. The feeding activities of springtails enrich the soil by breaking down these forms of organic matter and releasing the nutrients they contain. Because of these activities, springtails are considered to be a good indicator of soil health. Springtails occur in moist habitats almost everywhere except under water. Springtails invade structures in search of moisture when their usual habitat becomes dry. Their usual outdoor habitats include mulch, leaf litter, other decaying organic matter, firewood, logs and landscape timbers. They are attracted to light and are so small that they can enter houses through cracks and crevices around doors, utility pipes, window screens, etc. They can also be brought indoors in the soil of potted plants. Indoors, they are most often found in high-moisture areas such as bathrooms, kitchens, crawlspaces and basements. Moldy furniture is also able to support large infestations.

Homeowners who see these tiny, grayish insects in and around houseplant containers are often concerned that they are likely to harm their plants; however, this is not the case. Springtail activity is an indication of healthy, moist, organically rich soil. If springtails remain confined to the soil of houseplants, it is not necessary to initiate control measures unless there are so many that they cause a nuisance. When springtails are found in and around bathtubs and showers, these areas must be cleaned thoroughly and kept dry to correct the problem. For a temporary solution to indoor springtail problems, you can use a household aerosol spray; however, the problem will recur if the sources of moisture and organic matter are not removed. Springtails may be found in wooden windowsills where moisture is causing the wood to decay. Removing the cause of the moisture and refining the wood surface will eliminate the attractiveness of these areas. Occasionally, large numbers of springtails congregate on the surface of the soil in masses as large as a softball. Often, these masses appear on a sidewalk, patio or concrete porch. Usually there is no need to do anything, because the masses usually disappear in a day or two. However, if immediate removal is desired, just spray the mass with water to disperse or wash it away. If control is necessary, treat the soil surface of potted plants with an insecticide dust or aerosol that lists springtails on the label. Several products containing pyrethroids (products with various names ending in -thrin) are labeled for use around the home.

Source: MU Guide 7363, http://extension.missouri.edu/p/g7363
GARDENING UPDATE

Last year by this time we already had many 80 degree days, trees were leaved out, flowers were in bloom and cool-season crops had been in the ground since mid-March. March and the spring of 2012 were the warmest on record. But, last year was not a normal year for Missouri. This year on the other hand has been snowy, rainy and cold...a little more like normal, but below average. In fact, this is the coldest spring in 17 years, since 1996.

I got a late start to planting this year because of the cold. I planted spinach and lettuce seed in late February and broccoli, peas, carrots, potatoes, cabbage and Brussels sprouts the end of March and first of April. We are now almost to May, and the spinach, lettuce, and peas are barely up. The carrots and potatoes are not up at all.

Last spring, a neighbor gave me an 8 x 4 greenhouse. I placed it over one of my raised beds and planted lettuce and cilantro in November. The seed germinated fairly quickly, but the cold temperatures of December and January really slowed it down. On the few warm days in March and April that we had it was about 10 degrees warmer in it than outside. That was enough to initiate growth and have an early harvest. The greenhouse serves the purpose of a high tunnel over my raised bed allowing an early start and an extension to the growing season in the fall. You can find these greenhouse structures at farm supply stores or garden centers. If you wait until the end of the garden season, you might get one on clearance.

For the past couple of years we have wanted to raise laying chickens. After reading some magazine articles on raising them and talking to my friend Teri, we decided to purchase four pullets. I already had my mind made up that I wanted two Barred Rocks and two Rhode Island Reds. These are old breeds that are winter hardy. The boys did not have school on March 30, so we went to the farm supply stores and checked out all the pullets and brought home four baby chicks. For the first week they were kept in a big tub in the kitchen where we could watch them and play with them. They soon out grew that and had to be put in a large pet carrier. After a week there they had to be moved again. In the meantime, my husband worked on making us a chicken coop. He never complained and said “I’ll do whatever makes you happy.” Now the chickens have a nice home where they are protected from the weather and critters that might want to eat them. Each one has a name (Jasmine, Ruby, Martha and Valerie), and I’m sure they will become pets over time.

Two weeks after getting these chickens we visited Teri’s farm where we saw her chicken set-up and learned more about raising them. She let the boys gather the eggs and take them home. My five year old, Justin, doesn’t really like scrambled eggs that well. The youngest, Jason, loves them and would eat them every morning if I would make him one. I made Justin a scrambled egg from the ones he had gathered at Teri’s. It was dark yellow and really good. Justin loved it, and since then has requested I make him a “Teri Crandall scrambled egg.” Justin especially likes raising the chickens. He asks often “when will they start laying eggs?” My best guess is probably in August or September. He digs up worms and looks for rolly pollies to feed them. If he still likes raising them when he is eight, they’ll make a good 4-H project for him. Thanks for all your advice Teri!

There are advantages to raising your own chickens or buying from a local producer. Research has shown that eggs from pasture raised chickens that eat insects, worms, garden scraps, etc. are more nutritious than those raised in confinement. Because these chickens are not confined, there is usually no need to give them antibiotics in their water or feed. Research results can be found online. If you have no desire to raise chickens, check out the eggs available at your local farmers’ market. I think it’s worth spending an extra dollar for farm raised eggs and the benefits they give you. The Kirksville Farmer’s Market starts Saturday, May 4 on the square.

TIP FOR PLANTING BLUEBERRY BUSHES

Have you been at a garden center or nursery and thought, “I’d like to buy a blueberry bush to put in my backyard”? Many people purchase plants on the spur of the moment without giving thought to the site or soil conditions. If you are thinking about planting blueberry bushes, or any fruit trees or plants, do your research first. The soil for blueberries should be amended six months to a year before planting. In Northeast Missouri the number one cause of death of blueberry plants in the first two years is not amending the soil properly. It takes time for sulfur to work in the soil. It will not work or take effective immediately after applying it. It is best to amend your soil to the desired pH in the spring or fall and plant the blueberry bushes the following spring. To know what your soil pH is, you will need to do a soil test. After you receive the results with the recommendations, amend your soil using the recommended amendments. You could repeat the soil test again six months later to see if you have reached the desired pH of 4.5-5.0. Do not plant blueberry bushes until your soil has reached the desired pH.

Here are links for excellent guides on growing blueberries: http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/pdf/1422.pdf,
http://mtngrv.missouristate.edu/assets/publications/B44GrowingBlueberries.pdf
GARDEN TIPS FOR MAY

ORNAMENTALS
- Pinch azaleas and rhododendron blossoms as they fade. Double flowered azaleas need no pinching.
- Fertilize azaleas after bloom. Use a formulation that has an acid reaction.
- Apples, crabapples and hawthorns susceptible to rust disease should have protective fungicidal sprays applied beginning when these trees bloom.
- Begin planting gladiolus bulbs as the ground warms. Continue at two-week intervals. Plant summer bulbs such as caladiums, dahlias, cannas, and elephant ears. Don’t remove spring bulb foliage prematurely or next year’s flower production will decline.
- Plant hardy water lilies in tubs or garden pools.
- Continue monitoring pines, especially scotch and mugo, for sawfly activity on new shoots.
- Canker worms (inch worms) rarely cause permanent damage to ornamentals. Use B.T. if control is deemed necessary.
- Begin planting warm-season annuals.
- Scale crawlers are active now. Infested pines and euonymus should be treated at this time.
- Trees with a history of borer problems should receive their first spray now. Repeat twice at three-week intervals.
- Begin fertilizing annuals. Continue at regular intervals.
- Pinch back mums to promote bushy growth.

VEGETABLES
- Slugs will hide during the daytime beneath a board placed over damp ground. Check each morning and destroy any slugs that have gathered on the underside of the board.
- Growing lettuce under screening materials will slow bolting and extend harvests into hot weather.
- Place cutworm collars made from cardboard strips around young transplants.
- Set out tomato plants as soils warm. Place support stakes alongside at planting time.
- Isolate sweet, super sweet and popcorn varieties to prevent crossing.
- Keep asparagus harvested for continued spear production. Control asparagus beetles as needed.
- Thin plantings of carrots and beets to avoid overcrowding.
- Control caterpillars on broccoli and cabbage plants by handpicking or use biological sprays such as B.T.
- Plant dill to use when making pickles.
- Remove rhubarb seeds stalks as they appear.
- Watch for striped and spotted cucumber beetles now. Both may spread wilt and mosaic diseases to squash and cucumber plants.
- Set out peppers and eggplants after soils have warmed.
- Plant sweet potatoes now.
- Make new sowings of warm-season vegetables after harvesting early crops.
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FRUITS
- Mulch blueberries with pine needles or sawdust. Don’t spray any fruits while in bloom. Refer to local Extension publications for a fruit spray schedule.

TURFGRASS
- Keep bluegrass cut at 1.5 to 2.5 inch height.
- Mow tall fescues at 2 to 3.5 inch height.
- Apply post-emergence broadleaf weed controls now if needed.
- Watch for sod webworms emerging now.

- MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN-

UPCOMING EVENTS
May 2: Magic City MG plant sale and rain garden tour, 4-7 pm, Moberly, MO.
May 4: Magic City MG plant sale and rain garden tour, Moberly, MO. 9-12 am.
May 4: Salt River MG Plant Sale, Y Men's Pavilion in Hannibal.
May 17: Adair County Lady Landowner Workshop, Kirksville. RSVP to Adair Co. SWCD, 660-665-3274 x3.
May 19: Seed and Plant Exchange, 2:00-4:00 p.m., 2-4 p.m., Coursey Farm, 32728 Hwy E, LaPlata, MO. http://extension.missouri.edu/adair/documents/Hort/SeedExchange.pdf
May 30: Garden n’ Grow starts at the Adair County Extension Office for youth ages 9-14. Call 660-665-9866 to register your child.
June 7: Garden/Local Foods Tour in southern Adair/northern Macon counties. Details available in the June issue or call the extension office at 660-665-9866 in mid to late May for details.
June 28: Lady Landowner Workshop in Kahoka. Morning sessions and afternoon garden tour. Lunch provided. Details in June issue. To sign up call the Clark County Extension Office at 660-727-3339.
July 15-20: NEMO Fair, Kirksville.
August: May start a Master Gardener class in Kirksville. Have had requests for an afternoon class. May do evening class in the spring of 2014. Details in upcoming issues.
September 20-22, 2013: Missouri State Master Gardener Conference, Springfield, MO.