

## ***Living Earth School of Herbalism Materia Medica***

### ***Glechoma hederacea***

#### **GROUND IVY HERB**

##### (A) Botany

**Family:** Lamiaceae (Mint).

**Synonyms:** *Nepeta hederacea*, creeping Charlie, gill-over-the-ground.

**Harvesting:** The terminal 50% of the aerial parts of *Glechoma hederacea* are harvested in the middle of its flowering period from late May to mid June. The lower 60-70% of the stalks are removed and not used.

**Related Species:** There are no other species of *Glechoma*. This herb was formerly classified to as *Nepeta hederacea* indicating that there might be a close relationship with herbs from the *Nepeta* genus such as catnip (*N. cataria*).

**Habitat:** Perennial. *Glechoma* prefers moderately moist transition areas, however, its habitat ranges from open fields to open woodlands. It prefers 30-70% sunlight. This plant often grows on lawns, especially in shady areas. It can tolerate but doesn't usually do well in full sunlight.

**Distribution:** Alien. *Glechoma* is a native of the temperate regions of Europe and Asia. It has naturalized throughout most of North America south of the boreal forest.

##### (B) Therapeutics

**Administration:** Systemically: Fresh or dried herb infusion or tincture. The fresh herb tincture is preferred. Locally: Fresh or dried herb poultice, compress, infused oil or ointment.

**Primary Therapeutic Properties:** Anticatarrhal, anticonvulsant, antidepressant, anti-inflammatory (local, neural, systemic), antioxidant, antispasmodic (digestive, general, respiratory, uterine), antiulcerogenic, antiviral, anxiolytic, astringent, carminative, decongestant, diaphoretic, diuretic, febrifuge, nervine, relaxant, stomachic, tranquilizer, vasodilator (neural, peripheral), vulnerary.

**Secondary Therapeutic Properties:** Analgesic, antiallergenic, antibacterial, anticarcinogenic, antimelanogenic, antineoplastic, antirheumatic, aperient, appetite stimulant, bitter, cardiac, cholagogue, depurative, emetic (in large doses), emmenagogue (stimulating, tonic), expectorant (relaxing, secretolytic, stimulating), hypotensive, lymphatic, pancreatic, sedative, sialagogue, uterine (relaxant), vascular tonic.

**Primary Organ Systems:** Respiratory system, nervous system, urinary system, epithelial tissues.

**Secondary Organ Systems:** Cardiovascular system, digestive system, musculoskeletal system, lymphatic system, female reproductive system.

**Primary Indications:** Conditions of the respiratory system (head colds, sinusitis, sinus congestion, sinus headaches, influenza, congestion of the Eustachian tubes, ear infections, hay fever, chest colds, coughs, asthma, pneumonia); childhood illnesses (measles, chicken pox, mumps); stress-related conditions (nervousness, anxiety, depression, tension headaches); inflammatory conditions of the mouth, throat and digestive tract (mouth ulcers, gingivitis, sore throat, tonsillitis, gastric and duodenal ulcers, gastritis, diarrhea, colitis, diverticulitis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis); inflammatory conditions of the urinary tract (cystitis, nephritis, urethritis, uritis); dementia. Locally: Wounds; abrasions; bites and stings; rashes; eye irritations and conjunctivitis [as an eye wash or eye drops].

**Secondary Indications:** Conditions of the cardiovascular system (poor peripheral circulation, hemorrhoids, varicose veins, arteriosclerosis); functional conditions of the digestive system (acute and chronic indigestion, gas, bloating, liver and gallbladder congestion); traumatic injuries

(bruises, strains, sprains); nerve pain and inflammation (neuralgia, neuritis, tinnitus); conditions of the lymphatic system (inflamed lymph nodes, poor lymphatic drainage, spleen congestion); rheumatic conditions (rheumatoid arthritis, gout); anxiety, depression and mood swings associated with the menstrual cycle and menopause; cancer. Locally: Traumatic injuries (bruises, strains, sprains); vascular conditions (hemorrhoids, varicose veins, spider veins); skin hyperpigmentation; herpes lesions; cancer.

**Research:** *Glechoma* has demonstrated antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antimelanogenic, antineoplastic, antioxidant, antiviral and antispasmodic properties *in vitro*; anticarcinogenic, anti-inflammatory and antiulcerogenic properties in animal studies; and antimelanogenic properties in human clinical studies.

**Formulating:** 20-35% (15-100%). Astringency 3, bitterness 1, emmenagogue 2, pungency 0.

**Synergistic Combinations:** *Glechoma* combines well with *Achillea millefolium* herb (yarrow), *Capsicum annuum* fruit (cayenne), *Hyssopus officinalis* herb (hyssop), *Lythrum salicaria* herb (purple loosestrife), *Mentha* spp. herb (mint), *Monarda fistulosa* herb (wild bergamot), *Sambucus nigra* flower (black elder) and *Verbena hastata* herb (blue vervain) for upper respiratory and feverish conditions; with *Hypericum perforatum* herb (St. Johnswort), *Hyssopus officinalis* herb, *Lavandula angustifolia* flowering spike (English lavender), *Leonurus cardiaca* herb (motherwort), *Mentha* spp. herb, *Rosmarinus officinalis* herb (rosemary), *Scutellaria lateriflora* herb (mad-dog scullcap) and *Verbena hastata* herb for stress, anxiety and depression; and with *Achillea millefolium* herb, *Althaea officinalis* root (marshmallow), *Curcuma longa* rhizome (turmeric), *Equisetum arvense* herb (common horsetail), *Hypericum perforatum* herb, *Lythrum salicaria* herb, *Plantago* spp. herb (plantain), *Prunella vulgaris* herb (heal-all), *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* herb (New England aster) and *Symphytum officinale* herb (common comfrey) for inflammatory conditions of the mouth, throat and digestive tract.

**Toxicity:** None known in humans. There are reports of toxicity in horses that have over-grazed on the plant.

**Contraindications:** Not recommended in pregnancy. Use with caution during lactation or if taken concurrently with anticonvulsant, sedative or mood-altering medications.

**Dosage and Duration Restrictions:** Class 1a. No restrictions.

**General Comments:** *Glechoma* is an excellent herb for the treatment of upper respiratory catarrh and is one of the better herbs for congestion of the Eustachian tubes and/or ears. For this purpose it is used systemically. I haven't had the opportunity to use it locally as an infused oil (ear drops) for ear infections. This is something worth checking out at some point. *Glechoma* is also useful as a supporting herb for conditions of the lungs. Some sources claim that it is a good lung herb but I have found it mild, although deep acting over time. It is particularly useful in the long-term treatment of chronic lung conditions. In general, it is an excellent herb for treating respiratory and feverish conditions in children. It is very effective for common viral infections in adults as well. The action of *Glechoma* is much more pronounced on the digestive epithelium rather than for functional digestive conditions, however, in the latter case it is still a good supporting herb. It is particularly useful in formulations where it is necessary to both support digestion and heal the digestive mucosa. I highly recommend this herb for any acute or chronic ulcerations or other inflammatory conditions of the mouth, throat and digestive tract. In particular, I have found it very effective for healing the gums and often use it for receding gums and to heal the tissues after dental work. In the latter situation it combines very well with *Hypericum* if there is any nerve trauma. It also seems to reduce plaque formation. *Glechoma* is not often recommended for stress-related conditions. I have found it to be an excellent tonic nervine with pronounced anxiolytic and antidepressant properties. Although it is a tranquilizer, it is definitely uplifting, verging slightly into the amphoteric realm due to its moderate neural vasodilator action.