

The East London Garden Society

Plant Facts

Chickweed



Chickweed, *Stellaria media*, is an annual flowering plant in the family *Caryophyllaceae*. It is native to Eurasia and naturalised throughout the world, and is a weed found on waste ground, farmland and gardens.

In the realm of folklore, *Common Chickweed* has quietly symbolised fidelity and love. This unassuming plant, often overlooked, has been a steadfast emblem of constancy in relationships, whispering tales of devotion through its persistent growth

It grows low to the ground, has a hairy stem, and produces small, star-shaped, white flowers. It's primarily found in North America and Europe. Chickweed has many culinary and folk remedy uses that date back centuries.

A single plant can produce 2,500 to 15,000 seeds. The seeds remain viable for over a decade, and several generations of the plant can emerge in a year. Another confounding feature is that Chickweed bears both flowers and mature seeds simultaneously.

17th-century herbalist John Gerard recommended it as a remedy for mange. Modern herbalists prescribe it for iron-deficiency anaemia (for its high iron content)

Chickweed is a plant, the leaf of which is used to make medicine. People take chickweed for constipation, stomach and bowel problems, blood disorders, asthma and other lung diseases, obesity, a vitamin C deficiency disease called scurvy, a skin condition called psoriasis, rabies, itching, and muscle and joint pain.

This invasive weed is one of the biggest nuisances that lawn owners and gardeners face each year, because it germinates and spreads so fast. Chickweed could infest your lawn before you realise it is bringing unwanted pests, so it's important to know how to get rid of chickweed.

The whole plant, except the roots, is delicious. Eaten raw, it tastes like corn-on-the-cob, or like cornsilk. Cooked, it's more like spinach. Always chop the entire plant, except the roots, into bite-sized pieces before using.