



One of Our More Aggressive Weeds

WEED OF THE MONTH (August 2010)

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Common Names: Sticky Willie, Beggar's Lice, Catchweed, Cling Rascal, Gentleman's Tormentors, Grip Grass, etc.

Scientific Name: *Galium aparine*

Photos by GCMGA

Ouch! What was that? There you are, taking a lovely walk, and something nipped your ankle. You're smart, you are wearing socks—how could a pesky insect get at your flesh? You look down and see it's not a bug, but one of those darn "sticker-things." This velcro-mimicking weed makes Burdock seem like an amateur.

The scientific name for this weed is *Galium aparine* and it is a dicot from the Rubiaceae or Madder Family. This weed is also called by a variety of very descriptive common names including Bedstraw, Beggar's Lice, Catchweed, Clabber Grass, Cling Rascal, Cleavers, Cleaverwort, Clivers, Coachweed, Enchanter's Nightshade, Gentleman's Tormentors, Goose's Hair, Gosling Weed, Gravel Grass, Grip Grass, Hayriff, Hedge-burrs, Herb Robert, Loveman, Milk Sweet, Poor Robin, Robin-run-the-hedge, Savoyan, Scratchweed, Stick-a-back, Sweet Cicely, Sweethearts, Trail Plant, or my favorite: Sticky Willie.

Regardless, the *Galium* genus includes twenty species in Texas and is found in moist or grassy places, such as along riverbanks, trails, slopes, and fences. When people or animals pick off these hitchhiking seeds, the plants tend to grow wherever the seeds should land. *Galium aparine* has gained a notorious reputation among local residents as pesky weed in ornamental and flower beds. It grows during late winter and early spring and commonly infests St. Augustine lawns while dormant.

Galium aparine produces a remarkably slender, shallow taproot and delicate, quadrangular, prickly, climbing stems that can grow 2-6 feet long. The leaves are bright green, shiny and lightly haired, ending with a sharp point that occurs in whorls of 6 or 8 around the stem. The flowers are tiny, four-petaled and white (or greenish-white), which matures in cymes (clusters) from May to September. The fruit is distinctly two-lobed, which dry and separate into one-seed nutlets with hooked bristles.

Galium aparine is now one of our more aggressive weeds. Control options are similar to that of most herbaceous weeds. Weeds have specific times of producing seed, and it is important to control them prior to that time. Keep in mind that a common problem for the home gardener is that small weeds may spread from seed and rapidly root themselves before they are noticed, after which it is difficult to extract them without damaging established flowering plants and shrubs. Treat all these plants with the intent to destroy and prevent propagation annually until none remain.

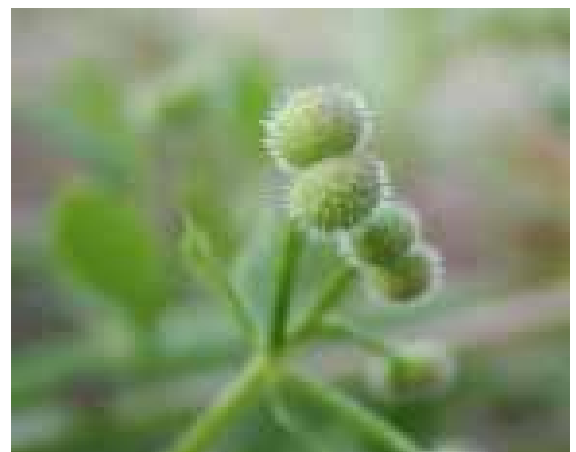
The infested area must be managed in a manner that prevents the spread of seeds or plant parts, and usually a range of methods (manual, mechanical, herbicide, habitat improvement, etc.) will be needed for any one weed or area. On actively growing *Galium aparine*, certain herbicides for broadleaf weeds can be effective for lawns but few herbicide options are available to the homeowner for infestations in ornamental and flower beds. The choice of method(s) is yours but hand pulling, proper disposal and regular monitoring are effective for limited or early infestations.*



The square-shaped, prickly stems of *Galium aparine* or Stick Willie will readily catch a ride on people's clothing or the fur of animals.



Galium aparine produces whorls of 6 or 8 leaves that are attached around the stem.



The fruit is distinctly two-lobed with velcro-hooked bristles.