

Lysimachia nummularia L.

Moneywort

Other Common Names: Creeping Charlie, Creeping Jenny, Creeping Joan, Turkey Ivy, Loosestrife, Monnayère, Running Jenny, Strings-Of-Sovereigns, Wandering Charlie, Wandering Jenny.

Family: *Primulaceae*.

Cold Hardiness: Useful in USDA zones 4 (3) through 8 (9a).

Foliage: Evergreen to semi-evergreen; opposite; simple; broadly ovate, cordate to orbicular; $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ (1) long; tips rounded to broadly acute; margins entire to slightly undulate; nearly glabrous except for sparse hairs long the midrib beneath; dotted with glands; somewhat succulent in texture; bases rounded to cordate; in summer the leaves are light green to yellow-green with no fall color occurring; petiole $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ long.

Flower: Small; $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ in diameter; yellow with a cup-shaped five-lobed corolla; mostly solitary in the axils of leaves; mildly effective from mid-spring to summer.

Fruit: Seldom produced; small capsules; not ornamental; deadheading is not needed.

Stem / Bark: Stems — succulent; nearly oval to four-sided; sparsely hairy to nearly glabrous; red, green flushed red, to green; redder on those portions exposed to sun; Buds — foliose; tiny; initially hidden within the axis of the leaf and stem; green or flushed red; Bark — not applicable.

Habit: Moneywort is a sprawling, 20 to 40 (60) tall, evergreen to semi-evergreen herbaceous that roots at successive nodes where they contact the soil; spread is indefinite for group plantings, but 180 to 240 would be a good estimate for individual plants; although the leaves are not large the species is medium in overall texture.

Cultural Requirements: In cooler climates plants can be grown in sun to moderate shade, but they benefit from partial shade in most of our region; the species is not drought tolerant and needs a steady supply of moisture to look presentable; plants are soil pH adaptable with best growth forming on high organic matter soils; the species is tolerant of less than perfect drainage, but is not tolerant of chronic salt exposure; growth rate is fast to moderate, depending upon the site conditions.

Pathological Problems: Salt damage can be a problem; this species is not bothered by a large number of pests or diseases, although red spider mites can be a problem in hot weather.

Ornamental Assets: Low mat-like growth form; mildly attractive yellow flowers; plants can form an effective soil cover without overwhelming shrubs in these plantings although smaller perennials may become engulfed.

Limitations & Liabilities: Not as vigorous in much of our region as is the case in the Midwest and Upper South where *L. nummularia* is considered to be invasive; this species can be attractive, but is not really a specimen quality taxa; flowers tend to be hidden amongst the leaves; the plants are intolerant of foot traffic.

Landscape Utilization: Under the right circumstances *L. nummularia* can be an effective groundcover of vigorous, but manageable, proportions for small areas; plants can be effective in between stepping stones and boulders in moist rock gardens; variegated cultivars are used in more specialized settings such as hanging baskets, substrate covers in patio pots, window baskets, and mixed annual/perennial plantings; plants create a nice effect when hanging over low walls; naturalizing in moist settings along streams or banks of water features; sometimes used in terrariums and interiorscapes.

Other Comments: Moneywort is most effective in Northeastern portions of our region and is often disappointing in hotter, drier portions of the region; the genus name honors King Lysimachus of ancient Thrace who supposedly scared away a charging bull by waving a handfull of Moneywort at it (not my plant of choice for this purpose, but whatever works in a pinch...); the specific epithet is

derived from the Latin word for coin and is in reference to the leaf shape; the common name Moneywort is also in reference to the coin-shaped leaves; legend has it that smoke from burning Moneywort will repel serpents; according to folk lore, once made into various compresses and concoctions, Moneywort has been used as a medicinal treatment for wounds, internal bleeding, scurvy, and whooping cough.

Native Habitat: A native of Northern Europe; reported to naturalize locally in the Eastern U.S.

Related Taxa: 'Aurea' is a yellowish leaved cultivar that is popular for hanging baskets, window boxes, and edging; Yellow Loosestrife, *Lysimachia punctata* L., is an erect 1½ to 2½ tall herbaceous perennial species with larger yellow flowers than those of *L. nummularia* that is sometimes cultivated in USDA zones 4 to 8; Yellow Loosestrife can be invasive in cooler climates, but is not vigorous in zones 7 and 8.

References: Belsterling, 1998; MacKenzie, 1997; Odenwald and Turner, 1996; Phillips and Foy, 1990; Terrell, 1989; Sperry, 1991; Still, 1994.

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