



# Garden Clippings



Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 28

## Ajuga

### History

Ajuga, both a perennial and an annual, is native to Europe. "Ajuga" was supposedly corrupted from "abija," in turn derived from the Latin word *abigo*, "to drive away," because the plant was thought to drive away various forms of disease. A seventeenth-century writer tells us that "it is put in drinks for woundes."

### Medicinal Uses

The whole herb is gathered in May and early June, when leaves are at their best, and then dried. The leaves taste bitter and are very aromatic.

In herbal treatment, an infusion of this plant is still considered very useful in arresting hemorrhages and is employed in coughs and spitting of blood, in incipient consumption and in some biliary disorders. It also has been considered good for the bad effects of excessive drinking.

### Description

Ajuga is a deciduous broadleaf perennial, to be found in flower from the end of April to the beginning of July and is well marked by tapering flower stalks, 6" to 9" inches high, and creeping runners. These are long shoots, sometimes a couple of feet or more long, sent out from the root stock. The flower stalk is pale green, often purplish above, with the leaves opposite in pairs, the lower leaves on stalks, the upper leaves stalkless, oblong and obtuse in form, toothed or almost entire at the margin.

Foliage grows in rosettes with upright clusters of blue flowers. Deadheading prevents excessive seeding and improves the overall appearance of the plant. This plant is grown mostly for its attractive burgundy foliage. Roots are fibrous and help to prevent erosion. This plant grows up to 6" tall and spreads up to 3'. It can be grown in zones three to nine, with a soil pH level between 3.7 and 6.5. Overall it is a great plant, requiring little or no care.

### Requirements

Ajuga likes sandy, loam, or clay soil types as long as the soil is well drained. It likes to be watered regularly but does not like to be over watered. Finally, it also prefers partial shade to full sun.

### Diseases

Ajuga's main threat is crown rot, which can be very destructive to plants growing in heavy soil. This condition is recognizable by a white fungal growth that forms at the base of the stem. The plant eventually turns black. Avoid infested soil and maintain good soil drainage.

### Pruning and Dividing

When pruning, cut back runners drastically whenever necessary to keep the plant from spreading too far; this also helps to prevent crown rot. Do not prune in winter.

Divide clumps when they begin to become crowded. Don't plant too closely, and make sure not to plant too deeply.

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