

Yard Weeds or Delightful Winter Annuals

by Pat Lust, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

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In early January, I noticed a patch of Persian Speedwell proudly blooming behind the Powhatan Extension Office. Then came the nasty winter storm. But if you are allowing them in your yard, a colorful array of winter annuals should be popping up right now. Let's look at three of them: Persian Speedwell, *Veronica persica*; Henbit, *Lamium amplexicaule*; and Chickweed, *Stellaria media* – all not native to Virginia.

Persian Speedwell is the earliest bloomer of the three. As a bright blue harbinger of spring, it will move into disturbed areas but will be crowded out by a lush green lawn. It is especially valuable to bees and other early insects. It is edible and can be a pretty garnish for your salad.

Chickens are fond of Henbit, which is why it's called Henbit. It can become a naturalized cover crop, useful for erosion control and nutrient cycling. In your backyard, its main virtues are its wonderful early splash of color and its attractiveness to hummingbirds and insects. As a member of the mint family, it can be a colorful and tasty addition to your salad.

Chickweed, also attractive to chickens, is more problematic than the other two. It is on the Virginia Invasive Plant Species list. While you are trying to get rid of it in your garden (good luck), why not eat some of it? You can find several recipes for chickweed pesto online. I've tried it and found it to be quite tasty.



Photo by Pat Lust

References:

Virginia Invasive Plant Species List –

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/nh-invasive-plant-list-2024.pdf>

Chickweed pesto –

<https://ediblealaska.ediblecommunities.com/recipe/recipes-chickweed-pesto/>

North Carolina State University Plant Toolbox –

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/veronica-persica/>