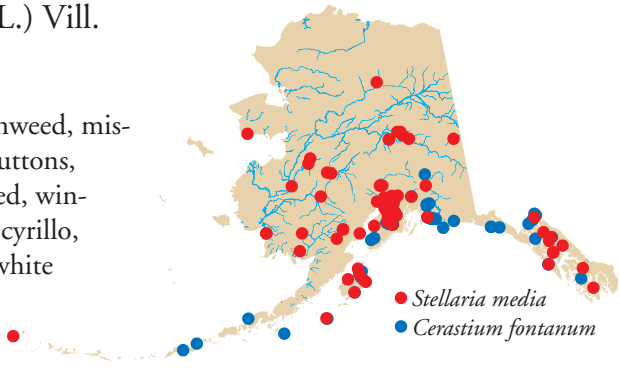
Common Chickweed

Stellaria media (L.) Vill.



Alternate Names

chickwhirtles, cluckenweed, mischievous Jack, skirt buttons, tongue-grass, star-weed, winter seed, satin flower, cyrillo, starwort, bindweed, white bird's-eye.

Related Species

Mouse-ear chickweed
Cerastium fontanum Baumg.

XID Services photo by Dan Tenaglia

Common chickweed.

Description

Common chickweed is an annual plant with creeping stems that root at the nodes on one side. Stems have a conspicuous line of hairs on one side. Leaves are up to 1½ inches long, and upper leaves lack stalks while lower leaves are hairy toward the base. Flowers are white and measure ¼ of an inch across.

Similar Species

There are several native species of *Stellaria* in Alaska, including northern starwort (*S. calycantha* (Ledeb.) Bong.) and curled starwort (*S. crispa* Cham. & Schlecht.), but only common chickweed has lower leaves with stalks. Mouse-ear chickweed (*Cerastium fontanum* Baumg.) is an exotic species that is similar in appearance to common chickweed, but its flowers have notched petals.

XID Services photo by Richard Old

Common chickweed.

Management

Hand-pulling can be effective for small populations of either species. Herbicide treatments are effective when applied before seedlings emerge or during active growth.

KULAK photo by Paul Busselen

Mouse-ear chickweed.

Notes

Externally, salves of common chickweed relieve itching and inflammation and are generally soothing and moisturizing. It can be used for minor skin infection or irritation and is an ingredient in a number of commercial skin care products. This plant probably originated in Europe but is now found across the world.

KULAK photo by Paul Busselen

Mouse-ear chickweed.