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How to Grow & Care for Ajuga Groundcover



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Planting, growing, and caring for ajuga (bugleweed)

By [Samantha Johnson](#)

Last Updated: April 23, 2025



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Seeking a groundcover or lawn alternative that is hardy, pretty, and thrives in shade?

Discover ajuga, a flowering perennial with colorful leaves, adding visual interest to your yard and garden. It's also deer-resistant! Learn how to grow and care for ajuga.

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What is Ajuga?

Ajuga reptans is commonly known as bugle, blue bugle, bugleherb, bugleweed, carpetweed, carpet bugleweed, and common bugle, and traditionally (though less commonly) as St. Lawrence plant.

Most varieties of *Ajuga reptans* are about 6 inches tall. The colorful blooms are one of the main attractions, but the foliage is equally beautiful even when the plant isn't in bloom. The fact that ajuga is from the mint—Lamiaceae—family means it has no trouble spreading quickly and thickly, so it's very effective as a groundcover, especially in areas where it slopes too much or is too tight to maintain grass.

Ajuga grows well in full sun to full shade, so there is a lot of flexibility to make it work around buildings and trees. Ajuga can be used to hold soil together on slopes around retaining walls or similar areas of your landscaping. Don't plan on growing it directly in paths or walkways, though, as ajuga won't tolerate foot traffic very well. Ajuga is beautiful when planted

Mississippi State University Extension
calls it “aggressive.” Some barriers/borders may need to be implemented to keep your ajuga where you want it. Still, bee and butterfly pollinators love ajuga, so it can be a valuable addition to your garden in more ways than one!

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Ajuga is a lovely choice for edges, rock gardens, and slopes. Credit: Peter Turner Photography

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PLANTING

Planting ajuga is easy. If you have access to existing plants (either your own or maybe a friend's), then division is effective and simple. Less commonly, they're grown from seed or stem cuttings.

When to Plant

- When planting by division, aim to do this work in the spring or fall, avoiding the hottest portions of the year.
- Plant transplanted seedlings any time from spring to fall.
- If you're planting from a stem cutting, you'll want to do this in the spring or early summer.

How to Plant

even further apart if needed, as they will spread and fill in on their own.

This can help keep the costs down, as long as you're willing to be patient.

- It's possible to plant by stem cuttings, but this isn't as common as division because division is just so easy. If you want to plant from a stem cutting, [Purdue University explains the steps here.](#)
- When planting, take care not to bury the crown (this is important). Dig your hole only as deep as the transplant's pot.
- Take care not to disturb the soil around the roots of the seedlings as you work.
- Seeds aren't typically used, but you can give it a try. Treat them rather like carrot or lettuce seeds—where you just barely cover the seeds with a little soil and don't bury them too deep.

GROWING

Ajuga spreads by runners (stolons) and

- Ajuga isn't fussy about sunshine and it can be a nice choice for shady areas. A mix of sun and shade is actually ideal. It's very adaptable and doesn't require a lot of babysitting.
- Ajuga fares well in semi-dry soil, but struggles somewhat in wet soil if the moisture is maintained constantly. Try to keep ajuga out of low-lying areas that might hold water.
- You can plant ajuga by banks or slopes —it helps fill in these areas so weeds don't just take over, and it can even help control soil erosion.
- You can grow ajuga in a container if you want to prevent it from spreading all around your garden, or if you'd just like to enjoy the colorful blooms and foliage on your deck or patio.
- The soil pH isn't critical, but ajuga is happiest in acidic to neutral soils.
- If it's feasible, you can deadhead your ajuga after it blooms; this will help with airflow and can minimize the risk of crown rot.
- You can even mow it down after flow-

maintain the proper look of

the groundcover.

- Dividing your plants every few years is another good way to increase air flow.
- Consistent watering is important during the establishment of new plants.

Keep the soil moist but not soggy.

After it's fully established, ajuga is fairly tough and adaptable to varying water conditions.



Even when not in bloom, ajuga's foliage is a beautiful addition to the garden. Credit: ABCreative.id

Types

There are many outstanding cultivars of ajuga, and here are a few lovely options:

- 'Chocolate Chip' is a popular cultivar

- ‘Multicolor’ has beautiful mottled leaves.
- ‘Alba’ has white flowers.
- ‘Rubra’ has rose-colored flowers.
- ‘Mahogany’ has beautiful dark purple leaves.

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PESTS/DISEASES

The main thing you need to worry about with ajuga is crown rot, especially if you live in a humid location. Providing plenty of air flow can help prevent crown rot

Aphids can be an annoyance, but small-scale invasions can be halted with a simple spray-down with a garden hose.

Happily, ajuga is fairly deer resistant.

Typical garden pests like deer, rabbits, and chipmunks just don't like the scent of ajuga, and mostly leave it alone. This provides you with a lot of flexibility, and the chance to use this groundcover just about anywhere you'd like in your landscaping.

WIT AND WISDOM

- Ajuga is naturally widespread throughout the world and is native to Europe, Africa, and Asia.
- Other common names include bugleherb, bugleweed, and carpet bugle.
- Though mammals don't like the scent of ajuga in general, the blossoms themselves don't typically have much of a fragrance that humans can detect.
- In Romanian folk medicine, ajuga was known for its anti-inflammatory properties.

GARDENING

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Samantha Johnson is an award-winning author and gardening expert with over 20 years of experience cultivating heirloom vegetables and sharing her passion for rural living. [Read More from Samantha Johnson](#)

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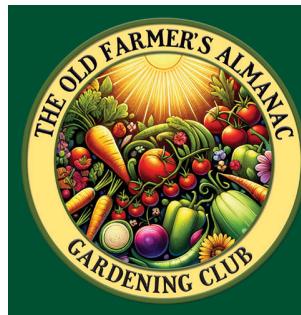
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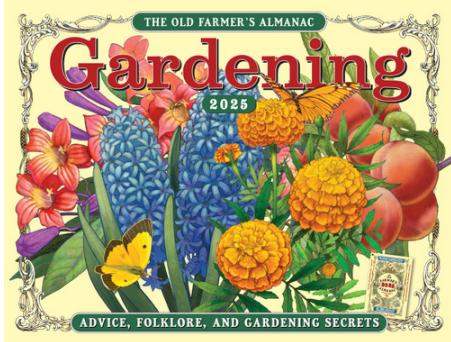
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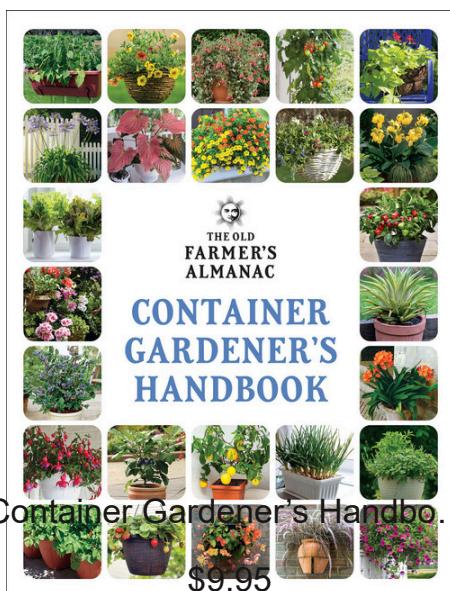
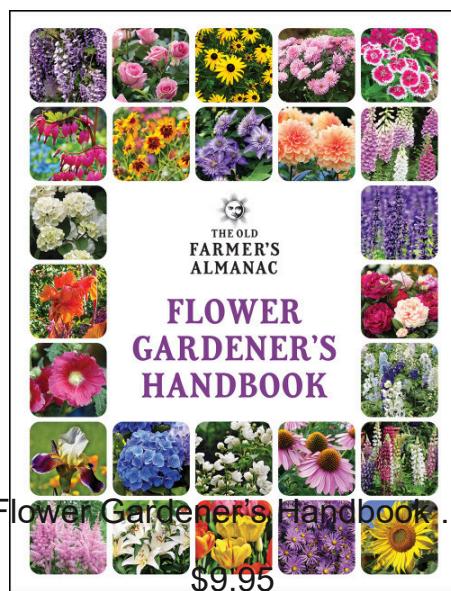
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