

## Introduction

Mind-your-own-business is a weed that has become increasingly common, particularly in suburban gardens. Its botanical name is *Soleirolia soleirolii* and was formally known as *Helxine soleirolii*. It's a member of the nettle family, Urticaceae, that includes the common nettle and the far less common Pellitory-of-the-wall. It rejoices under the common names of Mind your own Business, Mother of Thousands, Corsican Curse and Baby's Tears. It's named after Monsieur Soleirol, a military man who collected extensively in Corsica in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and is native to the western Mediterranean isles of Corsica and Sardinia.

## History

Mind-your-own-business was possibly introduced into Ireland as a greenhouse plant in Victorian times and subsequently escaped out into the garden where it now grows happily in borders and lawns. It has also become naturalised and the earliest records date back to the 1930's. It was first recorded in 1934 as growing wild in Merlin Park, on the eastern side of Galway city. Herbarium records in the National Botanical Gardens include a specimen recorded by Praeger in 1939 and a record for Terenure in 1953. It's more commonly found in coastal counties and less frequently further inland.



## Habitat

Although quite attractive in its own right when growing in the right position, Mind-your-own-business can be invasive and become a nuisance especially when growing amongst low shrubs and in lawns. It's usually found growing at the footings of walls and subsequently grows out to colonise large areas of ground. It tolerates a wide range of conditions but is more commonly found in shadier parts of the garden. Regarded as not fully hardy severe frost will cut it back, but it always recovers and when growing in grass seems immune to frost.

## Habit

It is a dwarf, creeping, mat forming, evergreen perennial herb with very small leaves (2-6 mm) and even smaller flowers. It can propagate itself by seed and rapidly spreads by stems that root as they grow. Mind-your-own-business tolerates close mowing and can grow so thickly in grass that it eventually smothers it.

## Control in Lawns

Mind-your-own-business is resistant to all of the commonly applied lawn herbicides. However it is susceptible to triclopyr, a constituent of brushwood killer. It's available in garden outlets as SBK Brushwood Killer (48 g/l triclopyr) in a variety of pack sizes. When used as an overall application it will also kill a variety of other lawn weeds such as dandelion and clover. To prevent possible damage avoid drift onto shrubs or herbaceous plants.

Please read the label carefully and exercise care when using this product.

# Mind your own business

## SBK Brushwood Killer recommendation (apply with a sprayer):

- Overall application – 20 ml in approximately 5 litres of water per 10 m<sup>2</sup>
- Spot spray – 25 ml per litre of water

The action of triclopyr on Mind-your-own-business is quite slow - allow 5-6 weeks before judging the result. Normally a second application is advisable, either to complete the kill or to treat patches you may have missed first time around.

This can be in the form of a spot spray and suggest using a concentration of 25 ml/L; it's difficult to give a definitive rate as spray amounts applied will vary between individuals.

NB: Spray only when grass is growing actively. Triclopyr may stunt or discolour grass but this effect is temporary and it will recover. It might be a good idea to apply some nitrogen to green up the grass, e.g. 10-15 g/m<sup>2</sup> of sulphate of ammonia.



## Reseeding

If Mind-your-own-business is well established in a lawn, bare patches will be left after it is killed and these will need reseeded. Sprinkle some grass seed over the affected area and cover lightly with some fine soil or sand. If the bare patches are left, it can regrow from self-sown seed or recolonisation.

## Mind-your-own-business Lawn

Where it has totally taken over the lawn and little grass is left, why not select the easier option? Get rid of the grass and leave the weed! This can be achieved by using low rates of glyphosate to kill off the grass. Mind-your-own-business is somewhat resistant to glyphosate and the use of low rates should be safe. Suggest using 20ml/ 100 m<sup>2</sup> (360 g/l product) but try it on a small area first.

## Control in Borders

If at all possible prevent it from establishing in the first place. Thoroughly hand weed and apply bark mulch between the plants. Use a band spray of triclopyr around the edge of the border where it adjoins a grass area with the weed growing in it.



*Soleirolia soleirolia*

Illustration from *The Wild Flowers of the British Isles*  
Streeter and Garrard

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks to Dr. David Robinson, Ted O'Donnell, Matthew Jebb, Donal Synnott and Sylvia Reynolds for their help in writing this article.

Produced by: Horticultural Development Department, Teagasc  
[www.teagasc.ie](http://www.teagasc.ie) | April 2020