Of interest this week at Beal...

Mossy stonecrop
*Sedum acre*

Family: the Orpine family, Crassulaceae
Also called Stonecrop, Biting stonecrop, Golden moss, Wall ginger, Peagon limb, Gold chain, Creeping Tom, Wall pepper

Mossy stonecrop, *Sedum acre* L. is one of the 400 or more species of stonecrop in the orpine family. Although a number of species in this genus are North American natives, *S. acre* is native to Europe and Asia. It is a well-established perennial on both sides of the U.S./Canadian border and as far south as Tennessee. It’s low growing profile rarely exceeds 4 inches (10 cm) in height, and it tends toward forming dense colonial patches. In sterile sandy soils it is a successful and aggressive weed, often difficult to eradicate from such lawns.

Many sedum species have enjoyed reputations as food in the edible plant world, often based upon their succulent non-toxic properties. Mossy stonecrop has been found to contain a series of alkaloids (sedridine, sedamine, sedinone, and isopellatierine) that give the plant a pungency that has lead to its use as a spice, hence the common name wall pepper. However, the above mentioned alkaloids also impart a low level of toxicity, and are probably responsible for a host of uses cited in herbal medicine literature. Dr. James Duke, in his CRC Handbook of Medicinal Herbs, cites over 30 uses ranging from treatments for cancers and malaria, to applications for epilepsy and water retention. Most medicinal preparations of mossy stonecrop are administered as a powder, ground from the dried plant. This is also the form usually used to add a peppery taste to food. It should be pointed out that using this plant is not recommended for everyone as blisters and skin irritations are widely reported.

In its native Europe, *Sedum acre* is one of the larval food plants of the Handmaid Daymoth, in the tiger moth family (Arctiidae), and also supports at least one species of noctuid moth.

The popularity of mossy stonecrop in North America is mostly derived from its ability to thrive in rock gardens. Its succulent habit gives it a survival advantage in the dry and
Two characteristics that have made *Sedum acre* a successful weed are its proliferative rhizome and its succulent habit. Especially in sandy areas, this combination allows it to compete very aggressively with lawn grasses.