

November Invasive Plant Highlight

English Ivy



What is English Ivy?



English Ivy choking trees

Hedera helix, known as English Ivy, is invasive throughout Eastern and Western United States. European colonists introduced English ivy as early as 1727. It is widely planted for its evergreen foliage and as a year-round “carefree” groundcover.

Although recognized as a serious invasive weed in parks, landscapes, and other natural areas, it continues to be sold and marketed as an ornamental plant in the United States. A habitat overwhelmed by English Ivy creates a monoculture that does not support native species. Vast resources are expended attempting to manage infestations on public and private lands.

*English Ivy is ubiquitous in residential landscapes. Replace it with native ground covers such as Allegheny spurge (*Pachysandra procumbens*), Green and gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*), or Alumroot (*Heuchera americana*).*



Native to Europe, Scandinavia, and Russia, ivy is a shade-adapted climbing vine that can grow to a height of 20 to 80 feet, and typically spreads between 3 and 50 feet. The plant has two growth stages: juvenile, which is its first year, and adult, which starts in its second year. Blooms appear in the adult stage.

Ivy flowers are greenish-white or greenish-yellow and bloom in the fall. Flowers turn to blue-black berries that have a hard, slightly poisonous inner seed. Birds digest the outer shell and disperse the inner seed efficiently spreading it.

Please Remove It!

If you find English Ivy in your yard, please remove it. Individual vines can be pulled by hand when soil is moist. Vines covering the ground can be uprooted and gathered using a heavy-duty rake, then cut close to the ground. Gathered vines can be piled up and allowed to desiccate and rot or it can be composted. Vines climbing up trees can be cut a few feet from the ground to kill upper portions without harming the tree.

If the vine is pulled in the fall while in fruit, the berries should be bagged and disposed of in a landfill – do not compost the berries.

More information about English Ivy:

<https://www.invasive.org/alien/pubs/midatlantic/hehe.htm>

<https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/topics/english-ivy>

Why Native Plants?

As open space disappears, it is necessary to look at our own landscapes for biodiversity. Native plants promote the unique relationships between our native plants and animals, from the smallest microorganisms, insects and other invertebrates to birds and mammals.

Native plants, from grasses and wildflowers to towering shade trees, form the base of the food chain. Our native insects are uniquely adapted to eat native plants; some are generalists and can eat a variety of plants, but many are specialists that can only digest certain types of leaves based on the chemistry of the plant.

Research by the entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars whereas ginkgos, a commonly planted landscape tree from Asia, host only 5 species of caterpillars. When it takes over 6,000 caterpillars to raise one brood of chickadees, that is a significant difference.

[More information on native plants:](#)

www.vnps.org/natives

www.plantnovanatives.org

www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder

www.audubon.org/native-plants

[More information on invasive plants:](#)

www.invasiveplantatlas.org

www.invasive.org



Native Virginia Bluebells

Who We Are?

The City of Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team restores the local ecosystem in city parks. We remove damaging invasive plants then re-plant with natives that benefit our local birds, butterflies, bees, and pollinators.

We are a community task force that supports the City's Green Space department. We have monthly events in the Fall and Spring open to volunteers.

Contact Information

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Native Butterfly Weed