

# December Invasive Plant Highlight

## Winter Creeper



### What is Winter Creeper?



*Winter Creeper leaves*

*Euonymus fortunei*, known as Fortune's spindle, wintercreeper or winter creeper, is highly invasive and damaging in the United States, causing the death of trees and forest in urban areas. It is native to east Asia, including China, Korea, the Philippines, and Japan and was introduced to the U.S. in 1907. Winter Creeper is a broadleaf semi-evergreen creeping vine that grows across the ground, displacing herbaceous plants and seedlings. It climbs trees high into the tree canopy by clinging to the bark.

*Once established, Winter Creeper can dominate the woodland floor, thus eliminating a diversity of wildflowers and other understory plants.*



*Winter Creeper berries*

Like English Ivy, the Winter Creeper vine has a sterile non-flowering juvenile climbing or creeping phase, which on reaching high enough into the crowns of trees to get more light, develops into an adult, flowering phase. The flowers are greenish-white or greenish-yellow bloom in the fall. Flowers develop into reddish orange berries in the fall. Winter Creeper can tolerate a broad range of environmental conditions ranging from full sun to deep shade, and acidic to basic and low nutrient soils.

### Better Groundcovers

Virginia Creeper, Creeping Phloxes, Wild Ginger, Golden Ragwort, and Ferns (Cinnamon Fern, Christmas Fern).

### Please Remove It!

If you have Winter Creeper, please remove it. Pull long vines up from along the ground to the point where they are rooted and dig or pull-out small roots with large pliers. Use a mattock or weed wrench to remove larger roots. Cut vines climbing trees at the base of the tree trunk and cut again three feet up the trunk. Remove cut vine from the base cut back to its roots. Any part of the remaining plant system may re-root at a node, so keep cut vines from contact with soil while they dry out. **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 Winter Creeper:

<https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=3024>

<https://extension.umd.edu/hgic/topics/winter-creeper-euonymus>

## 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](http://www.vnps.org/natives)

[www.plantnovanatives.org](http://www.plantnovanatives.org)

[www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder](http://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder)

[www.audubon.org/native-plants](http://www.audubon.org/native-plants)

### More information on invasive plants:

[www.invasiveplantatlas.org](http://www.invasiveplantatlas.org)

[www.invasive.org](http://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*