



Evergreen

INVASIVE PLANT PROFILE

English Ivy *Hedera helix* Family: Araliaceae Zone 6



EVERGREEN
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What makes English ivy a problem?

English ivy and closely related ivy species can thrive in moist to dry soil conditions and in full sun to full shade. Young ivy plants spread vegetatively (stem fragments in contact with the soil can regenerate growth). Mature ivy spreads by rhizomes, layering and seeds. Birds eating ivy berries in early spring also help distribute the plant. Without any biological or environmental controls, it spreads rapidly, forming a thick mat that creates a monoculture.

English ivy's adaptive qualities, as well as its ability to spread quickly, contribute to its success in areas outside maintained gardens (e.g. forests and urban ravines). It is one of the many invasive plants that can invade in stable environmental conditions as well as disturbed areas.

English ivy also:

- climbs into the tree canopy, shading out deciduous foliage
- wraps itself around trees, preventing bark from properly interacting with air and micro-organisms
- adds substantial weight to a tree as it grows, making the tree more likely to blow down as it becomes top heavy
- can kill a mature tree in less than 10 years
- contributes to slope slippage.

English ivy does not control erosion. Its shallow, mat-like root system does not have the diversity of configurations and depths to bring water down through the soil to form an interconnecting water dispersal system. Instead, it tends to pond the water on the surface.

Ivy monocultures and tree loss due to encroachment results in reduced shelter and food sources for wildlife; the compromise of essential ecosystem services such as air and water purification; and a reduction in the aesthetic value of urban neighborhoods.

English Ivy and government concern

Similar climatic conditions in Washington and Oregon have led to an English ivy problem in the United States. It has now been added to the Washington State Noxious Weed List.

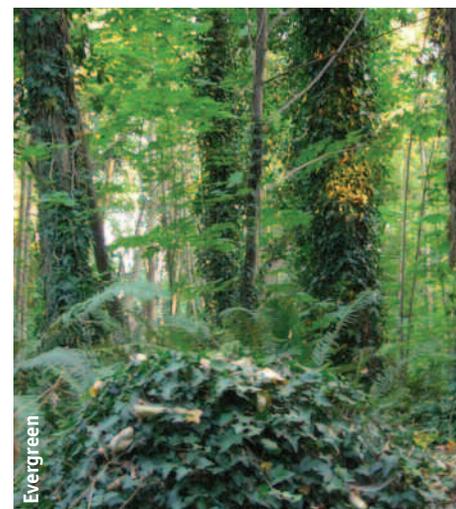
In Canada, several Lower Mainland municipalities in BC, including the City of North Vancouver, Burnaby, Vancouver, Coquitlam and West Vancouver, are working with stewardship groups to remove English ivy from public lands, such as parks, as part of an effort to reclaim biodiversity and habitat values in urban forests.

How is English ivy controlled once a site is invaded?

English ivy is often removed manually or mechanically, often by many community volunteers who spend hours at any given site. A three to five year plan of annual ivy pulls, combined with monitoring, will be effective on most patches.

The entire plant, including the roots, needs to be removed. Where the ivy is growing up a tree, stems need to be cut at shoulder height and at ground level, and that section removed. The plant on the ground is then pulled up and the roots dug up in a two metre radius around the tree. The vine in the trees will rot before it kills the tree. All clippings need to be removed.

The Stanley Park Ecology Society has found that English ivy grows approximately one meter per year in the park and that now up to 30% of the park is affected.



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Plant description

Originally from the Caucasus Mountain region of central Eurasia, this Evergreen vine is commonly sold in the Pacific Northwest as an indoor and outdoor garden ornamental.

English ivy's appearance changes as it ages. Juvenile ivy, a stage that lasts around 10 years, has light green leaves alternately arranged with three to five deep lobes. Stems produce roots at the nodes. Juvenile ivy and ivy under deep shade do not produce flowers.

Mature ivy has dark green, leathery, spirally arranged leaves but no lobes. It produces flowers when as it grows vertically and can grow over 30 metres long with stems reaching a metre in diameter.

Market Alternatives

There are plants that offer similar benefits to English ivy. The following plants are shade tolerant, able to cover fences and walls and can act as winter evergreen without becoming invasive and a threat to local ecosystems.

- 1 **Sword fern** *Polystichum munitum* A low maintenance plant for the West Coast garden, this evergreen fern can grow under cedar trees and in deep shade with little or no watering. It will also provide year-round interest. Sword fern is suitable for large plantings, woodland gardens, under trees, forest restoration and erosion control.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY/MOIST, 50CM-1.5M TALL



- 2 **Evergreen clematis** *Clematis arandii* This evergreen climbing vine is a suitable vine alternative to ivy. It creates a dense screen against wall and fences. Its white fragrant flowers bloom in spring and cover the vine. Evergreen clematis likes rich organic soil, protected roots and requires a structure to climb on.

SUN/LIGHT SHADE, MOIST, GROWS TO 7M TALL



- 3 **Kinnikinnick** *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* This low growing evergreen shrub naturally grows in rocky outcroppings and is ideal for full sun and well drained sites. It spreads rapidly, producing white flowers in spring followed by red berries. Its glossy Evergreen leaves provide year-round interest and is suitable for large plantings, rock gardens and erosion control.

NATIVE SPECIES, SUN, DRY, 20CM TALL, 60CM SPREAD (up to 5m when spread by layering)



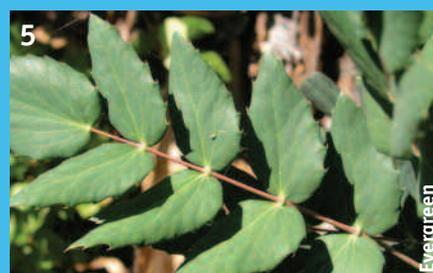
- 4 **Piggy back plant** *Tolmeia menziesii* In large numbers, this perennial creates a lush groundcover in shady sites that requires little attention. The foliage is rich green with flower stalks and new growth coming from the heart-shaped leaves. Tiny greenish flowers bloom in spring. It is suitable for under trees, in woodland gardens, shady borders and beside water features.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, MOIST, 15-30CM TALL, 45-60CM TALL



- 5 **Dull Oregon-grape** *Mahonia nervosa* This evergreen shrub produces clusters of yellow flowers from May to June followed by blue/purple grape-like berry clusters. This coastal native prefers well-drained acid soil, rich in organic matter. Dull Oregon-grape is suitable in a shady border, in large groupings as a groundcover, or in forest restoration.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY-MOIST, 45-60cm TALL



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