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INVASIVE PLANT PROFILE

Common Periwinkle, Vinca

Vinca minor

Family: Apocynaceae Zone 4-8



EVERGREEN
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Why is *Vinca minor* a problem?

Vinca minor is native to Europe, and was first introduced to North America in the 1700s as an ornamental plant. It is now commonly sold as a bedding plant, however, it is emerging as an invasive species in the Pacific Northwest. Inappropriate disposal of *V. minor* by gardeners – primarily dumping garden waste including hanging baskets into or on the edge of natural areas – has resulted in this plant becoming invasive in local ecosystems. *Vinca minor* reproduces by stolons (runners), with stems rooting at the nodes. *Vinca minor* forms a dense groundcover layer, often in coniferous forests, crowding out and discouraging the growth of other native plants. Both *Vinca minor* and *Vinca major* are known to be invasive, however, *V. major* is less hardy, is established as a problem in California and has only begun to be seen as invasive here on the coast, in very localized areas. *V. minor* is primarily a problem at the forest edge adjacent to residential gardens.

Where is *Vinca minor* a problem?

It is found to be invasive in the Lower Mainland, on the Sunshine Coast, and in other parts of Canada. Specifically *Vinca minor* has become an invasive plant problem in the following regional parks: Pacific Spirit, Kanaka, and Capilano River. It has also become a problem in Mahon Park in North Vancouver, invading the shady forest understory. *V. minor* is typically a problem in urban riparian corridors

For more information see www.invasive.org/browse/subject.cfm?sub=3081.

For more information on where *V. minor* is a problem in the United States go to www.invasive.org.

How is *Vinca minor* controlled once a site is invaded?

Vinca minor is one of the few invasives easily controlled by hand, partly as a result of its limited reproduction and spreading mechanisms. It does not spread by seed, but by rooting stolons. Repeated pulling of the plant as it appears will 'starve' it – persistence is key, as well as replanting the area cleared with native species. When removing it, remember to

- remove it down to the root level
- heavily mulch the site after removal
- re-plant in the mulch with non-invasive species.

In Mahon Park, *V. minor* invaded a disturbed area compacted by many people creating an informal trail. One large removal, followed two years later by another hand removal event has so far successfully controlled *Vinca minor* on that site.



Evergreen

Plant description

Vinca minor is an evergreen to semi-evergreen trailing perennial. The stems are slender, somewhat woody and green in color. The leaves are shiny, dark green, and opposite. They are approximately 2.75cm long and narrowly elliptical in shape. Flowers are pale blue to lavender in color, up to 3cm wide, and 5-petaled. They bloom in the spring, and intermittently throughout the summer. It grows in sandy to clay soils, both well-drained and moist, and prefers partial shade. It has a large pH range, from 3.7 to 7.0.

Market Alternatives

There are other groundcovers that offer similar benefits to *Vinca minor*, such as attractive flowers, shade tolerance, and semi-evergreen, without becoming invasive and a threat to local ecosystems.

- 1 **Dull Oregon grape** *Mahonia nervosa* This short evergreen shrub or groundcover shows clusters of yellow flowers from May – June followed by blue/purple grape-like berry clusters. Dull Oregon grape is suitable in dry to moist shade and when planted in a mass, creates a beautiful evergreen carpet especially under conifer trees.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY/MOIST, 45–60CM TALL



- 2 **Sweet Violet** *Viola odorata* This mat forming groundcover has heart-shaped leaves and fragrant purple or white flowers. Flowers appear as early as February and last until the end of April. The plant can spread widely with underground runners.

FULL SUN/PARTIAL SHADE, MOIST, 60CM SPREAD X 20CM TALL



- 3 **Cranes Bill Geranium** *Geranium 'Johnson's Blue'* This deciduous perennial has blue/purple flowers similar to those of periwinkle. When planted in groups the mounding foliage will grow together to create an attractive groundcover for a woodland garden. Suitable for a partially shaded border, under deciduous trees, in small or large gardens.

PART SHADE, MOIST, 30-45CM TALL X 45-60CM WIDE



- 4 **Redwood sorrel** *Oxalis oregana* A deciduous ground cover with clover like foliage and white flowers in spring. Redwood sorrel is suitable under trees and in large shady sites. It grows rapidly to fill in a space. It creates a lush green mat for spring, summer and fall interest before dying back in fall. Some varieties come with red on the underside of the leaf.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, MOIST 5-15CM TALL X 1.5M SPREAD



- 5 **Coral bells** *Heuchera micrantha* This semi-evergreen perennial provides year round interest with foliage that stays into winter with sprays of tiny flowers in the spring. Cultivars come in a variety of foliage colours. Suitable as a groundcover, under deciduous trees, in woodland gardens and in a perennial border.

NATIVE SPECIES, PART SHADE/SHADE, DRY/MOIST 30-45CM TALL AND WIDE



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