

Ivy on Hardscapes

English ivy climbs using tendrils and root clusters that grow from its stems and exude a sticky liquid allowing the ivy to cling to structures. The rootlets will push into cracks and fissures in mortar and in any spaces between rocks, bricks, wooden slats, siding, shingles, etc., and can loosen and eventually damage that part of the structure where the ivy is growing. The vines can hold moisture and can serve as "highways" for insects and other pests.



Ivy should be kept from climbing on structures, and removed where already attached. Removal should be done with care because the roots and tendrils can damage the structure when pulled off. Remove same way as on tree (details inside brochure) and gently pull off when dead and withered.

It may be best not to grow vines on a structure, except very sturdy structures such as arbors that are built to hold vines.

Alternative ground covers near foundations:

- Wild ginger
- Allegheny spurge
- Green and Gold
- Christmas fern
- Northern lady fern

See our *Tree Steward* webpage for more information and brochure references.

Extension Master Gardener Contact Information

Help Desk

(703) 771-5150
Hours: 9 am-noon,
Monday through Friday
e-mail: loudounmg@vt.edu

Website

www.loudouncountymastergardeners.org
Click on Programs, then Tree Stewards

Tree Steward email

TS@loudouncountymastergardeners.org

Virginia Cooperative Extension Office

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*Website Resources: nps.gov,
utextension.tennessee.edu, pubs.ext.vt.edu,
ncsu.edu and ag.arizona.edu*



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VCE Master
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English Ivy Is an Exotic Invasive



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What It Is

English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is native to Europe, from northeastern Ireland to southern Scandinavia, and south to Spain. It is also native in western Asia and northern Africa. English ivy arrived in North America as a landscape plant and escaped from those landscape settings into natural areas.

- An evergreen woody vine, the ivy will climb or form dense ground cover.
- Leaves are alternate and heart-shaped with pointed lobes in young plants and broadly lanceolate in mature plants.
- The light gray vine may reach a thickness of 10 inches in diameter and may be bumpy and gnarly.
- Small greenish-yellow flowers appear in June to October.
- Clusters of round berries ripen to dark blue from October to May. Birds will spread the seeds.

Impacts to Trees

As the ivy climbs in search of light, it engulfs and kills branches by blocking light from reaching the host tree's leaves. Branch dieback proceeds from the lower to upper branches. The host tree eventually succumbs from the steady weakening. Added weight of the vines makes infested trees much more susceptible to blow-over during severe weather.

Removal from Trees

Manual, mechanical and chemical control methods, especially in combination, are all effective in removing and killing English ivy. Wear protective gloves and long sleeves/trousers. Use appropriately sized cutters, pruners, loppers or a saw.

- Cut ivy vines near the ground and then again at approximately eye-level to make a vine-free band around the tree trunk.
- Carefully remove *only the cuttings* so no damage is done to tree bark. These cuttings will try to root, so either dry out thoroughly or put in trash. **DO NOT PULL REMAINING IVY OFF tree** - it may take the bark with it. Severed ivy left on tree will die and eventually fall off.
- Remove ivy from the ground at least 2 to 3 feet around base of tree.
- If necessary, follow vine cutting with application of concentrated systemic herbicide to rooted, living cut surfaces. Contact our Help Desk for more information.
- Because cutting may result in vigorous regrowth at base, vigilance is required to ensure long term control.

CAUTION: Mild to severe allergic skin reactions may occur when in contact with leaves or sap. Cover all exposed skin when working.

Invasive Status

English ivy infests woodlands, forest edges, fields, hedgerows, coastal areas, salt marsh edges, and other upland areas, especially where some soil moisture is present.

Reported to be invasive in natural areas of 18 states (MD, VA & WV included) and the District of Columbia.

Native Alternatives

Vines for fences/arbors

- Climbing hydrangea
- Trumpet creeper
- Virginia creeper
- Passionflower vine
- NATIVE wisteria

Ornamental Grasses for landscape

- Switch grass
- Wild Oat grass
- Bottlebrush grass
- Pennsylvania sedge

Ground Covers*

- Blue phlox
- Carolina jessamine
- Wild ginger
- Allegheny spurge
- Green and Gold
- Christmas fern

*Keep at least 2 feet from base of tree.