

INVASIVE EXOTICS

English Ivy

Hedera helix

Ginseng Family (Araliaceae)



What does it look like? English ivy, native to Eurasia, is a woody vine with dark evergreen leaves. Juvenile leaves have lighter-colored veins and three to five lobes. Mature leaves, which form when the plant reaches reproductive age at ten years, are oval in shape. The flowers are borne in clusters at the tips of each stem in autumn. The fruit is dark blue to purplish in color.

What habitats are threatened by this plant? English ivy is found growing in the deep shade of upland forests especially those near urban areas where ivy is most abundantly planted. The plant forms solid stands in forests, which inhibit the regeneration of wildflowers, trees and shrubs. It is not used by native wildlife. English ivy grows up tree trunks and adds weight to them, thereby increasing storm and wind damage.

How does this plant spread? English ivy was introduced to North America during the early colonial period. Presently it is found in the Middle Atlantic, Southeast, and West Coast states. The California Exotic Pest Plant Council considers it a

serious problem. It is especially invasive in western Oregon and Washington. English ivy roots at each node along the ground and also by aerial roots when it climbs trees or other objects. The non-native European starling feeds on the dark blue to purplish fruits and contributes to its spread throughout the landscape.

How can it be controlled? Prevent the spread of this plant by not introducing it in the landscape. Once established however, the best method of control is hand-pulling. Pruners can be used to cut the vine, then it should be pulled off trees and the forest floor. English ivy's waxy leaves are almost impervious to herbicide. To prevent undesirable plants from becoming established where the ivy has been removed, plant native plant species. Many native plants provide evergreen ground cover and can be used in place of English ivy, such as creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*), partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*) and Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*).

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