

INVASIVE EXOTICS

Periwinkle

Vinca minor

Dogbane Family (Apocynaceae)



What does it look like? Periwinkle, native to Europe, is a trailing groundcover with glossy, evergreen leaves that taper at both ends and grow opposite each other on the stem. Flowers appear in early spring and look like blue, lilac, or white stars.

What habitats are threatened by this plant? Periwinkle persists in shady areas of second-growth forests, usually near the site of the original planting. A single clone can spread vegetatively and cover large areas of woodland understory, crowding out all of the native herbaceous vegetation.

How does this plant spread? Periwinkle's introduction date is unknown, but it has a long garden history in the U.S. It was valued as a medicinal herb and aphrodisiac in Europe. It escaped cultivation in the Northeastern and Northcentral states. Periwinkle only spreads vegetatively and remains close to the original site of planting, but it dominates the herbaceous layer where it exists.

How can it be controlled? Prevent the spread of periwinkle by not planting it in the landscape. Many native plants make excellent evergreen groundcovers and can be used in place of periwinkle, such as creeping phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*), partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*) and three-toothed cinquefoil (*Potentilla tridentata*). Periwinkle can be removed mechanically by digging or by lifting up the runners with a rake and mowing the plants. Be sure to remove all of the plant, as the stems root easily wherever the nodes touch the ground. Periwinkle also is controlled by cutting the plants during active growth in early to late spring, followed by an application of a glyphosate herbicide such as Roundup. Any remaining plants can be removed by hand or spot-treated with the herbicide. Follow label directions when applying any herbicide.

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