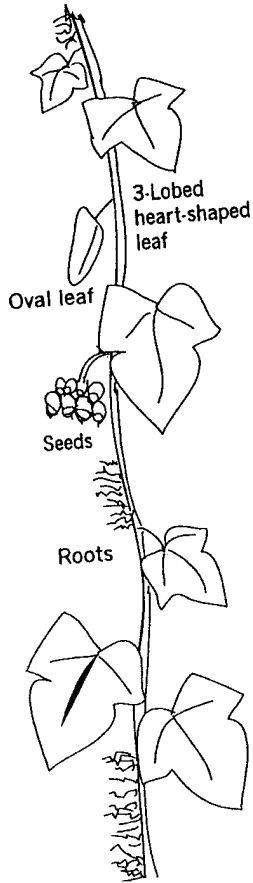


## Invasive Plant Fact Sheet

# English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

**Native range:** Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa



**Description:** English Ivy is an evergreen climbing vine. The vine attaches to the bark of trees, brickwork, and other surfaces by way of numerous small roots, which exude a glue-like substance. Its leaves are dark green, waxy, somewhat leathery, and arranged alternately along the stem. English ivy has many recognized leaf forms, the most common being a 3-lobed leaf with a heart-shaped base. Leaves in full sun are often unlobed, oval, and have wedge-shaped bases. Umbrella-like clusters of small, greenish white flowers appear in the fall if sufficient sunlight is available. Fruits mature in spring and are black with fleshy outer covering enclosing one to a few hard, stone-like seeds.

**Ecological Threat:** English ivy is an aggressive invader that crowds out all vegetation in forested and open areas, by creeping along the ground and climbing into the forest canopy. The dense growth and abundant leaves form a thick mat over the ground preventing sunlight from reaching other plants. The vines also routinely climb trees smothering branches and preventing normal photosynthesis. The result is increased stress on the host tree increasing risk of disease and death. The added weight of the vines also make the tree more susceptible to damage during storms. English ivy may also increase the risk of bacterial leaf scorch (*Xylella fastidiosa*) in host trees, a plant pathogen that is harmful to native trees such as elms, oaks, and maples.

**Methods of Reproduction and Dispersal:** English ivy spreads by runners and reproduces by seed, which is dispersed to new areas primarily by birds. English ivy will only reproduce by seed once it has climbed into the tree canopy. New plants grow easily from cuttings increasing risk of new infestations from yard waste.

**Manual and Mechanical Management Methods:** To slow the spread of the ivy and protect trees begin by cutting vines that are growing up tree trunks. Cut all the vines from the tree in a foot wide swath around the trunk. Cutting at chest high will make the project more manageable. Take care not to scar the bark of the tree. All cut vines above the swath will die back after two to three weeks. Peel vines from the trunk below the swath back and continue to remove any new growth to ensure long-term control.

Vines growing as groundcover can be pulled by hand and bagged as trash. **Do NOT place for city composting or dump as yard waste!** When removing plants take care to remove all stems and roots for complete eradication. Small stems and debris will encourage regrowth. Pull following rains when the soil is damp for greatest success.

**Suggested Alternative Plants:** Many attractive native vines and groundcovers are available that provide food for wildlife species such as butterflies, hummingbirds, and other song birds. A few examples are: Vines: American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*), trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*), and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) Groundcover: Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), and Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*).