

# English ivy

**Description:**

English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is a member of the ginseng family of plants (*Araliaceae*). It grows as a vine for up to ten years producing deeply lobed, alternating, waxy leaves with three to five points. When the plant is mature and ready to bear fruit, the leaves are only slightly lobed, if at all. Leaves are thick, waxy, shiny dark green and have distinct pale colored veins. Mature plants produce umbrella-shaped clusters of greenish white flowers in the fall resulting in a deep purple, soft skinned, berry-like fruit in the spring. Each berry may contain up to three seeds that can be widely dispersed by birds.



Vine stems begin pale green and slender when growing along the ground and quickly become woody and stout on climbing vines. Stems produce rootlets that give the vine a hairy appearance and produce a sticky substance that allows the vine to cling to vertical surfaces. Vines can produce roots from each node, allowing it to re-establish itself from cut stems and pieces of stems left on the ground.

**Impacts:**

English ivy is an invasive vine in the Pacific Northwest. It grows so rapidly that it surrounds and covers many native plants so that sunlight doesn't reach them and they die. Once the vines create a thick mat across the ground, other plants have little chance to get re-established. On trees, the vines can cling to the trunk and branches and grow up and over a 90 foot tree. If left uncontrolled, the ivy will make the tree top-heavy, block out sunlight, and gradually branches will die and further weaken the tree.



**Control Options:**

Thurston County's integrated pest management emphasizes cultural, biological, and manual control methods to keep pests and vegetation problems low enough to prevent damage. When chemical control is considered, the least toxic product is recommended when no other control methods would be effective or practical.

Most infestations of English ivy can be effectively controlled using manual and cultural control options. Large areas covered in ivy may require the use of herbicide if time and resources are an issue.

► **Cultural / Habitat**

Do not intentionally plant English ivy in your landscape. This includes the varieties: *Hedera helix* 'Baltica', *Hedera helix* 'Pittsburgh', *Hedera helix* 'Star', and *Hedera hibernica* 'Hibernica'. Mulch over and replant bare areas where ivy has been removed.

► **Manual / Mechanical**

Hand pulling vines is very effective for controlling English ivy. The plant produces a sap that may irritate some people's skin, so wearing gloves and a long sleeved shirt is recommended. Whenever pulling or cutting vines, be careful to remove all stem fragments from the soil or they will root and start a new plant. Vines that have grown up trees or structures should be cut at an easily reached height (killing the portion above the cut) and, if possible, pulled down. Some vines may be too large to remove from trees, if so, make sure all cut sections are not in contact with soil and evaluate your tree (is it top heavy or diseased from the ivy?).

Removing large infestations along the ground will expose soil making it vulnerable to erosion, especially on steep banks. Replant areas where ground has been made bare with fast-growing native groundcover as soon as possible. Groundcover will help to keep the soil in place and will help minimize the establishment of other non-native plant species.

► **Biological**

There are currently no known biological controls for English ivy.



► **Chemical**

Contact herbicides kill the plant tissue it touches, and systemic herbicides are taken into the plant and transported throughout the plant to kill all the tissue. A systemic herbicide is recommended for control of English ivy because even small stem fragments left alive can root and start a new plant.

**Glyphosate** is an active ingredient in many systemic herbicide products that are effective in the control of English ivy. Application methods vary for the type and size of the infestation; foliar applications (spraying leaves and stems) are recommended for large ground infestations, basal bark applications (applying product to vine after removing some leaves and stems) work when upper portions of vines are inaccessible, and cut stem applications (applying directly onto cut vine stumps) are most effective when combined with manual removal of vines and plant fragments.

**Timing**

The best chemical control is achieved when temperatures are above 50° F for several days. However, winter may be the best time to apply an herbicide to minimize injury to surrounding plants and trees. Since ivy grows all year long, spraying an herbicide in the winter will effectively control them and will reduce the risk to other plants when they are typically dormant. Shielding or covering neighboring plants is always a good idea to protect them from herbicidal injury.

**READ AND FOLLOW ALL PESTICIDE LABEL DIRECTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS.** Use of brand names does not imply endorsement and is for reference only; other formulations of the same herbicides may be available under other names. Information provided is current as of the date of the fact sheet. Pesticide product registration is renewed annually and product names and formulations may vary from year to year.



**REFERENCES:**

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