

English Ivy

fact sheet

Clackamas River
Basin Council

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How to Identify English Ivy:

English ivy is an evergreen climbing vine that attaches to the bark of trees, brickwork, and other surfaces by way of small rootlike structures which exude a sticky substance that helps the vines adhere to various surfaces. Older vines have been reported to reach 1 foot in diameter. Leaves are dark green with white veins, waxy to somewhat leathery, and arranged alternately along the stem. Leaf forms include a 3 to 5-lobed leaf (the most common) and an unlobed rounded leaf often found on mature plants in full sun that are ready to flower. Vines may grow for up to ten years before producing flowers. Under sufficient light conditions, terminal clusters of small, pale yellow-green flowers are produced in the fall. The flowers are attractive to flies and bees in search of late season nectar sources. The black-purple fruits have a thin fleshy outer covering, contain one to three hard, stone-like seeds and may persist through the winter if not eaten first.



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How It's Spread:

English ivy spreads locally through vegetative growth and new plants can grow from cut or broken pieces of stems that are able to root in the soil. It disperses longer distances via seed which is carried to new areas by frugivorous birds including the Cedar Waxwing, Northern Robin, Stellar Jay, Mockingbird, European Starling, and House Sparrow.

How Did it Get Here?

English ivy was probably first introduced to the U.S. by European immigrants for its ornamental appeal. It persists as a popular plant for homeowners, businesses, landscape designers and others. Cooperative Extension offices continue to recommend English ivy for use as a low maintenance alternative to lawns because it is evergreen, relatively pest free, very cold hardy and fast-growing groundcover that requires little care once established.

Environmental Impacts

English ivy is a vigorous growing vine that impacts all levels of disturbed and undisturbed forested areas, growing both as a ground cover and a climbing vine. As the ivy climbs in search of increased 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, often leaving the tree with just a small green "broccoli head." The host tree eventually succumbs entirely from this insidious and steady weakening. In addition, the added weight of the vines makes infested trees much more susceptible to blow-over during high rain and wind events and heavy snowfalls. Trees heavily draped with ivy can be hazardous if near roads, walkways, homes and other peopled areas. On the ground, English ivy forms dense and extensive monocultures that exclude native plants. English ivy also serves as a reservoir for Bacterial Leaf Scorch (*Xylella fastidiosa*), a plant pathogen that is harmful to elms, oaks, maples and other native plants.

Distribution:

English ivy has been reported to be invasive in natural areas in 18 states and the District of Columbia.

Management Options:

Manual
Mechanical
Chemical

Sources Cited: <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/hehe1.htm>,
<http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?c=47820>