

## English Ivy

*Hedera helix*

### **Identification:**

Evergreen vine in the ginseng family. Leaves are 3-lobed and glabrous. The leaves are dark green and have a shiny appearance. They are leathery, thick and evergreen. The vines have a large quantity of aerial root hairs that aid in climbing. The vine also grows along the ground and roots at nodes when the soil surface is moist. The flowers are inconspicuous and yellow, appearing in fall. The fruit resembles a berry, is black and contains one stone-like seed. It grows in small clusters of seven to twenty-eight.



**Origin:** Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa

### **Habitat:**

Prefers moist, high succession deciduous forests, but will tolerate open areas and drier soils as well. Highly shade tolerant. It can grow both along the ground and up tree trunks or other surfaces with the aid of its aerial roots. English ivy has been observed growing up to ninety feet high in trees.



### **Ecological Threat:**

English ivy is one of the more dangerous invasive plants because of its ability to invade both the ground level and the forest canopy. It is also shade tolerant, which gives it the ability to invade established forests. When growing along the ground, it forms a dense cover at ground level, blocking all sunlight and crowding out all other native plants and tree regeneration. Vines slowly kill the trees they climb by enveloping the tree and blocking all sunlight branch by branch. Trees infested with English ivy are also much more susceptible to wind shear and blow down because of the large amount of extra weight created by the climbing vines. English ivy is also poisonous, containing a compound which may cause sickness such as gastrointestinal upset, dizziness and confusion, and breathing difficulty.



### **Native alternatives:**

Allegheny Spruce  
(*Pachysandra procumbens*)  
Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*)  
Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*),  
pictured left

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