



Whatcom Weeds

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ENGLISH IVY

Hedera helix 'Baltica', *Hedera helix* 'Pittsburg', *Hedera helix* 'Star', *Hedera hibernica* 'Hibernica'

THREAT: English ivy, a native of Europe and widely introduced as a landscape plant throughout the world, was introduced into North America in colonial times. English ivy invades parks, natural areas and landscaped sites, growing over other plants and depriving them of sunlight. As a climbing vine, the weight of this plant can cause trees to become more susceptible to wind and storm damage. The vines root when they touch the ground and aerial rootlets help it to climb trees. As a groundcover, this plant grows in a thick blanket, inhibiting the germination and growth of other plants. In warmer areas, this plant grows throughout the year. English ivy reproduces by seed, which are spread by birds, and by stolons. English ivy grows well in most types of soil, and grows both in sun and shade. Once established, it is fairly drought tolerant. The leaves and berries are poisonous and the plant causes dermatitis in some people.

DESCRIPTION: English ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Irish ivy (*Hedera hibernica* or *Hedera helix hibernica*) are evergreen, perennial vines in the ginseng family. The two species are extremely similar and are both treated in this article under the name of English ivy. The woody, climbing vines grow up to 90 feet long. The leaves are dark green with light veins, and have a waxy surface. On old plants, the bark is light brown with shallow furrows and ridges. The plant produces two forms. The most common form is the juvenile form. Juvenile leaves are usually 3 to 5 lobed and about three inches long. Adult plants develop ovate leaves and only mature plants produce the small greenish-white flowers. Seeds are contained in a black, berry-like fruit, which is poisonous.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: English ivy can be controlled through mechanical and chemical means. Small infestations can be hand dug or pulled. Dug or pulled plants should not be left on the ground as they may re-root and the area must be revisited to ensure no regrowth occurs. For ivy plants already in trees, the vines should be cut at waist height and the roots dug out (the portion of the vines in the tree can be left to die). The waxy coating on the leaves often prevents herbicides from penetrating the plant. Contact the weed control board for site-specific recommendations.