

# English Ivy

*Hedera helix, H. helix hibernica*  
Ginseng Family

## Noxious Weed of Concern Control Recommended

### Identification Tips

Juvenile Form:

- Leaves are deeply 3 to 5 lobed, light green and alternately arranged
- Young shoots and leaves are hairy
- Stems produce adventitious roots at the nodes
- Immature plants do not produce flowers
- This juvenile stage lasts for about 10 years

Mature Form:

- Leaves are unlobed, or slightly lobed, dark green and leathery and spirally arranged
- English ivy matures to produce flowers when it begins to grow vertically
- Mature plants do not produce adventitious roots.

### Biology

- Woody, evergreen perennial, which grows as a vine (climbing and creeping) or as a shrub
- Can photosynthesize year-round, and is capable of growth for 9-10 months of the year
- English ivy is long-lived, with reports of one plant over 400 years old
- Entire plant contains slightly toxic compounds
- Berries and leaves are toxic to people or livestock if eaten in large quantities
- Sap can cause dermatitis and blistering

### Impacts

- Reaches tree canopies and shades out deciduous foliage during summer months, suppressing the host tree
- Dense ivy cover deprives the bark of normal contact with air and microorganisms
- Adds substantial weight to a tree. The estimated weight of ivy removed from a tree in the Olympic National Park was 2100 lbs.
- Mature trees covered with ivy are top-heavy and more likely to blow down
- Thick ivy mats can accelerate rot and deteriorate structures

### Distribution

- Found throughout Kitsap County
- Can grow in partial shade or sunny sites



*Leaves of a juvenile plant.*



*Leaves of a mature plant.*



*Thick ivy mats smother understory plants and tree seedlings.*

## What you can do

Prevention of new infestations is the key to controlling English Ivy. Preventative techniques include eradication of small, newly established sites and long-term follow up of controlled sites.

## Control Methods

The County Weed Board recommends control and containment of existing populations and discourages new plantings of invasive cultivars.

**Prevention:** When planting an area, consider alternative ground covers. The list includes, but is not limited to, the following native plants: wild strawberries, false lily-of-the-valley, bunchberry, fringe cup, wood sorrel, kinnikinnick, low Oregon grape, and sedges. Please contact local nurseries or native plant societies for more suggestions.

**Manual:** Even though it is labor intensive, the most effective control method is manual removal. Depending on the site, several other manual control options are also effective. NOTE: Remove all cut stems for soil contact.

Wear gloves and protective clothing. The sap can cause a reaction in some people.

- Remove flowers or seed heads you can reach.
- Hand pull or dig out accessible plants.
- Mowing is effective in areas that are mowed regularly. Clippings need to be removed.
- Mulching – apply an 8” thick mulch layer. The plants can be cut or removed and then mulched, or a mulch layer can be directly applied on top of plants. This is not an option in steep areas.

**Chemical Control:** Controlling established English ivy with herbicides is not very successful because of the waxy leaves. There is also a risk to non-target plants from run-off of the waxy leaves. English ivy is considered tolerant of many commonly used herbicides. Carefully selecting herbicides and focusing applications on young, actively growing plants, have achieved some success. If herbicides are used, make sure that their use is allowed at your site. Certain herbicides cannot be used in aquatic areas or their buffers. When using an herbicide follow all label directions.

**Information Program Line: 360-307-4242**  
**Website: [http://kitsap.wsu.edu/noxious\\_weed](http://kitsap.wsu.edu/noxious_weed)**



**Questions?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Modified from the King County Noxious Weed Program**