



Photo: James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org/od.org

ENGLISH IVY

English ivy, *Hedrix helix*, is a shade tolerant, evergreen vine introduced from Eurasia to the U.S. by early European settlers. By mid-20th century it was reported as naturalized in Delaware. It grows vigorously along the ground and also climbs vertically. It spreads so aggressively that it can cover entire forest floors and displace native vegetation that are important for maintaining the health and stability of forest ecosystems. It can potentially kill trees by climbing up into their canopies and completely covering them (bottom left). English ivy is also known to transmit tree diseases, such as Bacterial Leaf Scorch.

Only mature vines - at least 16 years old – flower and produce dark purplish-black fruit (bottom right). Mature ivy leaves look different than those on the standard younger, non-flowering vines: they are heart-shaped, typically not lobed and lack strong venation and marbling. The fruit matures from late summer to winter, and birds eat them and disperse their seed. Homeowners also will often dispose of English ivy yard waste in adjacent or nearby forests. The roots from discarded vines may take hold and become established then begin to spread throughout the forest floor.

Some of our native vines, such as Virginia creeper and poison ivy vines, will also climb tree trunks, but they are not evergreen like English ivy. Winter can be a great time to target the English Ivy but be careful to avoid the red hairy vines of poison ivy.

Members of the public are encouraged to hand-pull English Ivy that they find encroaching into natural areas. A combination of manual, mechanical, and chemical control methods may be necessary to control infestations. Vines that are climbing tree trunks should be cut at the base and the cut stem can be treated with an herbicide. In addition, hand-pull the roots from cut vines around base of the tree and try to minimize soil disturbance. Monitor for regrowth and follow up yearly.



QUICK FACTS

- Evergreen vine native to Eurasia
- Spreads to forests where it can outcompete and displace native vegetation
- Climbs trees and smothers their canopies
- Can transmit tree diseases
- Only mature vines produce fruit
- Birds eat and spread its black berries in the fall and winter
- July 1, 2022 it will be illegal to sell in Delaware

