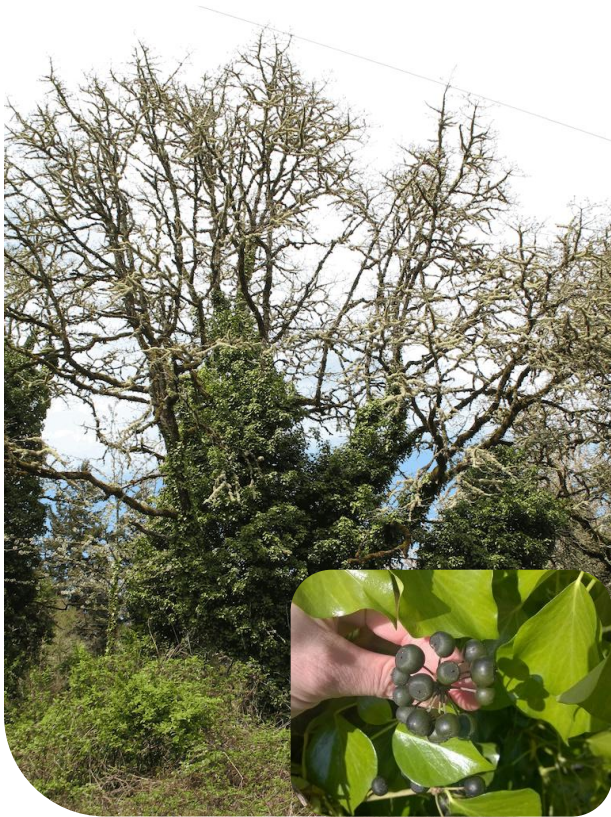


English Ivy

(*Hedera helix* var)

Prevention & Management



Why control English ivy?

Ivy chokes out surrounding plants, stresses supporting trees, accelerates wood rot, and its shallow roots destabilize banks. It has become one of the most prevalent and destructive weeds in Pacific Northwest urban and suburban forests.

Before you begin:

Create a plan for restoration before removing weeds or disturbing the soil. Determine if enough desirable vegetation is present to replace the ivy. If not, newly exposed soil can be planted with rapidly growing non-invasive plants.

Tools for ivy removal:

- Work gloves
- Protective clothing (Ivy sap is mildly toxic and may cause dermatitis.)
- Loppers
- Pruning saw
- String trimmer
- Appropriate herbicide and equipment, if needed

Prioritize your control plan:

English ivy reproduces vegetatively and by seed, dispersed primarily by birds. Controlling ivy's proliferation by seed is the first priority. This can be done by clipping blossoms and removing vertical vines, since only mature, and, typically, climbing ivy produces fruit. At the minimum, clipping seed heads or string-trimming at least

once a year to keep ivy in the juvenile stage will limit its spread. The



mature leaf



immature leaf

chosen approach for removing ivy from the ground will depend on the density of the ivy and on the amount of surrounding native or ornamental vegetation.

Removal from trees:

Mechanical: Use either loppers or a pruning saw to cut through the vines at both shoulder and ankle height, depending on the vine's diameter. Strip all cut vines away from the tree using a prying tool if needed. Leave the ivy above the shoulder cut to wither and pull the ivy below the lower cutting at least 6 feet away from the base of the tree.

Chemical: Cut vines off close to the ground and dab triclopyr or glyphosate on the perimeter of the cut surface, optimally within 30 seconds of cutting. By law, herbicide product labels must be followed carefully to ensure proper, safe, and legal use.

On the ground:

Manual: Begin by removing isolated plants, working toward the denser infestations. When pulling ivy from the ground it is essential to lift out as many root fragments as possible, limiting regrowth. Uprooting is more effective when the ground is moist. Using shears, cut lines through the mat to make an outline of a box (perhaps 4' wide by 10' long), then rolling up the mat, using a mattock or other digging tools to pry loose any stubborn roots. Clean an area of ivy thoroughly before moving on to a new area.

Mulching: Ivy can be smothered by covering it with a tarp or with 8 or more inches of mulch. To protect trees and woody shrubs, keep the mulch at least 3 inches away from their base. If pulling or mulching are not practical, periodically mow it with a string-trimmer.

Targeted grazing: Confine goats or sheep to ivy patches periodically. Regular intensive grazing by these animals can keep ground infestations in check. Vines climbing out of reach of animals should be lopped or sawed off at ground level.

Chemical: Use a string trimmer to reduce the amount of foliage, decreasing the volume of herbicide needed and increasing its effectiveness. Immediately after cutting, spot treat, paint, or use a wick applicator to apply a product containing triclopyr or glyphosate to the remaining foliage and stems. Be careful to only contact the target species. Mixing the herbicides with surfactants is recommended to increase effectiveness. A study by The Nature Conservancy suggests that herbicide use on ivy is more effective, and less damaging to native plants, when applied on dry sunny days in December and January, and when the temperature is above 55 degrees. Results of winter herbicide treatment may not be evident for up to five months. Ivy can also be wicked or sprayed in late spring after new leaves have developed but before they thicken and acquire waxy coats. *By law, herbicides must be used in strict accordance with label instructions.* Use a combination of mechanical and chemical methods to increase the success of noxious weed control.

What to do with the remains:

Exposing the stems and rootlets to air for a week should dry out the ivy enough to keep it from re-rooting. The dried ivy remains will eventually break down to about 1/5 of the original size. Covering the pile with a tarp will speed decomposition.

Site restoration:

After a section of ivy has been removed, replant with native or non-invasive ornamental species. The site should be monitored at least yearly and any recurring ivy removed.

Alternatives to English ivy:

Natives such as: Oregon grape, salal, sword fern, western bleeding heart, inside-out flower, false lily of the valley, twinflower, western trumpet honeysuckle, kinnikinnick, evergreen yellow violet, and coastal strawberry. For non-invasive ornamental vine substitutes consult WSU Master Gardeners (378-4414), your local nursery, or Washington State Noxious Weed Control Board's [Garden Wise](#) publication.

If you would like weed identification, site specific control recommendations or additional noxious weed information, contact:

[San Juan County Noxious Weed Control Department](#)

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