



TORONTO MASTER GARDENER

INVASIVE PLANTS FACT SHEETS

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ENGLISH IVY

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SUPPORTED BY
THE INVASIVE SPECIES CENTRE



Invasive
Species
Centre



ENGLISH IVY

(Hedera helix)

WHAT IS ENGLISH IVY

English ivy is an evergreen perennial vine native to Europe, Western Asia and Northern Africa. It was introduced to Canada as an ornamental in the 1800s. It can act as a groundcover or climb nearby structures using aerial roots that exude a glue-like substance. The leaves and berries are toxic.

WHY IS ENGLISH IVY A PROBLEM

English ivy aggressively invades natural areas and creates dense carpets of vegetation that

limit the amount of sunlight available to other species, affecting overall plant diversity. English ivy also climbs on other plants and objects in its area and will eventually kill trees by impeding photosynthesis. The plants are shade tolerant and once established are highly competitive. English ivy spreads by seed (the fruit may be consumed by birds and dispersed widely) and vegetatively through vigorous growth at stem tips which can form new roots.

IDENTIFICATION

Leaves are alternate along the stem, typically green and waxy with whitish veins, and vary from unlobed to three lobed.



Flowers are small, greenish-white, in globe-shaped inflorescences at stem tips.

Fruits are dark in colour and 6-9mm.

Vine stems can reach up to 30 m

MANAGEMENT FOR THE TORONTO GARDENER

Do not plant English ivy. If established, cut the vine close to the ground, then soak the area and use a spade to dig out the shallow roots or pull by hand. Monitor the site for regrowth. Small pieces of stem can develop roots and grow into new plants. Place everything in bags. Do not dispose of invasive plants in the compost pile; discard them in the regular garbage or check with your municipality for disposal information.

If you see English ivy or other invasive species in the wild, please contact the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711, or visit [EDDMapS Ontario](#) to report a sighting.

ALTERNATIVE NATIVE PLANTS

Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is a vigorous native vine with a similar growing habit to English ivy. The leaves, which are composed of five leaflets arranged in the shape of a hand, turn brilliant red in fall. Virginia creeper has white flowers that produce decorative blue berries by summer's end.



GROUNDCOVER SUBSTITUTIONS INCLUDE



WILD GINGER
(*Asarum canadense*)



BIG LEAF ASTER

(Aster macrophyllus syn. Eurybia macrophylla)



CANADA MAYFLOWER

(Maianthemum canadense)



WOODLAND/WILD STRAWBERRY

(Fragaria spp.)

REFERENCES

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Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program, Invasive Groundcovers. Accessed at: <http://www.invadingspecies.com/invaders/plants/invasive-ground-covers/>

Canadian Wildlife Federation: <https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/encyclopedias/flora/virginia-creeper.html>

PHOTO CREDIT

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