



# TORONTO MASTER GARDENER

# INVASIVE PLANTS FACT SHEETS

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## PERIWINKLE

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SUPPORTED BY  
THE INVASIVE SPECIES CENTRE



Invasive  
Species  
Centre



# PERIWINKLE

*(Vinca minor)*

## WHAT IS PERIWINKLE

Periwinkle is a common groundcover plant native to the Mediterranean and first introduced to North America as an ornamental plant.



## WHY IS PERIWINKLE A PROBLEM

Periwinkle spreads easily via underground stolons and stems which can form roots at nodes. It forms a dense layer and if it escapes into a natural area it can take over vast swaths of ground, choking out native species and preventing forest regeneration. It is shade tolerant and highly competitive once established. It creates dense carpets of vegetation that limit the amount of sunlight available to other species, affecting overall plant diversity. Leaves are toxic to most grazers and seeds are too small for birds to consume.

## IDENTIFICATION

Periwinkle has a vine-like habit growing close to the ground (up to 15 cm tall) on trailing stems.



**Leaves** are opposite along stem, evergreen, pointed, dark green and shiny. Some varieties are variegated.





**Flowers** are showy blue/purple or rarely white with 5 petals.

**Fruit** are not typically produced.

## MANAGEMENT

Do not plant periwinkle in your garden. As periwinkle mainly escapes via vegetative growth, it can sometimes be left in an existing garden if sufficiently distant from natural areas and closely monitored to be kept in check and excess growth removed. If you decide to remove periwinkle, you can pull it out quite easily by hand. You may need to go at it a few times the first season and possibly weed out residual growth the following spring. 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 find invasive ground covers 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.

## SIMILAR NATIVE PLANTS AND ALTERNATIVES

**Wild Geranium** (*Geranium maculatum*) is an attractive, sweet smelling perennial native to eastern North America. This woodland groundcover does well in city gardens and attracts beneficial pollinators. Pink or lavender flowers appear above palmate leaves in early spring. If desired, trimming back flowers after they close up will produce a second bloom. You can use the famous “Chelsea Chop” to extend its flowering time. Simply cut back one third of the whole plant in early June.





## OTHER GOOD ALTERNATIVES



### WILD GINGER

*(Asarum canadense)*



### BIG LEAF ASTER

*(Aster macrophyllus syn.  
Eurybia macrophylla)*



### BUNCHBERRY

*(Cornus canadensis)*



### WOODLAND/WILD STRAWBERRY

*(Fragaria spp.)*



### BEARBERRY

*(Arctostaphylos uva-ursi.)*

## REFERENCES

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## PHOTO CREDIT

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