

# REMOVE YOUR INVASIVE ENGLISH IVY

## What is it?

English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is a shade-tolerant woody perennial vine. Native to European forests, English ivy has been used in North American landscapes as a staple groundcover.



## Methods of Removal

This Worksheet explains mechanical removal, but there are other methods:

- Smothering: cover ivy with cardboard or newspaper, then top with 6"-12" of mulch – this method might take awhile and need repeat applications.
- Solarization (in sunny spots): place plastic sheeting over ivy and secure edges and leave in place during summer months.
- Repeat mowing: the ivy can be cut regularly throughout the growing season – this can take several years.
- Borrow a goat to graze on it!

## Why Remove?

Left unchecked, however, this introduced plant invades woodlands, climbs (and kills) trees and is considered an invasive species. Like many invasive species, successful removal without the use of herbicides takes elbow grease, persistence, and time.

## More Info

Most sources recommend bagging and disposing of English ivy rather than composting. If storing before removal, pile them roots side up.

A good rule of thumb is to replant the area quickly after the ivy is removed to try to crowd-out any returning ivy. The best option would be a native ground cover to refill the area (i.e. wild ginger, golden ragwort, or ferns).



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## Removal from a Tree

1. **Cut the vines around the base of the tree.** Working around the perimeter of the tree, at about ankle height, cut through every vine growing up the tree, making sure the vines are completely severed from the ground, and being careful not to cut the tree itself. Old, thick vines may require a lopper or handsaw. Ivy may have weakened the tree, making it more susceptible to disease. Take care not to cause further damage.

2. **Cut another circle around the perimeter of the tree at about shoulder level,** carefully pulling the section of the vines away from the tree as you go. The portion of the vine above shoulder level will no longer receive nutrients and will, over time, wither.

3. If the remaining ivy is mature and has visible flowers or berries, remove as many as possible and discard.



## Supplies Needed



- **Pruners,** Clippers, loppers, handsaw (depends on size of vine)
- **Small gardening tools** like trowel , multi-purpose garden tool, hori hori knife, etc.
- **Garden Gloves**
- **Bags** to dispose of ivy (not for composting)
- **Pants & Long-sleeves** (some people are sensitive to English Ivy and develop a rash when they come in contact with it--plus other plants could be hiding in the ivy that could also give a reaction, like Virginia Creeper or Poison Ivy)

## Removal from the Ground

1. **Clear the ground.** Working in 3-5 foot sections, continue cutting and pulling the ivy away from the tree (if applicable) and out of the ground, being careful of plants you do not want to disturb. Loosening the soil, if possible, may make root removal more successful. English ivy stems can regenerate from a piece six inches in length if left behind, so walk along the section you've removed and ensure you've been thorough.

2. Depending on your success at removing the roots, vines may grow back. Return to the site regularly to remove re-growth, if necessary.

