

# English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

Four cultivars are listed as noxious weeds by the State of Washington: *Hedera helix* 'Baltica'; *H. helix* 'Pittsburgh'; *H. helix* 'Star' and *H. helix* 'Hibernica'. Listed as noxious weed and quarantined by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

**Threat:** Aggressive invader that threatens all vegetation in forested and open areas • Out-competes native species for light, space, water, and nutrients, thus establishing “ivy deserts” • Disrupts native plant succession and regeneration • Makes trees susceptible to toppling and blow-down due to weight of vines • Leads to collapse of canopy • Shallow root system does not effectively combat erosion and makes slope failure more likely • Harbors undesirable vermin such as rats • Suspected source of certain plant diseases.

**Description:** Evergreen, woody vine with alternate, 3 or 5 lobed, waxy leaves and adventitious roots for climbing in its juvenile stage • Dramatically changes appearance from vines to woody spirals when growing conditions support seed production • Unlobed, wedge-shaped leaves with umbrella-like clusters of small, greenish-white flowers in the fall that produce purple-black berries • In the ginseng family (Araliaceae) • Vines can grow a foot or more in diameter • Has many recognized leaf forms with several hundred named horticultural varieties.

**History:** Native to Central Eurasia • Introduced as an ornamental during colonial times • Aggressive, low maintenance growth led to widespread use in landscaping.

**Spread:** Spreads vegetatively in its juvenile form and can thrive as a juvenile indefinitely • Mature form produces berries whose seeds are principally dispersed by starlings, English house sparrows, and robins.

**Control:** No known biological controls • Many manual methods available, but key is removing roots • Mowing, grazing, solarization, have been successful on small scale • Treatment with herbicides developed for woody weed species has had success in specific situations when applied by certified personnel and when product directions scrupulously followed • All control methods require follow-up • Any nearby seed sources must also be addressed.

**Alternatives:** Native ground cover alternatives include coastal strawberries, wild ginger, kinnikinnick, and low-growing Oregon grape • Horticultural alternatives include ground-covering raspberry (*Rubus calycinoides*), and dwarf sweet box (*Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis*) • Caution: many alternate ground covers such as vinca are equally invasive; carefully check on potential invasiveness of any alternative.

For more information:

No Ivy League- [www.NoIvyLeague.com](http://www.NoIvyLeague.com)

Alien Plant Working Group- [www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/hehe1.htm](http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/hehe1.htm)

The Nature Conservancy- <http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/hedeheli.html>

King County (Washington) Noxious Weed Control Program- <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/weeds>

Ivy OUT- [www.ivyout.org/](http://www.ivyout.org/)



courtesy of Tom Forney, OR Dept of Agriculture



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Cooperative Weed  
Management Area