

Controlling English Ivy

You may recall from the May issue that non-native invasive plants have different management strategies based on their biology and life cycles. English ivy (*Hedera hibernica*) is a common non-native invasive woody vine in Lake Ridge that can choke and kill the beautiful trees in our community. The innocent looking little green plant can strangle trees, accelerate rot, attract mosquitoes, reduce biological diversity, introduce diseases and parasites, and cause mature trees to fail during storms. Once the ivy is in the tree canopy, it blocks necessary sunlight from the tree's leaves or needles, while also competing with the tree for nutrients and water. Ivy growing vertically up a tree trunk that gets more sunlight matures into the adult stage that flowers and sets fruit, which birds then eat and spread the seeds. Here are some easy instructions to follow that will allow you to gain control over English ivy on your property.

- Wear pants and long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes or boots, and gloves for removal to avoid contact with any poison ivy growing in the same area.
- Use bypass pruners or loppers to cut ivy at the bottom of the tree to a height of 2-3 feet up the trunk around the entire tree for all infested trees. Avoid using a handsaw or hatchet, which may damage the tree's bark.
- After cutting, leave the upper sections of ivy on the tree. Pulling pieces of any size the thickness of a pencil or larger may harm the tree. Severed ivy left in place will dry out and better blend with the color of the bark.
- Pull all ivy vines out of the ground around the base of the tree, making a 2-3 foot "life saver ring" around the tree to protect the tree from future infestations. If possible, remove all the ivy in the surrounding area. Soil disturbance should be minimized and take care not to damage existing native plants including tree seedlings and spring wildflowers.
- Fall and winter are the ideal times to remove ivy since most native plants are dormant then, and the soil is moist. If no native plants are present, then spring can also be good time to remove ivy. Small garden tools such as trowels and weeders may come in handy for loosening large or stubborn sections of vines from the ground without digging a hole. Digging is not necessary and can aid in the spread of other non-native invasive species.
- For ivy runners that have spread horizontally across the ground, pull one vine at a time, making sure that all major pieces of the vine are removed. If small runners break off, they should be pulled out as well, since they will re-sprout. If ivy is very dense, a hand pruner may be necessary to separate masses of knotted vines to allow for easy pulling.
- Removed ivy can be bagged for disposal or piled into a tall pile away from native vegetation so it dries out. Re-sprouting is unlikely as long as all soil has been removed.
- Re-inspect the site 2-3 months after removal. No matter how thorough you were, any missed English ivy will sprout back. Re-pull all sprouts and then re-inspect again in 2-3 months. Each time there will be less and less until it is gone.

Sustainable Landscaping

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English ivy chocking out trees. Kingcountyweeds.com