

## English Ivy

### *Hedera helix*

Alex X. Niemiera, Associate Professor, Department of Horticulture

#### Summary:

Foliage: There is a great amount of variation in leaf shape and color; evergreen

Height: As a ground cover to about 9 inches tall; as a vine will climb to 90 feet tall

Spread: As a ground cover will spread indefinitely

Main features: English ivy is an attractive evergreen ground cover and vine that grows in full sun or full shade. While very attractive due to its lustrous green foliage and numerous foliage variations found in the cultivars, and being very tolerant of adverse conditions, this species has been documented as an invasive species. NatureServe's overall invasive rank for English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is High/medium with an ecological impact ranking of Medium. NatureServe's Invasive Rank Reasons Summary is "*Hedera helix* is shown to negatively effect forest biodiversity, especially in the Pacific Northwest. It is also a popular landscaping plant. There is no guaranteed method for keeping *H. helix* out of natural areas or removing it once it has established." (reference at bottom)

#### Plant Needs:

Zone: 4 to 9 but will depend on cultivar; some cultivars are not hardy in zone 6

Light: Full sun to full shade; foliage may be discolored in full sun during winter

Moisture: Moist to dry

Soil type: Any type; will tolerate salt spray

pH range: Acid to alkaline

#### Functions:

English ivy is an attractive ground cover or vine.

#### Care:

English ivy is a relatively maintenance-free species when grown as a ground cover with the exception that it will invade adjacent beds. Once it has invaded adjacent beds, it is difficult to control. When it reaches a vertical element (e.g., fence, tree, and wall), English ivy will climb by rootlets on the stem. To protect the health of trees, one must remove/kill vines that climb on trees.

#### Additional Information:

English ivy has two growth phases, juvenile and adult (mature). In the juvenile phase leaves are lobed and plants will usually not flower/set seed. In the adult phase leaves are not lobed and plant will flower and set seed. In general, plants that grow horizontally (ground cover) do not enter the adult phase; hence, they do not pose a reproductively invasive situation. In the juvenile phase, they do, however, pose a somewhat local vegetative invasive threat, i.e., they will spread to surrounding areas by stem elongation. In the adult phase, when the plant grows in a vertical fashion (i.e., vine), plants will pose a reproductive invasive threat, i.e., plants will flower and set seeds that can be eaten by birds and spread to distant locations. If one already has English ivy on their property, then they should be sure to cut down vines to prevent the

seed set and potential spread of this species. Chemical control measures for English Ivy can be found in the Plant Conservation Alliance web site (reference at bottom).

**References:**

NatureServe - Hedera helix

[http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?sourceTemplate=tabular\\_report.wmt&loadTemplate=species\\_RptComprehensive.wmt&selectedReport=RptComprehensive.wmt&summaryView=tabular\\_report.wmt&elKey=147683&paging=home&save=true&startIndex=1&nextStartIndex=1&reset=false&offPageSelectedElKey=147683&offPageSelectedElType=species&offPageYesNo=true&post\\_processes=&radiobutton=radiobutton&selectedIndexes=147683](http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/servlet/NatureServe?sourceTemplate=tabular_report.wmt&loadTemplate=species_RptComprehensive.wmt&selectedReport=RptComprehensive.wmt&summaryView=tabular_report.wmt&elKey=147683&paging=home&save=true&startIndex=1&nextStartIndex=1&reset=false&offPageSelectedElKey=147683&offPageSelectedElType=species&offPageYesNo=true&post_processes=&radiobutton=radiobutton&selectedIndexes=147683)

Plant Conservation Alliance – English Ivy <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/hehe1.htm>