

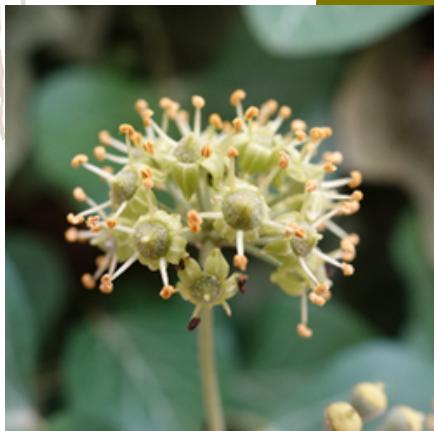
ENGLISH IVY INVASIVE OF THE MONTH!

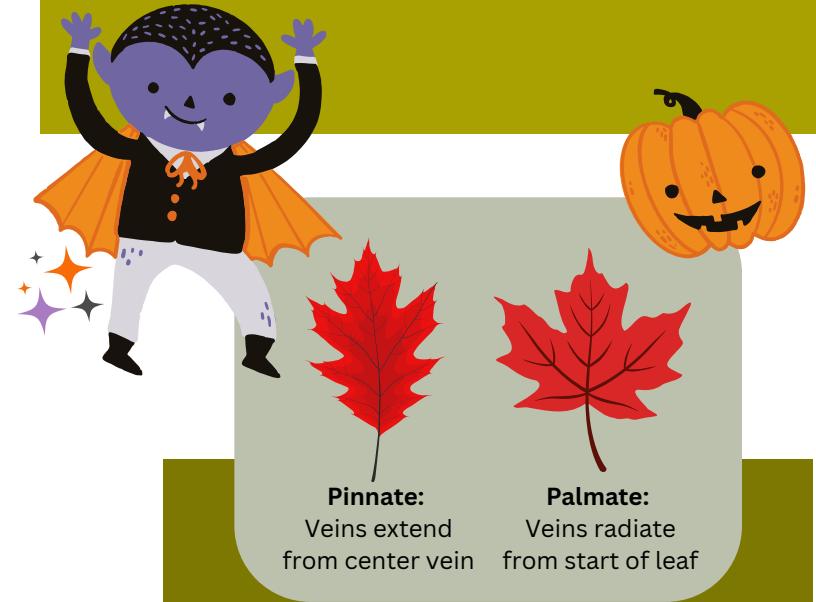
CHRISTIAN SNEAD

English ivy (*Hedera helix* L.) is a Category 1 invasive species in the state of Georgia, meaning that it poses a serious threat to native habitat. English ivy is an evergreen perennial climbing vine that attaches to tree bark, brickwork, and other surfaces by excreting a glue-like substance that helps it stick and stay in place.

It is native to Europe, Scandinavia, and Russia, having first been introduced to the United States in 1727. It continues to be sold as an ornamental plant despite its threat to natural ecosystems, parks, landscapes and other green areas. You can find English ivy in 28 different states, including Hawaii.

English ivy thrives in shady to full-sun conditions, and prefers moist soil. It doesn't tolerate drought or salinity well. The vines grow outwards, ranging in





length from anywhere between 3 to 50 feet, dependent on how tall its supporting structure is.

English ivy has two growing stages: juvenile, and mature. The plant is considered juvenile in its first year of growth, featuring palmate leaves with 3-5 lobes. However, when the plant is flowering in its mature stage, you can find different variations of its leaves along the vine. Primarily, leaves at this stage are dark green with whitish veins with a waxy cuticle (outer coating of the leaf).

English Ivy doesn't bloom until it's reached its adult stage, producing a starburst cluster of small, greenish-yellow flowers in late summer to early fall. Its fruits are small, black, and have a fleshy outer layer with stone-like seeds in the center. Birds eat these fruits and disperse the seeds to new areas, assisting its spread.

A common misconception is that English Ivy is a good ground cover, but in reality, it does not sport a very robust or extensive root system, failing to prevent erosion particularly on steeper slopes.



In the United States, there aren't any natural pests or diseases that affect English ivy, and there are many places across the country that have been labeled "Ivy Deserts" because the ivy has completely choked out other plants, decreasing bug diversity, which subsequently decreases bird populations as well. Areas that are heavily afflicted by large mats of English ivy on the ground retain moisture which can create breeding grounds for mosquitos.

Removal of English ivy is straightforward, but can be time consuming and tedious. The first step is to remove the climbing vines; severing the stem will cause the plant growing above that line to die, allowing you to focus on the removal of everything below. Roots can be pulled up by hand and disposed of by being left to dry out and die or by being thrown in the trash. When using herbicide, it's more efficient to focus on newer growth, as older leaves are more robust and resistant to chemical treatment.



PHOTO CREDITS: REBEKAH D. WALLACE, BUGWOOD



[FOR SOURCES AND TO LEARN MORE CLICK HERE](#)

