



## Invasive Species of the Month for December 2017

### English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

**Origin:** Europe, West Asia, and North Africa

**Interesting Fact:** Like the invasive Wintercreeper, English Ivy will not produce flowers and fruit until it gets to climb a tree or other object.

**Description:** English Ivy is a perennial woody vine that forms groundcover and can climb up large trees. English Ivy has small to medium, alternate, evergreen leaves that usually have three to five lobes (but can be unlobed as well).

**Defining characteristics:**

- Leaves are evergreen with white veins and can be variegated.
- Juvenile leaves (ground) will be lobed, while mature leaves (climbing) are usually unlobed.
- Terminal clusters of blue-black fruit on mature plants.
- Vines can grow to be quite large with similar diameters to small trees.



(Left image) The lobed, evergreen leaves of English Ivy.

(Center image) English Ivy's clusters of fruit and an example of its unlobed leaves in the background.

(Right image) English Ivy engulfing a large tree.



**Habitat:** Found along roadsides, forests, forest edges, and hedgerows.

English Ivy spreading as thick ground cover over a hillside in Vincennes.



**Ecological threat:** English Ivy can form dense groundcover in interior woods, outcompeting native plants. Climbing vines can inhibit large trees by covering them completely and preventing them from getting sunlight. The vines can also encircle the entire tree and promote development of fungi and diseases. The large mass of vines also increases weight on limbs and can cause branches to break off during storms. Both the berries and leaves are slightly toxic; however, there are some species of birds that eat (and thus spread) the berries.

#### **Control Methods:**

- Manual: Most manual methods are not effective, except for very small patches that can be pulled.
- Chemical: Cut stump treating\* large vines is effective. Foliar herbicide applications have had varying degrees of success. Dormant season foliar applications can minimize collateral damage to native plants, but these dormant treatments can have less efficacy and require favorable weather conditions. Using a broadleaf specific herbicide (with a surfactant)\* in the spring on new growth can be more effective.

\*Always follow herbicide label instructions.

#### **References**

Kaufman, Sylvan R. and Wallace Kaufman. *Invasive Plants*. Stackpole Books, 2012.  
Swearingen, Jil M. and Sandra Diedrich. "Factsheet: English Ivy." *Plant Conservation Alliance*, 6 Apr. 2006, <https://www.invasive.org/weedcd/pdfs/wgw/englishivy.pdf>. Accessed 12 Dec. 2017.