

Living Streamside

Guide to Designing your Property and Protecting our Watershed



BACKYARD BUFFER PROGRAM

Invasive Species Removal

Description

- English ivy (*Hedera helix*) is a non-native invasive evergreen climbing vine that covers and kills trees.
- As a ground cover, this ivy chokes out other plants, creating an “ivy desert” where nothing else can grow.
- English ivy spreads by runners as well as by seed when its berrylike fruits are eaten and dispersed by birds.

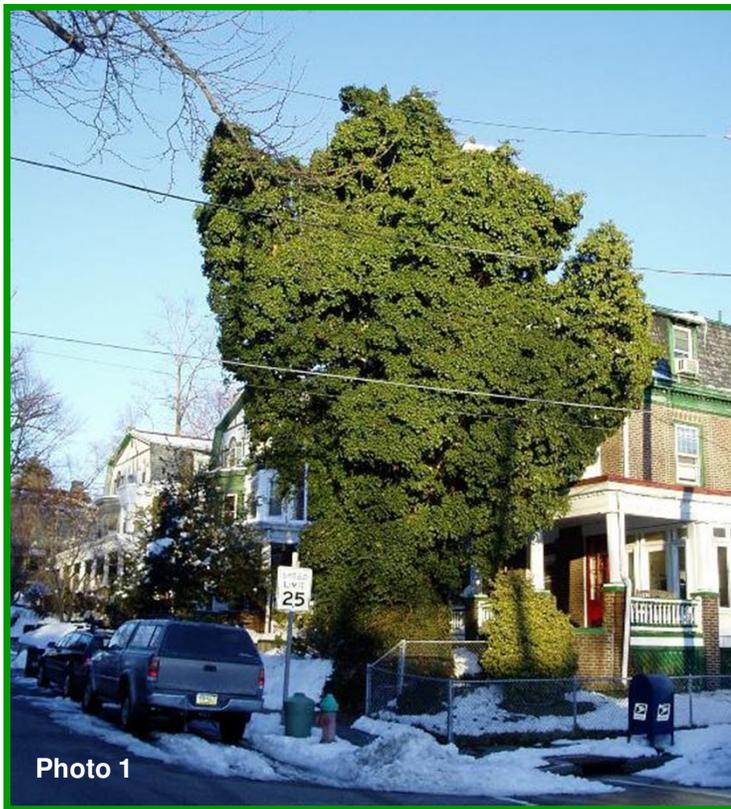


Photo 1

The tree in Photo 1 (above) is dead and covered in English Ivy. Ivy growing on the tree in Photo 2 (right) will eventually overwhelm this whole tree if it is not removed soon. Both trees were photographed in Philadelphia.

English Ivy

Hazards and Removal Benefits

- Vines climb and cover trees, starving them of sunlight, causing branch and eventual tree death.
- Vines become weighted with snow and ice during the winter, causing broken limbs and falling trees – a threat to nearby property.
- Dense mats of ivy on the ground hide puddles and soggy soil, allowing mosquitoes to breed.
- English ivy carries Bacterial Leaf Scorch (*Xylella fastidiosa*), a plant pathogen harmful to elms, oaks, maples, & other native plants.



Photo 2



For more information, contact:
Jeanne Waldowski
Philadelphia Water Department (Office of Watersheds)
215-685-4945
Jeanne.waldowski@phila.gov
<http://www.phillywatersheds.org/public>

Living Streamside

Guide to Designing your Property and Protecting our Watershed



BACKYARD BUFFER PROGRAM

Invasive Species Removal

English Ivy

General Steps to Get Rid of English Ivy

1. Wear gloves. Remove leaves and small vines to expose the bigger vines attached to the tree trunk. Do this from the ground up to about 3-4 feet, creating a band where ivy will be removed around the whole tree trunk.
2. Cut larger vines to create a band of clean tree trunk as shown in Photo 3. Use a flat pry bar or long screwdriver to pull vines away from tree, then cut with pruning shears, saws, bypass loppers or hand axe. Be careful to avoid damaging the tree's bark.
3. Remove as much of the root growth on the ground as possible. Remove new leaves several times a year to starve the roots and eventually kill the plant. This becomes easier each year and prevents ivy from climbing back up the tree.
4. Bag all vines & dispose with regular trash pickup. New plants can grow from cut or broken stems.
5. Remove English Ivy ground cover by pulling out or mowing down to ground level. Cover ivy bed with 6-8" of mulch or compost. Replace ivy with native plant alternatives (see list below).
6. Avoid using pesticides. Repetitive cutting or close mowing of new growth several times a year will eventually starve ivy of sunlight and kill it.



Photo 3

Ivy has been cut away at the base of this tree (photo 3), and the upper parts of the plant began to die within a month (photo 4).



Photo 4

Native Alternatives to English Ivy

Climbing vines:

- Allegheny pachysandra (*Pachysandra procumbens*)
- Trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*)
- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
- Dutchman's pipe (*Aristolochia tomentosa*)
- American wisteria (*Wisteria frutescens*)

Note: Even native climbing vines can overwhelm trees and must be cut back periodically to control their growth. Best bet is to avoid planting vines around trees.

References

- Ivy Off Urban Trees (www.ivyout.org)
Plant Conservation Alliance English Ivy Fact Sheet (www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/hehe1.htm)
Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides (www.pesticide.org)
No Ivy League (www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?c=47820)

Ground covers:

- Blue phlox (*Phlox divaricata*)
- Green and Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*)
- Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)
- Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*)
- Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostochoides*)
- Hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*)



For more information, contact:
Jeanne Waldowski
Philadelphia Water Department (Office of Watersheds)
215-685-4945
Jeanne.waldowski@phila.gov
<http://www.phillywatersheds.org/public>