



# HOW DO I... REMOVE ENGLISH IVY?

If you're wondering why, it's simple: English ivy damages valuable trees and buildings. A plant not native to Hyattsville (or anywhere in the US), English ivy spreads so quickly that it can strangle the base of trees and even help topple trees in storms, killing them. English ivy blocks sunlight from a tree's leaves, accelerates rot and is doing great ecological harm to our native trees and forests. It can also smother smaller plants and damage building exteriors. But you can remove this invasive weed. It's satisfying and an excellent way to bond with your neighbors.

## WHAT YOU NEED



**GLOVES**



**LONG SLEEVES**



**WORK SHOES**



**EYE PROTECTION**



**SCREWDRIVER**  
Large flathead



**PRUNERS**  
Or loppers



**TRASH BAGS**  
Black

## BENEFITS



Beauty



Community  
Building



Exercise



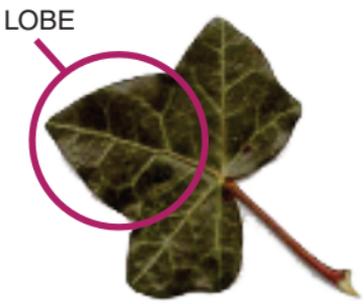
Eco-Friendly

## GETTING STARTED

- 1 IDENTIFY THE PLANT.** English ivy climbs up our trees, often right up to the canopy, where it can easily be mistaken as part of the tree itself. It looks similar to poison ivy, so take care first to visually identify. English ivy has medium to dark

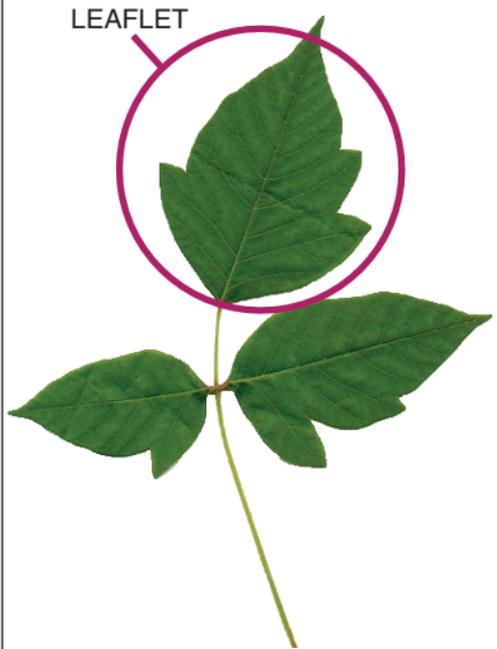
green, glossy leaves and is evergreen in winter. English ivy leaves are simple, typically with 3 lobes when young, becoming roughly egg-shaped with a pointed tip when mature, with clusters of purple-black berries in the fall. Poison ivy, a Maryland native plant, also climbs trees, but has compound leaves with 3 leaflets and is deciduous, with pale green-white berries in fall. The vines may look similar, especially in winter, so gaining familiarity with the plant throughout the year is important. See *Resources* for more info.

### Identifying features of ivy leaves



english ivy juvenile leaf (above)  
& mature leaf (below)

walamarrestoration.org/resources



poison ivy leaf

www.missouriplants.com

**2** **CUT THE VINES.** The simplest method is to cut off a section of ivy stems at about eye-level, using a pair of pruners. The section should be up to 4 feet of stem, which prevents vines at the tree base from growing back up the tree, since they will die on their own. English ivy attaches itself tightly by means of multiple rootlets, so sometimes the vines must be pried from the trunk with a flat bladed screwdriver or similar tool before cutting with pruners. Be careful not to uproot desirable plants along with the ivy. Use care to avoid damaging tree bark; cutting into bark harms a tree's ability to transport nutrients and invites disease.

**3** **PULL VINES OFF TRUNK.** Once the stems are cut, pull that section of vines off the tree toward the base. Vines above

## Tree after ivy sections are cut



Joey Williamson, ©2014 HGIC, Clemson Extension

<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic>

eye-level can stay—pulling them down can cause more harm to the tree, so it is better to leave them.

**4** PULL UP GROUND VINES. English ivy on the ground is usually easier to pull up after rains have softened the soil. If pulling is done during the winter, any perennials in these beds are less likely to be damaged while they are dormant. The ivy stems are strong and not deeply-rooted so long sections can often be removed at once. Check back each season to be sure the vines have not grown back.

**5** ENGLISH IVY IS TRASH. Let the cut ivy stems dry out for a few days, then bag them in black bags. Let the bags sit in the sun a while to kill the vines, then take them to your regular trash (not with yard waste). If ivy is composted along with leaves, the vines will likely survive and be returned to our yards along with composted mulch. All non-native, invasive plants should be disposed of as trash.

## TIPS & FAQs

- ✓ **Safety first.** Wear gloves, eye protection and long sleeves, as the sap from English ivy may cause a skin rash on sensitive individuals. This will also help protect against any poison ivy that may also be in the area.
- ✓ **Make it a party.** If you have lots of ivy, invite friends to help remove it. Feed them well and you'll have an occasion to remember along with a nicer looking, healthier yard!

## RESOURCES

For various high quality photos showing all **identifying features of poison ivy**, check out [www.poison-ivy.org/eastern-poison-ivy](http://www.poison-ivy.org/eastern-poison-ivy).

Learn about the **growth, damage, and details about control of English ivy** from Clemson University's Cooperative Extension Service at [www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/weeds/hgic2327.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/weeds/hgic2327.html).

You're in good hands with horticulture professor Linda McMahan, who—along with Oregon State University's Extension—tells her **personal story of first-hand experience with ivy removal**. Find Prof. McMahan's "Fact Sheet on Removing Ivy in a Home Landscape," including **great advanced tips and before and after photos**. Scroll down to download the fact sheet at [www.woodlandtree.com/ivy-removal](http://www.woodlandtree.com/ivy-removal).

**Want training on proper removal techniques?** Sign up with the City of Bowie's Weed Warriors, who focus on English ivy removal, at [www.cityofbowie.org/881/Weed-Warriors](http://www.cityofbowie.org/881/Weed-Warriors).

Do you want to **help remove invasive plants across Hyattsville**? The City of Hyattsville's Office of Volunteer Services organizes regular group invasive removals in City parks. [www.hyattsville.org/volunteer](http://www.hyattsville.org/volunteer)

Got the invasives eradication itch? Learn other noxious weeds you can remove with the Action Guide "**HOW DO I...IDENTIFY AND REMOVE WEEDS?**" [www.ndc-md.org/get-involved/community-action-guides](http://www.ndc-md.org/get-involved/community-action-guides)

