



Yachats Weed of the Month – November 2023

English and Irish ivy (*Hedera helix*, *H. hibernica*)

Ivy was brought to North America centuries ago as an ornamental and is still sold and used as such. We admit it does look rather pretty as it climbs up the walls of an old mansion or hangs down over the edge of a stone wall. But don't forget the wise words of Ogden Nash: "The trouble with a kitten is that eventually it becomes a cat." Ivy is a bit like that too.

Impact: Ivy, as a non-native, has no natural predators or pests in the USA. It easily escapes from planting areas and invades natural areas and forests. Soon "Ivy Deserts" will be created, where no other vegetation survives. As ivy climbs into the canopy of trees, it adds weight to the limbs while reducing the flow of air around the trunk and the flow of nutrients up and down the tree. Trees are weakened and may be killed. It provides no significant food for native wildlife (the seeds are toxic), but it does provide excellent habitat for rats. Do you still want ivy in your garden?



Identification: Ivy is an evergreen vine with long trailing stems and waxy leaves. It is equally at home on the ground, entwined with shrubs, in a tree or climbing a wall. Juvenile ivy has dark green 3-lobed leaves while mature ivy has diamond-shaped leaves that are lighter in color. Older plants have stems up to 5 inches in diameter and produce white to green flowers which develop into black, berry-like fruits.

Habitat: Ivy is highly adaptable in terms of soil conditions and light requirements but is particularly at home and invasive throughout the Pacific Northwest. It has an extensive but shallow root system that depends on near-surface soil moisture.



Management: Wear gloves when handling ivy as the sap may cause a skin reaction. In small areas, manual removal can be effective provided there is regular follow-up. Vines in trees can be cut a few feet above the ground and left to rot and fall. Roots should be grubbed out to 5 feet or more from the tree trunk. Ivy can be treated with various herbicides; however, since the ivy is often entangled with desirable plants, herbicide use may not be practical. Needless to say, please don't plant any ivy in the garden – within a few years you will have a monster on your hands!

Suggested replacement plants: Kinnikinnick, a native plant, and some heather varieties form low-growing mats that are attractive, non-invasive and easy to manage.

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