

TACKLING

# Common Periwinkle

(*Vinca minor*)

Invasive species have significant impacts on the environment, human health, infrastructure and the economy in the Metro Vancouver region.

Common periwinkle (also known as Vinca, periwinkle, and small periwinkle) is a low-growing trailing evergreen plant that was introduced to North America in the 1700s as a garden ornamental and medicinal herb. It has escaped cultivation in BC and spread into forests, forming dense groundcover and crowding out native plants. Unfortunately, many garden centres still sell several varieties of periwinkle, including *Vinca major*, a close relative of common periwinkle that is also considered to be invasive in Metro Vancouver.

## IMPACTS

Common periwinkle spreads rapidly and forms dense mats that block sunlight. It also produces chemicals that prevent the germination and growth of tree seedlings. Common periwinkle grows vigorously in disturbed areas, forests, cemeteries, abandoned home sites and along roadsides, trails and streams, but is most common in gardens and forest edges adjacent to residential properties.

## IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Perennial, evergreen trailing groundcover
- **Stems:** Slender, smooth, and branching; flowering stems grow upright to 30 centimetres tall; stolons (stems that grow horizontally along the ground) grow up to 1 metre long



Leaves

CREDIT: ISCMV



Pinwheel-shaped flower

CREDIT: ISCMV



Large periwinkle (*Vinca major*), a closely related invasive species, is taller with larger flowers and larger leaves that are triangular or heart-shaped.

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- **Leaves:** Shiny, thick, dark green, egg or oval shaped, approximately 2.5-4 centimetres long, arranged oppositely along the stem; leaf veins are often white; some varieties are variegated
- **Flowers:** Showy, pale blue to lavender (rarely white) with 5 petals in a pinwheel shape, up to 3 centimetres wide; blooms from March to June and intermittently throughout the summer
- **Seeds:** Cylindrical seed pods up to 5 centimetres long; seeds are rarely seen

## CONTROL METHODS

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade, grow or propagate periwinkle. If this plant is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent yards, parks, or natural areas. Effective invasive plant management typically includes a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling common periwinkle on private property or where permission has been granted by the landowner or manager. Other methods may be used by professionals.

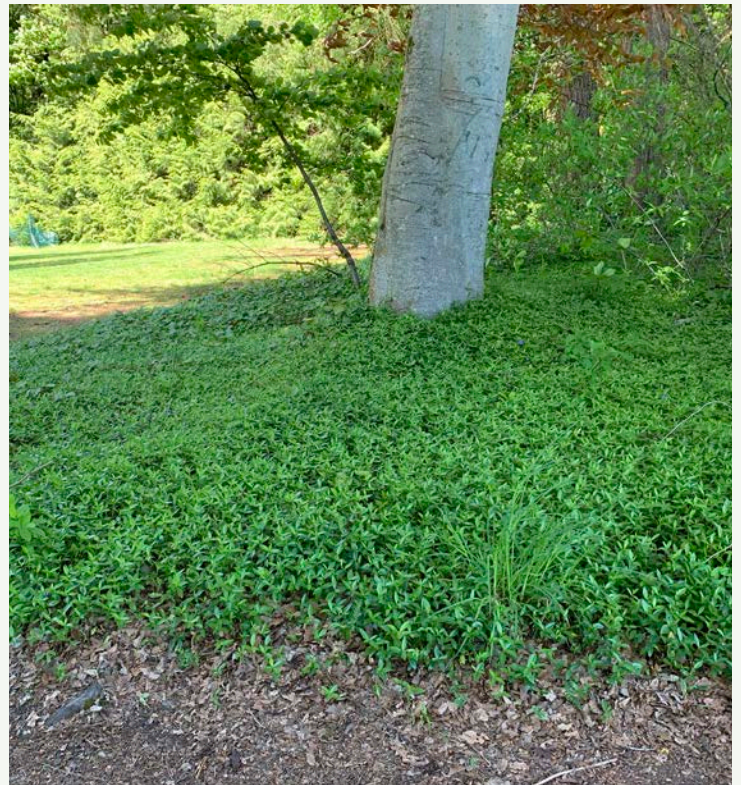
CONTROL METHOD	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	<b>Pulling</b>	Any site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is the most recommended control method for this plant</li><li>• Remove as much of the plant as possible, including the stems, stolons, and roots</li></ul>
	<b>Digging</b>	Any site, sites where pulling is not successful, or large matted sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Digging can help release roots from the soil</li><li>• Remove as much of the plant as possible, including the stems, stolons, and roots</li></ul>

Applying mulch after removal can decrease the likelihood of regrowth. Following treatment, the plants may be more sparse and challenging to find amongst other plants or dead leaves. Sites should be monitored closely for several years after treatment.

## How Can You Help?

- Do not purchase, trade, or grow common or large periwinkle. Non-invasive groundcovers are available that offer similar characteristics.
- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out [growgreenguide.ca](http://growgreenguide.ca) for suggestions.
- Do not place invasive plants in your backyard composter as the temperature will not become hot enough to destroy the seeds and roots.
- To reduce the spread of invasive species, dispose of yard waste and soil appropriately. Visit your municipality's website for more information.
- Download the '[Report Invasives BC](#)' app to identify and report invasive species.
- Join a stewardship group and help remove invasive species from local parks.

For the complete set of best management practices for common periwinkle, and other key invasive species, visit [MetroVancouver.org](http://MetroVancouver.org) and search 'Invasive Species'.



Common periwinkle spreading at the edge of a forest

CREDIT: ISCMV