TACKLING
English and Irish Ivies
(Hedera helix, Hedera hibernica)

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

There are two species of ivy present in Metro Vancouver – English ivy and Irish ivy. Both were introduced from Europe and western Asia as garden groundcover plants. Ivy can cover the forest floor and engulf trees, and is considered a serious invasive plant in the Metro Vancouver region. Unfortunately, many garden centres still sell several varieties of ivy.

IMPACTS

Ivy spreads by plant fragments, roots and seeds, forming a dense carpet along the ground, smothering native plants. Seeds can be transported log distances by birds and deposited in sensitive forest ecosystems. Ivy can also climb trees, robbing them of sunlight, spreading harmful plant diseases, and breaking branches and trunks. This plant may provide hiding areas for rats, pests, and garbage. **The berries are toxic to humans if eaten, and some people may develop skin irritation after touching ivy**.

IDENTIFICATION

- **Lifecycle:** Woody, evergreen perennial that can live for many decades

- **Stem:** Up to 30 metres long/tall

- **Leaves:** Dark, glossy green with white veins; alternating on either side of the stem; shape changes as the plant matures

- **Flowers:** Greenish-yellow flowers in clusters; only grow on older stems, bloom from summer to fall

Young leaf (with pointed edges)
CREDIT: ISCMV

Mature leaf (with rounded edges)
CREDIT: ISCMV

Berries
CREDIT: FOREST AND KIM STARR, STARR ENVIRONMENTAL, BUGWOOD.ORG

Stem
CREDIT: ISCMV

- **Seeds:** Round, bluish-black berries that ripen in winter/spring and are often eaten by birds

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

To prevent further spread across the region and beyond, it is best not to purchase, trade or grow ivy, including ivy plants in hanging baskets or containers. If ivy is already present, it is critical to ensure it does not invade adjacent yards, parks and natural areas. Effective invasive plant management typically involves a variety of control methods. The following table summarizes the recommended techniques for controlling English and Irish ivies on private property or where permission has been granted by the land owner or manager. **Always wear gloves when working with ivy**.

CONTROL STRATEGY	TECHNIQUES	SUITABLE SITES	NOTES
Manual	**Cut stems at chest height around the entire trunk of the tree, then remove the ivy down to the ground, clearing it 1-2 metres away from the base**	Ivy growing on trees	• Be careful not to cut or damage the tree • Any ivy above the cut will eventually die and should be left in place • Use the same method for ivy growing up structures
	Pull stems out in the direction of growth, loosening the roots from the ground; cut large roots or long stems as you pull	Ivy growing on the ground	• Remove as much of the plant as possible • Any plant pieces left in the soil may re-sprout

Remove ivy growing up trees first, to prevent tree damage and seed spread. Ivy can be controlled throughout the year, although it may be easiest in the spring and fall when the soil is moist. Dead leaves and stems can be a fire hazard for months or even years after control. Restore the area with native or non-invasive plants and monitor for regrowth.

How Can You Help?

- Do not purchase, trade or grow English or Irish ivies.

- Control invasive plants and replace them with a non-invasive alternative. Check out **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 English and Irish ivies, and other key invasive species, visit **MetroVancouver.org** and search 'Invasive Species'.

An ivy pull in Mundy Park
CREDIT: CITY OF COQUITLAM

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