



ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or
Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335

Reader Question of the Week: *I have a two-fold question: (1) how does English Ivy spread? Over 20 years ago we were told it was alright to allow the English Ivy to be on a magnificent tree that was as tall as a 2-story house. The tree died, and I keep finding the Ivy all over our almost 4 acres. (2) Is there a good way to kill it? I have been pulling it up, but it keeps getting ahead of me.KC*

Answer: Do not ever plant English Ivy! English Ivy (*Hedera helix* L.) is an evergreen vine that is a member of the ginseng family. It is native to Europe, Western Asia and Northern Africa. European colonists brought English Ivy with them as a decorative plant. It has spread across 26 states and is a major problem especially along the east coast of the United States and in the Pacific Northwest.

Using aerial roots, English Ivy climbs on anything, plant or object, in its path. It spreads by runners (elongated horizontal stems) and by bird-dispersed seeds. As it grows along the ground, it forms a dense blanket of growth that prevents sunlight from reaching the plants growing beneath it, reducing plant diversity. It's able to grow vertically up tree trunks into the canopy of tree, spreading along the branches, adding extra weight to the trees limbs, and eventually causing breakage. As the ivy grows up the tree trunk it can loosen bark and hold moisture against the trunk causing eventual decay and death of the tree. When it has a chance to climb, English Ivy produces small black fruits that are poisonous...few bird species feed on them.



English Ivy can also grow vertically several stories up the sides of buildings clinging to masonry, working its roots into joints. On wooden siding it can grow under the shingles, eventually ripping them off the building. It retains moisture and encourages rot.

The only way to manage English Ivy is to pull it up or dig it up. Vines growing along the ground can be smothered by covering them with plastic or a thick layer of wet newspaper covered with mulch during the summer. Climbing vines can be cut at a chosen height, loosened from around tree limbs and removed. Finally, vines can be cut back repeatedly to starve the roots.

Be careful with the cut debris because English Ivy can sprout from cuttings left in contact with the ground. To dispose of it properly it needs to be burned or bagged.

"Ask The Landscape Professional" articles are all on our website; if you missed any, go to www.SprigsandTwigs.net

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Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

860-235-0752

CT HIC #577341

