

How to Get Rid of English Ivy in the Landscape



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English ivy, or *Hedera helix*, is a quick-spreading vine that can invade large areas, often smothering trees and other groundcovers, consuming all the nutrients and blocking sunlight. These aggressive plants are also known to cause wildfires to spread, with flames climbing up the vine-covered trees, igniting the foliage.

Wear durable gloves and remember to wear long sleeves, long pants and proper shoes to keep ivy from touching your skin. Though nothing like poison ivy, English ivy may cause skin irritation.

Removing Ivy from Trees

English Ivy will damage trees and eventually kill them. Ivy damages the bark as it climbs, and will eventually overtake even a mature tree, weakening branches from its weight and preventing sunlight from reaching the tree's leaves.

Make sure not to pull on ivy that is above you—bees/bird nests may be hidden there. Remove any ivy from the base of the tree trunk to roughly 3 to 5 feet high—remove the vine at least to waist level. The higher ivy will eventually die off. To properly eradicate the aggressive vine from the tree, place a screwdriver or any flat, sturdy object—such as a pry bar, under the vine and gently pull away from the tree.

Ways to Remove Ivy Without Chemicals

- You can mow ivy groundcover to ground level several times a year to slowly kill the spreading vine. When the tendrils first appear, you can spray it with Glyphosate.
- With a pair of thick gardening gloves, pull out any English ivy, making sure to remove all the roots. A trowel can be used over hand-pulling to help with any stubborn roots.
- Some use white vinegar as an alternative to herbicides for English ivy removal. Put the vinegar in a sprayer or spray bottle and lather the vine thoroughly—making sure not to squirt any nearby vegetation. Wait roughly a week or so and check treated areas for dead/dying ivy.
- After removal, bag it in plastic trash bags and throw away the removed ivy immediately after removal because new plants can grow from cut/broken stems. Do not compost it, as it will root in your compost pile!
- Cover the eradicated area with a thick layer of mulch—typically 6 to 8 inches—to keep the English ivy from returning.

Killing English Ivy with Herbicides

One of the reasons that killing English ivy is difficult is because the leaves of the plant are covered with a waxy substance that helps prevent herbicides from penetrating into the plant.

1 So, in order to be effective at killing English ivy, you must get through that barrier.

The first thing you can do to make herbicide more effective for removing ivy is to use it in the winter on a sunny day. The cool temperatures make sure that the spray does not evaporate quickly and gives the herbicide more time to penetrate the plant. The sun helps keep the wax on the leaves more pliable and more easily penetrated.

The other thing you can do to make herbicide more effective in killing ivy is to lacerate or cut the plants' stems. Using a weed whacker or other device on the plant that will damage the stems and then applying the herbicide will help the chemical penetrate the plants through the wounds.

Removing English Ivy with Manual Labor

Digging and pulling up the English ivy plants can also be an effective way to remove ivy plants from your garden. When removing English ivy manually, you will want to make sure that you remove as much of the plant, both stems and roots, as possible as it can regrow from stem and root pieces left in the ground. Sometimes it is helpful to soak the ground with a sprinkler before pulling to loosen the soil.