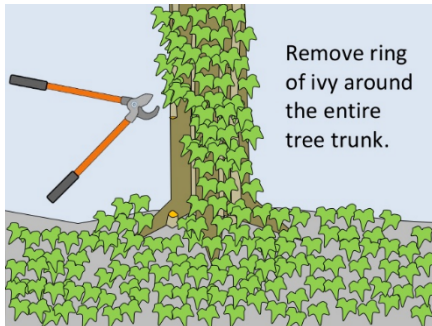


Don't Let Vines Kill Our Trees!

Aggressive invasive vines are damaging our native tree canopy, contributing to climate change. Vines compete with the tree they grow on for sunlight, water, and nutrients. After encircling a towering tree to reach the sunlight, the vine branches out and shades the tree's own foliage. Vines also add weight to the tree, causing broken and damaged limbs and trunks.

Start looking and you will see them everywhere - English Ivy, Oriental Bittersweet, and Porcelain berry are common in our area. This time of year, you will be able to easily spot the English Ivy because it is evergreen and will really stand out as you view a wooded area when there is very little green. So this is a good time to prune to keep it from engulfing a tree.



To kill the vines on a tree, you will need a pruner, a lopper for thicker vines, and possibly a hand saw for very thick vines. Wear gloves! Don't attempt to pull vines out of trees as they might bring weakened branches down on your head.

As illustrated here, cut the vines from near the ground and again about waist high above the ground, going all the way around the trunk. It is best to bag the cut segments so they don't re-root.



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English ivy plants can engulf a tree trunk, weakening it over time, leaving it susceptible to pests, disease and wind damage as well as poor foliage growth. It spreads by seeds eaten by birds, and new plants grow easily from cuttings left on the ground, so be sure to bag the cut pieces.



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Oriental Bittersweet strangles the tree and breaks branches due to the weight. Stems can reach 4 inches in diameter. Spreads by seeds eaten by birds.



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Porcelain berry vines smother the tree. The plant is a deciduous, woody vine that resembles grape. Spreads by seeds eaten by birds and other small animals.

Talk to any SWCC member if you spot vine-covered trees in the area. We are planning to do some vine removal soon, so we'll add it to our list.

Below are some extra readings if you would like to learn more about invasive plants:

["Invasive Plants of the Patapsco Watershed"](#), a presentation given by Diana Devers, Environmental Program Manager of the Patapsco Heritage Greenway at the GPCA general meeting in 2021.

["Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas; Field Guide"](#), a > 200 page guide providing information on 92 aquatic and terrestrial invasive species threatening our region, guidance on control methods, discussion of the effects of climate change on invasive plants, explanations and maps of ecoregions and physiographic provinces, and suggestions for native plant alternatives.

~ Laurie Donnelly