



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Hedera helix¹

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Introduction

The small, neat foliage of English Ivy provides excellent material for use as a ground cover or can be allowed to climb, its aerial roots firmly attaching to any rough-textured surface (Fig. 1). The dark green leaves are produced in abundance along the rapidly growing but rarely branching stems. It makes a wonderful ground cover giving a gentle uniformity to any landscape. As the plant climbs a wall or other structure and becomes older, mature leaves develop with fewer lobes.

General Information

Scientific name: *Hedera helix*

Pronunciation: HED-dur-uh HEL-licks

Common name(s): English Ivy

Family: *Araliaceae*

Plant type: ground cover

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; hanging basket; suitable for growing indoors; cut foliage/twigs

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

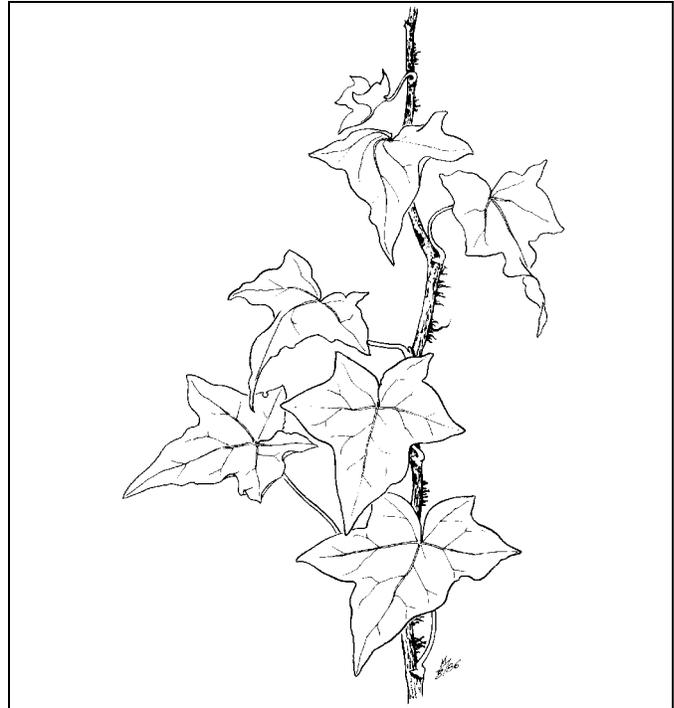


Figure 1. English Ivy.

Plant habit: prostrate (flat)

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed
Leaf shape: cordate
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: variegated
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: less than .5 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: unknown
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: reddish
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Ivy tolerates only little foot traffic or other disturbances. Be careful not to step into the bed after it is established. Raking leaves from or cleaning debris out of a bed of ivy can cause severe damage to it. Let leaves drop into the bed and remain in place. Some leaves can be blown out of the bed with a leaf blower.

Growing in full sun to deep shade, English Ivy is tolerant of a wide variety of soils except those kept wet. Plants growing in full sun occasionally burn during the winter in the northern part of its hardiness range. Although somewhat drought-tolerant once established, English Ivy maintains its freshest appearance when given ample moisture. Ivy benefits from some shade, especially when grown in the South. Plant on 1-foot centers for quick establishment.

There are hundreds of cultivars available with different leaf shapes, sizes, and colors including variegated. A few include: 'Baltica', small leaves, very hardy form; 'Buttercup', dark green leaves with light veins, new leaves yellow; 'Fluffy Ruffles', roundish, dark green leaves with undulating margins; 'Gnome', ground-hugging, 1-inch-long, dark green leaves; 'Gold Heart', small dark green leaves with cream centers; 'Hahn's', small green leaves, bushy growth; 'Harrison', broad dark green leaves, turn reddish-purple in winter; 'Marginata', grey-green leaves with white margins; 'Thorndale' - hardy cultivar suitable for northern climates; and 'Wilson', very hardy form, small leaves, overall height 6 to 8 inches. Some cultivars were developed for tolerance to sunny conditions.

Propagation is by cuttings of young shoots only. Simply trim 3 to 4-inch-long young shoots and stick them several inches into the soil and water regularly to establish a new area with Ivy.

Problems include scale, sooty mold, mealy-bugs, and aphids.

Pests and Diseases

Fungus leaf spot and bacterial leaf spot are a problem under moist conditions and in humid climates.