

## Help with removing English Ivy

09.25.2017

Q. We just bought an older house and large portions of the yard are covered with English Ivy. How can we remove it?

A. *Hedera helix*, commonly known as English Ivy, is a native to Europe and was brought here by early colonists. While appreciated by some gardeners as a way to cover large areas of the landscape it is also an aggressive invader which can kill trees and threaten whole forests. Another drawback is that it is prone to several diseases that cause brown or black spots on the foliage during the summer. The most common disease is *Xanthomonas*, or bacterial leaf spot that causes blackened or brown lesions on the leaves sometimes surrounded by yellow halos when it receives any overhead water.

Removing English Ivy can be difficult as it reproduces by root like stems (called rhizomes), seeds and even sprouts from fragments of stem.

According to the UC IPM Pest Notes “Removing English or Algerian ivy with a shovel can be very effective if roots and stems are dug out. It is essential to remove all runners. Cutting or mowing English or Algerian ivy followed by an application of glyphosate to the damaged leaves and cut stem tips can also provide effective control. For the ivy species, it is important that gloves be worn, as many people are sensitive to the dermatitis-causing agents in the plant.”

Regardless of the method you choose, with or without herbicide, you will need to cut away and uproot as much of the plant as you can, and then remove any pieces of the plant left in the soil. It will re-sprout, so may have to repeat several times.

If you do choose to use herbicides there is good information on application rates, timing and application methods for many hard to remove woody plants such as Poison Oak and English Ivy on the UC IPM site.

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74142.html>.

If you are not in a hurry you can try using solarization. This is a process of laying clear plastic over the area after you have mowed down the plants and securing plastic on all sides with soil. You will need to leave the plastic in place at least a month or possibly longer during the cooler times of the year. The idea is to heat up to soil enough that it kills all seed and plant shoots. Solarization should keep you from having to repeat the elimination process, so it may be worth the wait time. Just remember that Ivy is one tough

customer so whatever method you choose will take time and persistence but removal of English Ivy can be done.