

Fighting Invasive Species

a guide on protecting native plants



by Abigail Wilson

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About The Project

English ivy is an invasive species that negatively impacts the environment by taking over areas where native plants would otherwise be able to grow. Its popularity has protected it from the noxious weed listing that species of similar nature would be on. I chose this ivy removal project after researching the effects of the plant. I was unaware of just how invasive ivy was and the destruction it causes. I wanted to share what I had learned with others, but also make a visible difference in a high traffic area that will hopefully spark interest and motivation in others to take further action. I was able to communicate my project plans to over 70 people in attendance at a meeting with the Port of Camas-Washougal. With the help of many volunteers, we were able to remove English ivy at the Port of Camas-Washougal and replace it with various native plants. To share more about taking action against invasive plant species, I have created this guidebook that includes species



commonly found in the Pacific Northwest. I am pleased to be able to share it with you.

English Ivy

Hedera helix

English ivy is a flowering ivy native to Europe as well as western Asia. It was introduced to the United States as early as 1727¹. Ivy is still sold as a decorative plant and used in landscaping as a groundcover.

While English ivy is effective as a groundcover, it grows aggressively into ivy deserts, where the ivy is so overgrown that no other plant can survive. This is why the ivy is so harmful to local ecosystems, as it chokes out the native plants. Ivy grows on the ground, walls, and even in trees, where the vines will climb up a tree trunk and along the tree's branches. As the ivy infests the tree, it blocks the sunlight from reaching the tree's leaves, leading to the eventual death of the tree.

Taking Action Against English Ivy

The easiest way to put a stop to invasive English ivy is through prevention: simply choose to plant a native species instead of English ivy. For places where ivy is already growing, the ivy can be uprooted by hand (this is easiest done when the soil is moist). Ivy growing in trees can be killed by cutting the vines in a ring around the trunk a meter above the ground.



¹English Ivy (Hedera Helix), www.invasive.org/alien/pubs/midatlantic/hehe.htm.

English Holly

Ilex aquifolium

English holly is a broadleaf evergreen tree or shrub that is native to the British Isles and Southern and Central Europe¹. In the Pacific Northwest it is grown for decorative and landscaping purposes. English holly grows red, orange, or yellow berries that are poisonous to pets and humans. Birds feed on the berries and spread the seeds to new places.

English holly is harmful to native trees and shrubs because of how densely it grows. The seeds of native species are unable to germinate and grow into mature plants. English holly is a **naturalized plant**, meaning that it can grow and reproduce without the help of humans in an area that it is not native to.

Taking Action Against English Holly

Do not plant English holly, instead choose a native species of plant. For English holly that already exists, removal depends on how well established the plant is. Small plants can be pulled out of the ground, which is easiest done when the soil is moist, similar to English ivy. Larger plants must be dug up and may even require the use of herbicides after cutting much of the plant down.



¹“English Holly Identification and Control.” English Holly Identification and Control: Ilex Aquifolium - King County, kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds/weed-identification/english-holly.aspx.

Hoary Cress

Cardaria draba

Hoary cress, also known as whitetop, is a flowering plant native to Western Asia and Europe that is now widespread in areas it is not native to. It spreads by roots and seeds¹ and thrives in full sun conditions, such as fields and roadsides. According to the USDA, one plant can produce “up to 4,800 seeds that are viable for up to 3 years in the soil”². These seeds can travel very far distances, making Hoary cress very difficult to contain.

Hoary cress forms a **monoculture**, meaning that it is the only species of plant that will grow in a certain area, such as a field. This restricts the growth of other plants, especially native species, as the hoary cress takes over instead.

Taking Action Against Hoary Cress

To stop the growth of hoary cress, the entire plant must be removed. Pull the roots out of the soil so that hoary cress will not have the ability to sprout again. Do not till hoary cress because the roots will sprout again into new plants³. Herbicide may be necessary, and the larger the infestation of hoary cress, the harder it will be to control, so make sure to act quickly to prevent its spread.



¹“Hoary Cress.” Invasive Species Council of British Columbia, 15 Apr. 2021, bcinvasives.ca/invasives/hoary-cress/.

²Field Guide for Managing Whitetop in the Southwest, www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5410132.pdf.

³Utah State University. “Hoary Cress.” USU, https://extension.usu.edu/pests/ipm/ornamental-pest-guide/weeds/w_hoary-cress.

Common St. Johnswort

Hypericum perforatum

Common St. Johnswort is a flowering plant that, like many invasive plant species, was brought to the United States for decorative purposes. It now spreads invasively across several states. Common St. Johnswort can be found in open, sunny spaces such as fields and roadsides, similar to hoary cress. It grows bright yellow flowers with tiny black dots, and is toxic to livestock such as cattle and horses.

Taking Action Against Common St. Johnswort

Common St. Johnswort can be managed by pulling the plants out of the dirt, taking care to remove the root system. It is most effective to remove Common St. Johnswort before it produces seeds that can spread and further contribute to the problem. After pulling Common St. Johnswort out of the ground, the plants should be burned, but take care not to burn the area that it is growing as this will cause it to spread¹.



¹“St. John’s Wort Control: Learn How To Control St. John’s Wort.” StackPath, <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/edible/herbs/st-johns-wort/controlling-st-johns-wort.htm>.

Kinnikinnick

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi

Kinnikinnick is an evergreen shrub that forms an effective groundcover. It has thick leaves and grows berries that turn red in the winter. Kinnikinnick attracts large numbers of native pollinating bees and provides nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds. The berries, although fairly tasteless to humans, are eaten by birds and other wildlife, including bears. I chose to plant Kinnikinnick at the site where we removed ivy to provide a source of food for the bees.



Oregon Grape

Mahonia aquifolium

Oregon grape is a flowering plant that grows tart, edible berries. It attracts pollinators like bees and hummingbirds. Birds like to eat the berries. The inner bark is yellow in color and can be made into a dye. The leaves look similar to holly, which is why it would be a good substitution for invasive English holly in order to achieve similar ornamental value.



Mock Orange

Philadelphus lewisii

Mock orange is a flowering shrub that grows fragrant white flowers that smell like orange blossoms. Mock orange can grow into a large shrub measuring 6 ft high or more. The flowers attract bees, so planting mock orange near your garden may help with the pollination of your fruits and vegetables. The leaves and bark contain saponins which create a lather for a natural soap.



Red Flowering Currant

Ribes sanguineum

Red flowering currant is a deciduous shrub that grows red or pink flowers. It is pollinated by hummingbirds, bees, and other insects and also grows berries. I planted red flowering currant at the ivy removal site at the Port of Camas-Washougal.



About the Author

A dedicated Girl Scout, Abigail served as a Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington Council Delegate and completed the Brownie, Junior, Cadette, Senior, and Ambassador Girl Scout levels. She enjoys playing the violin, traveling, learning new things, and is passionate about being a good steward of our environment.

Abigail proudly represented Girl Scouts at her high school graduation by wearing green Girl Scout cords. Upon graduation, Abigail received a Lifetime Membership when she bridged to an adult member of the Girl Scout program... a gift from her service unit as an appreciation of her long time dedication to the Girl Scout movement.

Abigail feels the courage and leadership she developed through Girl Scouts instilled a solid foundation to prepare her for the next chapter in life as she attends Barnard College of Columbia University.



