



Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Winter Creeper

Euonymus fortunei



Photo: James Miller, USDA Forest Service,
www.invasive.org

Background:

Also known as climbing euonymus, this vine was brought to the U.S. in 1907 from Asia to be used as an ornamental ground cover.

Range:

This species is scattered throughout the eastern U.S. as far north as New York and south to Georgia, as well as in the Midwest.

Description:

This evergreen, woody vine can grow in mats along the ground or climb trees to a height of up to 70 feet. The opposite leaves are dark green, oval, slightly toothed, glossy, thick, and often have a silvery-white mid-vein.

Inconspicuous yellow-green flowers develop in mid-summer, and usually only develop when the plants are climbing. Fruit are pinkish-red capsules that open to show orange seeds (*see below*).



Photo: Keith Langdon, National Park Service,
www.invasive.org

Habitat:

This plant can tolerate a variety of conditions, including poor soil, full sun to dense shade, and a wide pH range. It does not do well in wet soils, however.

Biology and Spread:

Winter creeper spreads both through its seeds – wildlife eat the fruits or they are spread by water – and vegetatively by its extending tendrils and rootlets that are produced along the stem at short intervals.

Ecological Threat:

Winter creeper aggressively invades forest edges and openings. The dense ground cover can displace native understory species and restrict tree seedling establishment by blocking sunlight. The vines can also smother and kill shrubs and small trees.

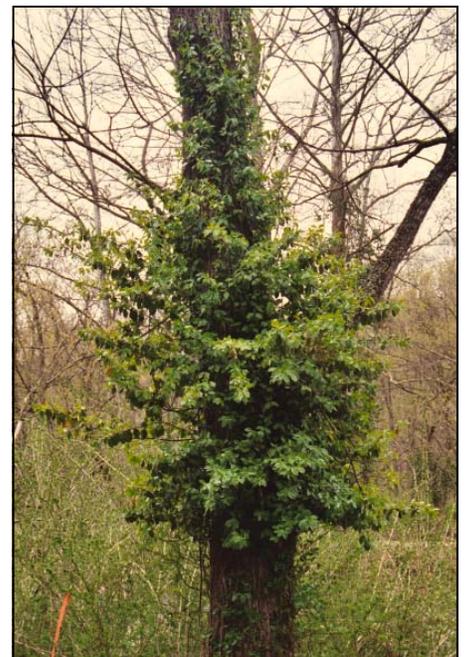


Photo: Jessica Sprajcar, DCNR

How to Control this Species:

Manual

In areas of light infestation, vines and roots can be pulled by hand or dug up. All roots and runners must be removed, however, to ensure no new sprouts emerge. Bag and dispose of all plant parts.

Chemical

For heavier infestations, cut the stems and apply a 25 percent solution of glyphosate or triclopyr to the cut stems. This should be done in autumn.

If cutting the stems is too labor-intensive, a foliar application of two percent glyphosate or triclopyr with a 0.5 percent non-ionic surfactant can be used. Wet the leaves but not so much that the herbicide drips off. This should be done when the air temperature is above 65 degrees F. Repeated applications will probably be necessary.

The following have been shown NOT to be effective: mowing, prescribed burns, biological controls and herbicides during the growing season.

References:

Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health:

<http://www.invasive.org>

Invasive Exotic Plant Pest Tutorial for Natural Lands Managers:

http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/climbing_euonymus.htm

For More Information:

DCNR Invasive Species Site:

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/conservationscience/invasivespecies/index.htm>

Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, National Park Service:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/midatlantic.pdf>

Invasive Plants Field and Reference Guide, U.S. Forest Service:

http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/misc/ip/ip_field_guide.pdf

Native Alternatives:

There are a variety of native creeping or climbing vines that are good substitutes:

trumpet creeper
(*Campsis radicans*)



Photo: Ohio State Weed Lab Archive,
www.forestryimages.org

crossvine
(*Bignonia capreolata*)



Photo: Jerry Payne, USDA,
www.forestryimages.org