

INVASIVE PLANT FACT SHEET

Purple Wintercreeper *Euonymus fortunei*



DESCRIPTION AND IDENTIFICATION

Purple wintercreeper is an evergreen invasive vine that can climb up to 30 feet. It's dark green, oval leaves are 1 to 2.5 inches long, opposite, simple, and leathery with toothed margins. Roots and stems are thick and can become woody with age. Wintercreeper forms a dense groundcover and aggressively creeps up trees. Flowers are small, green-white, and bloom in clusters, June to July. Fruits are orange arils surrounded by a pale husk that splits open when ripe. Because wintercreeper can tolerate a wide range of soils, it's able to grow in a variety of sites including forests and wooded, urban environments.



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WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Wintercreeper forms dense groundcover and outcompetes native plants. This is harmful to our native wildlife, including many species of birds and insects, which rely on native plants for food and other resources. Climbing vines of wintercreeper grow over shrubs and trees, blocking access to light and making them more vulnerable to storm damage. Because purple wintercreeper is so damaging to the environment, it is illegal in Indiana to buy, sell, transport, or share this plant with others.



ORIGIN

Wintercreeper originated in China and is also native to Japan and Korea, where it is common to woodlands, scrublands, and forests.

CONTROL METHODS

In areas that have only a small amount of wintercreeper, vines can be pulled from the ground and removed entirely from the site. For larger areas, chemical methods may be needed. Triclopyr, either the amine or ester formulation, can be effective at controlling purple wintercreeper. For more detailed information on control visit:

mc-iris.org/purple-wintercreeper.html.

NATIVE PLANT ALTERNATIVES



Plantain-leaved Sedge, *Carex plantaginea*

Broad-leaved, grass-like, clump forming perennial, lime-green foliage with puckered leaf surface
Part-shade to full-shade, wet to medium soil moisture, 1 ft. height, 1 ft. spread
Blooms April to May, slowly spreads from short rhizomes and occasionally by seed
Caterpillars of several woodland butterflies feed on foliage, birds feed on seeds
Pest resistant and unpalatable to deer



Eastern Star Sedge, *Carex radiata*

Narrow, grass-like, clump forming perennial, fine-textured leaves
Full-sun to full-shade, medium-wet to medium soil moisture, 1 ft. height, 1 ft. spread
Blooms April to May, star-shaped clusters of yellow green flowers and fruits
In ideal growing conditions it will naturalize by self-seeding, birds feed on seeds
Pest resistant and unpalatable to deer



Wild Strawberry, *Frageria virginiana*

Ground-hugging, perennial running groundcover with trifoliolate leaves
Full-sun to part-shade, medium soil moisture, 0.25 to 0.75 ft. height, 1 to 2 ft. spread
Blooms late spring, delicate white flowers, produces small but delicious edible fruit
Attracts bees and other insects, birds and small mammals enjoy fruit
Tolerates drought and spreads quickly via horizontal creeping stems



Wild Geranium, *Geranium maculatum*

Clump forming perennial, delicate, palmately compound leaves
Full-sun to part-shade, medium soil moisture, 1.5 to 2 ft. height, 1 to 1.5 ft. in spread
Blooms late spring, showy lavender flowers
Attracts bees and butterflies
Tolerates drought, not typically browsed by rabbits and deer



Golden Ragwort, *Packera aurea*

Colony forming herbaceous perennial, year-round, evergreen foliage
Full sun to part-shade, medium to wet soil moisture, 0.5 to 2.5 ft. height, 0.5 to 1.5 ft. spread
Blooms spring, purple flower buds produce abundant showy yellow flowers
Attracts butterflies and other insects
Tolerates wet soils, not typically browsed by rabbits and deer, spreads by rhizomes



Rock Stonecrop, *Sedum ternatum*

Mat forming, perennial groundcover, year-round, succulent foliage
Full sun to part-shade, medium soil moisture, 0.25 to 0.5 ft. height, 0.50 to 0.75 ft. spread
Blooms late spring to early summer, showy clusters of abundant white flowers
Attracts butterflies and other insects
Tolerates drought, not palatable to rabbits and deer

OTHER NATIVE ALTERNATIVES: Canada Anemone (*Anemone canadensis*), Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*), Running Strawberry Bush (*Euonymus obovatus*), Dwarf Crested Iris (*Iris cristata*), Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), Lyre-leaf Sage (*Salvia lyrata*), Violets (*Viola spp.*)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

"Wintercreeper" Woody Invasives of the Great Lakes Collaborative (WIGL): woodyinvasives.org/woody-invasive-species/wintercreeper/
"Winter Creeper, Climbing Euonymus" Weed of the Week, USDA Forest Service: invasive.org/weedcd/pdfs/wow/winter_creeper.pdf
"Invasive Plant Species: Wintercreeper FNR-524-WV" Purdue Extension YouTube Channel: [youtube.com/watch?v=rRxHICeBECg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRxHICeBECg)

