Ivy plants include English ivy (Hedera helix), Algerian ivy (Hedera canariensis), and Persian ivy (Hedera colchica). Boston ivy (Parthenocissus tricuspidata) is an unrelated climbing plant used in similar ways.

For information on poison ivy (Rhus radicans) see HGIC 2307, Poison Ivy.

**English, Algerian, & Persian Ivy**

**Mature Height/Spread:** English ivy is an evergreen creeping vine forming a dense mat of dark green foliage. It spreads horizontally over the ground, 6 to 8 inches high, or climbs on walls, fences and trellises up to 50 feet high. The plant has woody stems and climbs by aerial rootlets that cling easily to brick or masonry, but less so to wood. The vine has rich, shiny, dark green, lobed leaves that hold their color if protected from winter sun and wind. Mature plants bear round clusters of small greenish flowers, followed by ¼-inch blue-black berries.

Hedera helix 'Arborescens' is plain green; 'Glacier' has leaves variegated gray and green, with pink and white margins. 'Baltica,' 'Bulgaria' and 'Hebron' are very hardy forms with small leaves. Very small-leaved forms are 'Conglomerata,' a slow-growing dwarf; 'Hahn's Self-Branching,' with light green leaves and dense branching; and 'Minima' with leaves ½ to 1 inch across. Many cutleaf and variegated cultivars exist.

Algerian ivy (Hedera canariensis) has shiny, green leaves 5 to 8 inches wide, with three to five shallow lobes, more widely spaced along the stems than on English ivy. 'Variegata' or variegated Algerian ivy has leaves edged with yellowish white.

Persian ivy (Hedera colchica) has oval to heart-shaped leaves, 3 to 7 inches wide and to 10 inches long (largest leaves of all ivies). Persian ivy is more cold hardy. 'Dentata' is faintly toothed. 'Dentata Variegata' is marbled with deep green, gray green, and creamy white. 'Sulpher Heart' has central gold variegation.
Landscape Use: All are wonderful evergreens for shady locations. They are most useful on north- and east-facing banks, under trees where grass will not grow or as an underplanting between shrubs. The plant roots hold the soil, discouraging erosion and slippage on slopes. Roots grow deep and fill soil densely.

Ivy climbs almost any vertical surface with aerial rootlets (small roots along the stem).

Many small- and miniature-leaved forms of English ivy are useful for small-area ground covers, hanging baskets, and training to form intricate patterns on walls and in pots. Some are grown as houseplants, but if planted in protected sites, most are hardy.

Cultivation: Plants perform best in rich, moist soil, well-supplied with organic material. They prefer shade, especially where summers are hot, or leaves may scorch. Plants are easy to grow from cuttings, many of which already have aerial roots. Plant in the spring and space the plants 1 foot apart for quick coverage within one year. Otherwise, it is more economical to space plants 18 to 24 inches apart. Most ivy groundcovers need trimming around the edges two or three times a year. When the ground cover builds up higher than you want, cut it back with hedge shears. Do this in spring so that new growth quickly covers bald look. Ivy can be a haven for slugs and snails, and rodents also, especially when it is never cut back.

Problems: Fungal diseases, which may occur, are leaf spot, gray mold and root rot. Bacterial spot and canker can also be a serious problem. Nematodes, which are microscopic worms that live in the soil and feed on plant roots, may cause stunting of the plants. Spider mites may be a problem in hot, dry locations.

Boston Ivy

Mature Height/Spread: Boston ivy is a deciduous broadleaf plant, which will grow to a height of 50 to 60 feet when supported. The reddish-bronze new growth turns glossy, dark green in summer and changes to orange-red in fall. This vine bears clusters of blue-black berries.

Cultivars include 'Beverly Brooks' with large leaves and bright red fall color; 'Lowii' with small leaves, creating a finer texture; and 'Purpurea' with reddish-purple summer foliage.

Landscape Use: This plant is mainly used as a climbing vine. It is one of the best vines for covering structures or supports quickly. It has the potential to damage masonry walls and buildings due to its adhesive disks that cling to structures. The plant will cover windows and doors when given free rein.

Cultivation: This plant prefers moist soils and partial shade to full sun. It tolerates a wide range of soil types and it also tolerates city conditions, but is less tolerant of drought, heat and sun than Virginia Creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia). Plant two-year old plants. Prune annually to keep the plant in bounds.

Problems: Boston ivy does not suffer from serious pests. Spider mites may be a problem in hot, dry locations. Boston ivy is sometimes confused with poison ivy, because it also has three leaflets. Boston ivy is not poisonous, but the best policy is to avoid plants that look like poison ivy.

Prepared by Marjan Kluepfel HGIC Information Specialist, and Bob Polomski. Extension consumer Horticulturist, Clemson University. (New 05/99. Images added 03/07.)

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